ISSN 1949-8519 (Print)
ISSN 2154-6711 (Online)

Forum for World Literature Studies

世界文学研究论坛

Vol.15 No.2 June 2023

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Knowledge Hub Publishing Company Limited
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Vol.15 No.2 June 2023

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Vol.15, No.2, June 2023

Knowledge Hub Publishing Company Limited
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2023 年第 2 期

香港 • 西拉法叶

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Forum for World Literature Studies (Print ISSN: 1949-8519; Online ISSN: 2154-6711), published by Knowledge Hub Publishing Company Limited, is a peer reviewed academic journal sponsored by Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Zhejiang University and co-edited by Professor Nie Zhenzhao of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Professor Charles Ross of Purdue University. This journal provides a forum to promote diversity in world literature, with a particular interest in the study of literatures of those neglected countries and culture regions. With four issues coming out every year, this journal publishes original articles on topics including theoretical studies, literary criticism, literary history, and cultural studies, as well as book review articles.

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***The Publisher and Editorial Office Address*:** Knowledge Hub Publishing Company Limited, Hong Kong SAR, China. To subscribe to this journal or purchase any single issue, please contact the editorial office at 6 East Building, Zijingang Campus, Zhejiang University, 866 Yuhangtang Rd, Hangzhou 310058, P.R. China. Tel: +86-571-8898-2010, Email: fwlsmarket@163.com or fwlstudies@163.com.

Forum for World Literature Studies is indexed in ESCI, SCOPUS and also included in the databases of EBSCO, Gale, MLA (MLA International Bibliography) and ABELL (The Annual Bibligraphy of English Language and Literature).

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A Postanthropocentric Reading of Racial Hybridity in Contemporary British Ethnic Fiction and Caryl Phillips' Reflections on Cross-Racial Solidarity

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Abstract This article illustrates how the postcolonial postanthropocentric perspective is employed to analyze the conflictive relationship between the "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces, suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin, on the representations of racial and cultural hybridity in contemporary Britain. Concepts such as deterritorialization, liminal space and the violence of colonial desire are used to the postanthropocentric reading of contemporary British ethnic novels. Through a comparative analysis of novels by V. S. Naipaul, Sam Selvon, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Caryl Phillips' novels, this article argues that the rhetoric and practice of dichotomy in social life and literary works inevitably leads to the reinforcement of ideologies of colonialism, racism and patriarchal sexism, and the rhetoric and practice of solidarity and empathy create positive visions of cross racial community.

Keywords postanthropocentric reading; hybridity; cross racial solidarity; contemporary British ethnic fiction; Caryl Phillips

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Introduction

Contemporary British ethnic novels are mainly written by immigrants (or their

descendants) who came from former British colonies. Their novels reflect the deterritorialization of cultural heritage in a global age. Deleuze and Guattari think that deterritorialization is a way of challenging dominant cultural discourses and opening up a space to express the concerns and experiences of a marginalized community. In "What Is a Minor Literature?" Deleuze and Guattari argue that "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 16).

Contemporary British ethnic fiction is minor literature characterized by "deterritorialization," political and "collective value." Contemporary British ethnic novelists such as Sam Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Caryl Phillips have collectively enunciated their desire of expressing "another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (Deleuze and Guattari 17). They are unanimously in a tug of war between two mutually antagonistic forces working on a nation's language. Mikhail Bakhtin define these forces as "centripetal" and "centrifugal." The "centripetal" force of a nation's official language "attempts to enforce a unified and authorized way of speaking, for example, 'Received Pronunciation' or 'BBC English'" (Bentley 78). Contemporary British ethnic novels represent the oppositional or "centrifugal" force that challenges the official way of speaking with "unlicensed" language.

Contemporary British ethnic fiction celebrates and problematizes the racial and cultural hybridity which is considered by the white British as something containable because Eurocentrism or European humanism still characterizes British ideology despite the truth that multiculturalism and cultural hybridity have already been interwoven with ordinary British life. "European humanism has historically excluded others from 'legitimate participation' in the political. These others range from non-males, non-whites, and non-Europeans to nonhumans, who are all in one way or another thought of as the deficient and subjacent Others of Man, lacking in subjectivity and reduceable to passive objects of knowledge, systemic exploitation, and resource extraction" (Moslund 4). When colored immigrants are considered as non-whites, non-Europeans and nonhumans there will be no emotional empathy toward them. Contemporary British ethnic fiction reveals and challenges this unempathetic British cross racial and cultural situation.

Reading contemporary British ethnic fictions, readers can still feel the strong influence of the Eurocentrism of the dominant anthropocene narrative, even though "the cultural dynamic of deterritorialization has decoupled previous links between

space, stability and reproduction; it has situated the notion of community in multiple locations; it has split loyalties and fractured the practices that secure understanding and knowledge within the family and social unit" (Papastergiadis 117). Emphasizing colored immigrants' human nature and the necessity of cross racial solidarity, contemporary British ethnic novelists have demonstrated their strong intention to revolutionize the problematic anthropocene narrative of British racial and cultural hybridity.

Racial Hybridity in Liminal Space and Its Postanthropocentric Representations

Edward Said argues that western superiority over the colonized and western economic and cultural hegemony that once existed in the colonial period still exist in the postcolonial age. Said affirms that there is always a division between the (white) colonizer and the (colored) colonized and in postcolonial age the division becomes the one that is between the first world and the third world (Said 206-207). Bhabha deviates from Said's opinion of racial division by suggesting the displacement of the binary logic of Black/White, Self/Other and the development of racial and cultural hybridity in liminal space.

Drawing from Renee Green's conversation with Donna Harkavy, Bhabha argues that the liminal space is "the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white" and "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 5). Celebrating racial and cultural hybridity in liminal space, Bhabha is also aware of the difficulty in authorizing "cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (3). According to Bhabha, racial and cultural hybridity is not only a truth, a trend in history but also an on-going negotiation.

Sten Pultz Moslund argues that "Posthuman thinking theorizes not the empowerment (or attainment) of human subjectivity but its relative dissolution, not the history of interhuman power struggles but a decentralization of human history altogether" (Moslund 3). According to Moslund, racial hybridity does not solve racism because it does not endow the colored immigrants with subjectivity and dignity. In the novels written by Sam Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith racial hybridity evacuates or dissolves subjectivity. Thus, racial hybridity becomes a constantly contested posthuman issue in contemporary British ethnic fiction.

Within the liminal space of racial hybridity racialized people are "deprived of their subjectivity, of being exiled from humanity as exploitable 'objects among

other objects' and 'judged to belong to nature rather than to history'" (qtd. in Moslund 3). Identifying "the [sado-masochistic] violence of colonial desire" (Young 108), Robert Young contends that "Theory of race were thus also covert theories of desire" (Young 9) and hybridity is a key term managing and explaining the ambivalent colonial attraction to and repulsion from racial Others.

In *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Sam Selvon's creolized voice "transports the calypsonian 'ballads' of his errant island 'boy' to the diamond pavements of Caribbean London" (Nasta vi). Sam Selvon illustrates that racial hybridity and Caribbean immigrants' "nigrification" of London are postcolonial fantasies. As the names of the characters such as Moses and Galahad whose real name is Henry Oliver suggest, black Caribbean male immigrants have their ambitions to brave the new world of London. Sam Selvon draws a picture of Caribbean male immigrants' bleak and oxymoronic London life. Their pilgrimage and knightly pursuit turn out to be in vain. In *Exodus* Moses is the spiritual leader for Jewish diaspora. In *The Lonely Londoners* Moses is the "liaison officer" and "a welfare officer" for Caribbean diasporas in London. In *The Legend of King Arthur*, Galahad is the noble knight in King Arthur's court siting in the Siege Perilous and embarks on the journey searching for the holy grail. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Henry Oliver nicknamed by Moses as Sir Galahad embodies Caribbean immigrants' collective search for the holy grail, the sense of belonging in London. Sadly, Henry Oliver has to give up his moral goodness in order to make a living and is forever on an ambiguous journey.

According to Sam Selvon, racial hybridity in London is postanthropocentric, i.e., materialistic and physical but never emotional and spiritual. *The Lonely Londoners* has a carnivalistic beginning, climax but a hellish ending, "As if a forlorn shadow of doom fall on all the spades in the country" (Selvon 139). At the end of the novel, the third person narrator's reflections summarize the living situation of Caribbean black male immigrants "...lord Galahad say when the sweetness of summer get in him he say he would never leave the old Brit'n as long as he live and Moses sigh a long sigh like a man who live life and see nothing at all in it and who frighten as the years go by wondering what it is all about" (Selvon 101-102).

Contrary to Selvon's disillusionment of racial hybridity, BBC television documentary series entitled "Windrush" celebrated Caribbean immigration and Caribbean immigrants' integration into British society in 1998. Responding to BBC special program, Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips published a book named *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (1998). They tell an optimistic story of change against all odds, in the course of which people and

customs with roots in former colonies have become integral parts of a reconstituted, postcolonial British society, a society in which compounds like "Caribbean British" or "Black British" are no longer considered oxymoronic. The Empire Windrush, Mike and Trevor Phillips suggest, is an apt symbol to mark the beginning of this gradual and ultimately unstoppable process of ethnic and cultural pluralization (Frank 290).

BBC special program and the book by Mike and Trevor Phillips stand for the "centripetal" force of a nation's official language. They aim to create a rosy picture of British racial hybridity and multiculturalism by exaggerating the effectiveness of immigrants' social integration. As Selvon has stated, in order to make a living Caribbean boys have to "live up to the films and stories they [the English white] hear about black people living primitive in the jungles of the world..." (Selvon 100) and satisfy the fetish of British colonial ideology. In *The Lonely Londoners* there are two modes of temporal narrative structure, one is seasonal (summer and winter) and the other one is of the division between day and night. Summer night is the time for Caribbean boys to fulfill their wish of racial hybridity by having sex with British white women in London parks. Winter is their season of starvation due to unemployment. During summer Caribbean boys work as cheap laborers in factories in the daytime and they are sexual preys at night. They want to be integrated into British society but turn out to be the embodiment of white English women's sexual fantasy.

Zadie Smith's millennium novel *White Teeth* (2000) continues to challenge the propagandized idea of British racial and cultural hybridity. According to Zadie Smith, racism in Britain has changed its strategy from stereotyping to "genetic control." Both strategies are postanthropocentric due to their dehumanizing nature. In *White Teeth* British Jewish genetic scientist Marcus assimilate human tumor to cultural tumor and affirms that "You eliminate the random, you rule the world" (Smith 341). According to Marcus "the random" not only refers to the biological oncogene but also metaphorically refers to alien cultural elements. The elimination of "the random," the cultural oncogene, means British cultural purification or "Englishifying" the cultural DNA of the colored immigrants. Marcus's future mouse project emerges from "neo-fascist tabloid fantasies-mindless human clones, genetic policing of sexual and racial characteristics mutated diseases, etc" (Smith 419). Ironically the master-mind behind Marcus's project used to be a Nazi doctor who conducted gruesome and horrific medical experiments on prisoners. Smith has depicted a satirical picture in which Jewish scientist and former Nazi doctor cooperate to carry out genetic experiments. Marcus's genetic experiments and his

wife Joyce's cross-pollination practice in horticulture can be regarded as metaphors for the containment of racial and cultural hybridity.

In *The Lonely Londoners* and *White Teeth* labor, sex and tumor are racialized, objectified and postanthropocentrically represented in liminal spaces such as factories, summer night parks and Marcus's gene laboratory. In *White Teeth,* Samad, the middle-aged Bangladeshi immigrant, is the "racial and cultural tumor" that Marcus, the spokesman and practitioner of eugenics politics, intends to get rid of. According to Nikos Papastergiadis, Samad is one of the members of migrant communities who came to prominence "within the cultural and political circles of the dominant society" they "began to argue in favor of new models of representing the process of cultural interaction, and to demonstrate the negative consequences of insisting upon the denial of the emergent forms of cultural identity" (Papastergiadis 3). In *White Teeth,* the negative consequence is Samad's son Millat's terrorist action, the failed assassination of the former Nazi doctor. In *White Teeth* the liminal space for racial hybridity is nothing but "a space for Britain, Britishness, space of Britain, British industrial space cultural space" (Smith 518). Zadie Smith has examined the botanical and biological parameters of racial and cultural hybridity and manifested that the universality of colonial ideology and colonial desire have taken postanthropocentric forms in 21st century Britain.

In Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), the liminal space is the Eva Kay's house where Karim's father conducts meditation and yoga class for affluent Londoners. During the class Karim's father instructs his audience with a kaleidoscopic mixture of "Yin and Yang, cosmic consciousness, Chinese philosophy, and the following of the Way" (Kureishi 27). Karim's father is an Indian Muslim immigrant. Indian Muslim, Chinese and English racial and cultural elements coexist in his class. Karim's father as the Buddha of Suburbia and his English followers are not really dedicated to the dissemination and learning of Oriental culture because the class is nothing but a part of the "Oriental Fever." In the liminal space, as the result of the racial and cultural hybridity Karim's father together with his cultural performances become saleable commodities.

The liminal space of racial hybridity in V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Live* (2001) is "Notting Hill, neutral territory" (Naipaul 72), where the "new and exotic" colored immigrants meet "English people—both high and low, with a taste for social adventure [...] in dimly lit furnished flats in certain socially mixed squares [...]" (72). The bohemian world of Soho can be regarded as the enlarged version of the summer night parks in *The Lonely Londoners*. The colored immigrants only enjoy their nocturnal life in which they become faceless objects of oriental fantasy and people

without identity.

Racial hybridity in the above mentioned contemporary British ethnic novels is a process of objectification, commodification and loaded with sexual, biological and cultural assumptions and prejudices. They are what Étienne Balibar calls "anthropological universals," which are themselves a form of the "superstition" from which the Enlightenment sought to break free (Wolfe xiv). Marcus's future mouse project aims for human evolution through the mastery of both human nature and culture, as Balibar notes, "the paradoxical figure of an evolution which has to extract humanity properly so-called (that is, culture, the technological nature—including the mastery of human nature: eugenics) from animality, but to do so by means which characterized animality (the 'survival of the fittest') or, in other words, by an 'animal' competition between the different degrees of humanity" (Balibar 56). Racial hybridity in the above mentioned British ethnic novels displays a humanism that leans on colonial desire and imperial politics. As a result, cross racial relationship in the form of hybridity is always characterized by the humanity/animality dichotomy, the humanity of the British white versus the animality of the colored immigrants.

"Marking Whiteness" for Cross-Racial Solidarity

While Sam Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith have paid much attention to the unfulfilled ineffective racial and cultural hybridity in post-war Britain, Caryl Phillips emphasizes the importance of cross racial solidarity. In his novels the dehumanized subalterns, both white English women and discriminated blacks, are united together to make a living and to possess their human dignity. In another word, cross racial solidarity consolidate subalterns' humanity. Caryl Phillips wrote a letter to me emphasizing that "without cross-racial solidarity there is no chance to overcome the racism that exists. In fact, the racism that threatens to undermine society as a whole. Especially British and American society."

Juliet Hooker argues that solidarity is necessary to address racial injustice, but racial injustice prevents the development of solidarity between Black and White Americans (Hooker 5). According to Hooker "It is precisely the views of the majority who do not see themselves as having benefited from White supremacy that must change if the political will to achieve racial justice is to be developed" (114). Greta Fowler Snyder comments that "'Marking' is a social process whereby certain groups are made more visible than others, often in negative ways" (Snyder 311) and "marking whiteness" is an effective way to develop cross racial solidarity and achieve racial justice. Snyder contends that "By making the racial polity visible, and

by making contemporary Whiteness's place in the racial polity undeniable, marking Whiteness may shift the White lifeworld—including understandings of self and community—in ways that enable cross racial solidarity" (299).

Compared with Snyder's notion of "marking whiteness" which mainly aims at white racism, Caryl Phillips' marking of whiteness includes not only the description and criticism of white supremacy, average whites' practice of power and their complicity in racial oppression but also patriarchy and sexism in white societies associated with racism and colonialism. Making people conscious of their Whiteness is a step toward cross-racial solidarity. Phillips intends to encourage the typical whites especially white males to see themselves not only as raced, but also as oppressors in hierarchical racial and gender polities that distort relationships.

The critical point of cross racial solidarity is a situation within which the humanity/animality dichotomy or the racial boundary between the white "self" and the colored "other" vanishes due to practical reasons. Racial crossing takes place of the principle of "survival of the fittest," or on the other hand, racial crossing is the result of abiding by the principle because in certain cases only racial crossing can guarantee the collective survival of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Damon Ieremia Salesa argues that British Empire "were filled with black and yellow 'perils', all kinds of fears and controversies, as well as a kaleidoscope of fixations, books, studies and discussions that were driven by one or another kind of racial crossing" (Salesa 1). According to Salesa, cross racial narrative is often characterized by the description of racial exoticism and the fear of miscegenation.

In *Cambridge* (1991), *A Distant Shore* (2003) and *The Lost Child* (2015), Caryl Phillips' cross racial narratives focus on the problems of racial exoticism and the fear of miscegenation. But as far as the portrayal of major characters are concerned, Phillips' concern is mainly on the necessity of the development of cross racial solidarity under contexts of racial exoticism and the fear of miscegenation. In Phillips' upper mentioned novels British white women's anti-patriarchal struggle goes hand in hand with black males' anti-colonial resistance. In the struggle and the resistance against patriarchy and colonialism, white English women and the African blacks (black males in most cases) are in alliance with each other to develop cross racial solidarity.

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis regard "racisms as modes of exclusion, inferiorization, subordination and exploitation that present specific and different characters in different social and historical contexts. Extreme examples are those of extermination, segregation and slavery" (Anthias 2). In Caryl Phillips' novels white English women subjugated to patriarchal sexism can be identified as the

colonized and racialized "other," as Edward Said contends "'the colonized' has since expanded considerably to include women, subjugated and oppressed classes, national minorities, and even marginalized or incorporated academic subspecialties" (Said 207).

According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the colonized women, black women to be specific, are in a combined course of anti-patriarchal struggles and anti-colonial resistance. One crucial point in Spivak's feminist theoretical framework is her exploration of the links between (neo-) racism-capitalism/colonialism and patriarchy that combined together contribute to women's marginalisation. Women as the subaltern are under a double shadow of colonialism and patriarchy (Spivak 287). In Phillips' novels, white English woman characters are directly or indirectly involved in the course of British colonization. They resemble the colonized black women who are forced into voicelessness and dehumanized by patriarchy, colonialism or racism. The liminal space, or contact zone for the development of cross racial solidarity is either in British colonial plantation, or in an English city. The dehumanizing forces of patriarchy, colonialism and racism draw white English females and the African blacks together. They are on an equal footing. Material needs and mutual sympathy facilitate the development of their cross racial solidarity.

In *Cambridge*, the word "Father" with the first letter capitalized has three meanings full of patriarchal and colonial implications. "Father" is Emily Cartwright's biological father who is an English absentee landlord of a plantation in West Indies. "Father" also refers to the colonial England and the English priests in West Indies plantations. "Father" in the novel is not a human but a synonym of British colonial institution in West Indies.

Father's arrangement for Emily's future is "The rude mechanics of horse-trading" (Phillips 4). Emily, a white English woman at the age of thirty, has to marry Thomas Lockwood a fifty-year-old widower with three children after her return from the inspection journey to her father's West Indian estate. Emily's father has lost a large amount of money to Thomas Lockwood in gambling. Emily's arranged marriage to Thomas Lockwood is the way in which her father pays his gambling debts. Emily thus becomes an expendable commodity, deserted and sold into "slavery" by her father. Pramod K. Nayar argues that when humans are speciesist and treat non-human life forms as expendable, then some species of humans are also — as history shows in the form of genocides, racism and slavery— excluded from the category of the human to be then expendable (Nayar 14).

According to Nayar, there is an "intrinsic link between a speciesist humanism

and discriminatory practices such as racism or sexism" (14). *Cambridge* is full of descriptions of speciesist humanism. As a victim of colonialism and patriarchal sexism carried out by her father and her white English lover Mr. Brown, Emily sympathizes with Cambridge who is the victim of racism and slavery. After the stillbirth of her baby with Mr. Brown, Emily is deserted by Mr. Brown and decides to live with her black servant Stella in the West Indies. Going native is Emily's way of developing cross racial solidarity in a hostile environment and her only hope to survive. Cambridge's consideration of Emily's personal safety and Emily's sympathy toward Cambridge lay a foundation for the development of their cross racial solidarity which is finally materialized in Emily's union with Stella after Cambridge is persecuted to death by Mr. Brown.

In *A Distant Shore* Dorothy, the white English female protagonist, a retired music teacher moves to the new development of Stoneleigh in a village named Weston to recover from a bad thirty-year marriage, an affair gone sour and depression due to the untimely death of her young sister. Dorothy is constantly under the supervision and discipline of English men, her father, her husband, her school master, her new colleague and even her psychiatrist. Maltreated, used and deserted by English men, Dorothy is in urgent need of companionship. Solomon, a black African male refugee, who has escaped from Sierra Leone civil war and works as a watchman in Stoneleigh is the only person who offers solace to Dorothy. Solomon and Dorothy gradually develop a cross-racial solidarity in Stoneleigh to be temporarily free from English patriarchal oppression and racial violence. Solomon is discriminated and killed by a group of white British young men. The death of Solomon leads to the subsequent "madness" of Dorothy. Diagnosed without scientific reason or proof by Williams, the psychiatrist, as a schizophrenic Dorothy is hospitalized.

Based on the story of Manisha, a homeless mentally-ill woman who met with an untimely end in a mental hospital, Kimberly Lacroix and Sabah Siddiqui questions "the scientific-medical paradigm, the state legal system, and society that allows a vulnerable woman to vanish without a trace" (Lacroix 68). They argue that cultures of violence exist in apparently benevolent institutions and the complicit relationship between science and the law in violence takes place in the name of helping the helpless (68). Resembling Manisha, Dorothy is also a victim of benevolent institutions such as school, psychiatric clinic and mental hospital. In *A Distant Shore,* Caryl Phillips makes further efforts to reveal the patriarchal and sexist nature of these "benevolent institutions."

Solomon and Dorothy's emotional engagement is the precondition for the

development of their cross racial solidarity, even though there are huge racial and age discrepancies between Solomon, a black African refugee in his thirties and Dorothy, a white English woman at the age of 55. Solomon is Dorothy's loyal listener and volunteered driver who accompanies Dorothy to her psychiatrist regularly. In Dorothy's eyes Solomon is "a proper gentleman. In fact, one of the first gentlemen that I'd ever met, with his smart driving gloves" (Phillips, *Distant* 64). Solomon's death has a devastating effect on Dorothy. Dorothy reflects "Without Solomon, Weston suddenly seems like a strange and empty village, and it feels as though a whole lifetime has passed since the day that Solomon came calling" (55). Solomon's death has worsened Dorothy's depression that could have been relieved by Solomon's constant and contented company.

According to Dorothy, Solomon is full of human dignity while the native English are lazy and animalistic. Meanwhile, Solomon views Dorothy as his soul mate in England. Caryl Phillips vividly describes Dorothy's emotional engagement with Solomon: "His every movement would appear to be an attempt to erase a past that he no longer wishes to be reminded of. She looks at him and she understands" (268). Unfortunately, Solomon does not have the opportunity to tell Dorothy his tragic life experience in Sierra Leone due to his murder. Dorothy and Solomon have told their personal stories not to each other but to the readers. Readers have observed their urge for mutual comfort which could have been achieved if Solomon were still alive. Reading thus becomes a testimony for the budding but unfulfilled cross racial solidarity between Dorothy and Solomon.

In *The Lost Child* by juxtaposing the tragic experiences of the black Congo woman who is depicted as the mother of Heathcliff, the dark-skinned protagonist in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and the white Oxford University female graduate Monica Johnson, Caryl Phillips has marked whiteness from the perspectives of colonialism, racism, patriarchal sexism simultaneously. The black Congo woman's maltreatment by English slave ship captain and Mr. Earnshaw and Monica Johnson's maltreatment by her father and her white English boyfriend are narrated side by side. As far as their tragic fates are concerned there is no difference between the black Congo woman who is deserted and dies on Liverpool street in late 18th century and Monica Johnson who is deserted, sent into mental hospital and dies in mid-twentieth-century England.

For Caryl Phillips, "marking whiteness" is multifunctional and transhistorical. Phillips has highlighted the boomerang effect of British colonialism and slave trade in contemporary English society. In his novels, there are multiple sites of racial and gender oppression and the victims of the inhumane and degrading treatments carried

out by the white males include not only African blacks but also white English females. Phillips has constructed a fictional world in which colonialism, racism and patriarchal sexism are in a symbiotic and interactive relationship. In his novels, hostile living situations enable black subalterns, either as black slaves or as black migrants and white subalterns, often depicted as marginalized white English females go over the racial border and establish a collaborative relationship in which racial difference and racism give way to multiracial experience with cross racial solidarity as its basis.

Cross Racial Empathy between Jews and African Black Diasporas

In "African Modes of Self-Writing," Achille Mbembe has summarized the black problems caused by "historical degradation: slavery, colonization, and apartheid" (Mbembe 241). Mbembe argues that as a result of the historical degradation the blacks are plunged "not only into humiliation, debasement, and nameless suffering but also into a zone of nonbeing and social death characterized by the denial of dignity, heavy psychic damage, and the torment of exile" (241-242). Mbembe suggests that "the model of Jewish reflection on the phenomena of suffering, contingency, and finitude" (242) can be borrowed to address the problems of black African diasporas.

In *The Nature of Blood*, Phillips adopts Mbembe's strategy by collaging histories and stories of Jewish persecution with his story of Othello to weave "connections between the experiences of loss suffered by Jews and Blacks at the hands of Janus-like persecutors" (Guignery 124). *The Nature of Blood* reveals Phillips' reflections on cross racial empathy and alliance between white Jews and black African diasporas.

Empathy signifies a strong element of co-feeling, identification, or what the psychologist C. Daniel Batson calls "perspective-taking"—imaginatively experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and situation of another. Batson prefers empathy ("perspective-taking") over sympathy, which he fears "has become tinged with a paternalistic, moralistic cast" (Batson 87). Opposite to Batson's positive definition of empathy, Kimberly Chabot Davis has pointed out that "Cultural critics often argue that crying over the plight of disempowered people does little to challenge the status quo, since the emotional catharsis afforded by literature and film all too often results in political inertia and complacency" (Davis 6). As Davis has mentioned empathetic feeling and humanizing emotions have been denied their efficacy as tools in the fight for social justice. Elizabeth V. Spelman voices that sympathy and compassion are regularly equated with condescending form of pity, a "selfish and

cruel wallowing in the misfortunes of others" (Spelman 65).

Being the offspring of Windrush generation and as a descendant of black African diasporas Caryl Phillips has no racial, cultural or political advantages over Jews and other black African diasporas. Lacking condescending effect, Phillips' narrative empathy shows more emotional and moral engagement with the racially discriminated and persecuted, such as white Jews and black African diasporas.

On one hand Phillips shows his empathy for both white Jews and the "successful" African diaspora Othello, on the other hand he warns the white Israeli Jews not to forget Jewish holocaust and not to turn themselves into racists by discriminating black African Jews in their newly established country. The racial discrimination and persecution of black African Jews carried out by white Jews in Israel is a form of new racism, a moral crime similar to the anti-Semitic crimes in history. Mutual empathy between the Jews and the blacks is the precondition for the elimination of racial discrimination and persecution and the key to develop cross racial solidarity.

Caryl Phillips weaves the stories from *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947), the history of the blood libel trial in Venice in 1480 and his prequel to William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1622) to construct three seemingly irrelevant narratives, the narrative of Eva Stern, a Jewish girl whose prototype is Anne Frank, the narrative of Othello and the narrative of Eva Stern's uncle Stephen Stern. The third person narrative of the history of the blood libel is embedded within the two first person narratives of Eva Stern and Stephen Stern. Othello's encounter with an old Jewish man at the Venetian Jewish ghetto and Stephen Stern's encounter with an black African girl on the Israeli street introduce readers to the idea that the fate of Jews and the fate of the blacks are intertwined.

Besides the upper mentioned narratives there is a covert narrative in which Phillips links *Merchant of Venice* (1600) and *Othello* together. In *The Nature of Blood,* the narrative of 1480 blood libel trial and the description of Othello's encounter with Venetian Jews implicitly refer to William Shakespeare's reflections on racial discrimination and persecution in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*.

In *The Merchant of Venice* Portia's mentioning of one drop of Christian blood is the turning point of the trial. Caryl Phillips infers that Shylock's fear of "one drop of Christian blood" in *The Merchant of Venice* comes from the shared Venetian knowledge of the 1480 blood libel trial. Shylock certainly knows the consequences of the blood libel trial and that is the reason for his silence and complete surrender in the Venetian court.

In *The Nature of Blood*, Caryl Phillips attributes Othello's tragedy to his

failure in associating the fate of Venetian Jews with his own fate. Othello does not even identify his fate with the fate of Venetian African black gondoliers who share similar experiences with him. The black gondoliers are the African diasporas in Renaissance Venice. Kate Lowe argues that "There are probably hundreds of notarial records mentioning or relating to black slaves in Venice [...]. Venice could also be an African's second, third, or fourth destination of forced diaspora" (Lowe 419-420). In *The Nature of Blood* Othello reflects upon his personal history of diaspora but he prefers to forget his humiliating slave experience and enjoy his high social status as a Venetian general.

Othello suffers misidentification syndrome characterized by overemphasizing his present identity as a Venetian general and erasing his identity as an African black diaspora as he meditates: "I, a man born of royal blood, a mighty warrior, yet a man who, at one time, could view himself only as a poor slave, had been summoned to serve this state; to lead the Venetian army; to stand at the very centre of the empire" (Phillips, *Nature* 107). In *The European Tribe* (2000) Caryl Phillips defines Othello as the insupportable loss-leader created by Venice, "the most famous of all the black European success. But the pressure placed upon him rendered his life a tragedy" (Phillips, *European* 46). The pressure mentioned by Phillips is not only the Turkish military pressure on Cyprus that Othello has to deal with but also his identity-related pressure.

Othello sympathizes with Venetian Jews who live in poverty stricken ghetto and expresses his surprise at the harsh reality of Jewish life: "My exploration had unnerved me somewhat, for it was well known that the Jews were fortunate in their wealth. Why they should choose to live in this manner defeated my understanding" (Phillips, *Nature* 130). Ghetto refers not only to the enclosed living space of the Venetian Jews but also to the open space of the city of Venice in which Jews and blacks including Othello himself are under the supervision and containment of white Venetian Christians.

Even though Othello realizes that he is supervised as his monologue shows "Upon my arrival in fair Venice, a retired merchant—a man somewhat advanced in years, but with considerable experience of trading in different parts of the world—was appointed by the doge and his senators to watch over me" (107), he prefers to wear a "white mask" in order to be integrated with the white Venetian Christians and win the hand of Desdemona.

Racial threats such as Shylock's revenge on Antonio and Othello's marriage to Desdemona which is the source of Venetian fear of miscegenation will certainly be dealt with by white Venetian Christians. Othello's military value to Venice is the

precondition for the interracial marriage between Othello and Desdemona. Othello's military value vanishes after his occupation of Cyprus. As a result of which, Othello and Desdemona are severely punished.

In Phillips' fictional world of *The Nature of Blood* Othello's story takes place after the blood libel trial in 1480 and the story of *The Merchant of Venice*. Othello should have learned from the Jewish persecution history and paid attention to his African countrymen sold into slavery in Venice. Phillips has revealed the reasons for Othello's misidentification syndrome which explains Othello's paranoid schizophrenia and his murder of Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello.*

It is the Islamic-Christian conflicts that bind the fate of Venetian Jews and the fate of Othello together and Venice is the place where Jews and blacks suffer similar if not the same racial persecutions. In *The Nature of Blood* the conflicts include the first Turkish war from 1463 to 1479 and the fourth Ottoman–Venetian war between 1570 and 1573. The first Turkish war is the background of the 1480 blood libel trial and the fourth Ottoman–Venetian war is the background of the story of Shylock and Othello. Jewish persecution and the vicissitude of Othello's life are the result of the political economic crisis caused by the wars. Under the context of Islamic-Christian conflicts Jews were executed in 1480 blood libel trial, Shylock and Othello have been sacrificed for the political economic interests of the Venetian empire.

In most part of *The Nature of Blood* Caryl Phillips has demonstrated the importance and necessity of cross racial empathy and alliance between white Jews and African blacks in Venice but in the last section of the novel Phillips diverts readers' attention from Jewish persecutions in 15th and 16th century Venice, the Jewish Holocaust during the second world war and the racial persecution of Othello to the discrimination of black African Jews in the newly established Israeli state.

As one of the founders of Israeli state Stephen Stern witnesses not only Jewish persecution and diaspora in Nazi Germany and Cyprus refugee camp but also racial discrimination against black African Jews who are rescued by Israeli soldiers from Ethiopia. Stephen Stern's first person narration reveals the oxymoronic nature of white Israeli Jews, i.e. the once persecuted people in history become modern day persecutors.

Portraying the character of Malka, a black Ethiopian Jew who has been forced to emigrate to Israel, Caryl Phillips challenges the official report of Operation Solomon, the officially eulogized Beta Israel's salvation and Ethiopian Jews' exodus to Israel in 1991. Stephen Spector wrote the news story entitled "Operation Solomon The Daring Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews" and expanded it into a book with the same title.

In *Operation Solomon: The Daring Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews* (2005), Stephen Spector argues that Ethiopian black Jews' diaspora to Israel is to answer the call of God as he writes "an Ethiopian qes (Jewish priest) named Adane told me that his people had left for Israel for a simple and compelling reason: God had told them to. Hearing God's call, they quite suddenly had abandoned their villages and their homes, leaving their crops unharvested" (Spector xiii).

In *The Nature of Blood* Malka does not mention the God's call documented by Stephen Spector. According to Malka's first person narration, Ethiopian black Jews are attracted by lights in the desert, herded together and transported to Israel. It is a forced diaspora organized by Israeli government. Black African Jews have been uprooted from their families, religious and cultural traditions. Young black African Jews represented by Malka, her sister and brother are told to believe the religious significance of the journey. The forced diaspora is described by white Israelis as "going home" and "We (the African black Jews) thanked God for returning us to Zion" (Phillips, *Nature* 201).

Malka asks a question on arrival at Israeli airport "My sister and I wondered, in this new land, would our babies be born white?" (201) It is a question about racial discrimination. Within the context of the black Ethiopian Jews' diaspora Malka reflects "Gently plucked me from one century, helped me to cross two more, and then placed me in this time. Here. Now. But why? What are you trying to prove?" (208) Malka's life experience in Israel proves that white Jews' racial discrimination against black African Jews does exist. Black African Jews are confronted with problems such as lack of job, poor living situation, segregation, linguistic, religious and cultural barriers. According to Malka's description they are transported to Israel to be singers and dancers for a folklore group for tourists, nurses and soldiers but many African black Jewish women become prostitutes due to lack of jobs.

The night club encounter between Eva Stern's uncle Stephen Stern who is at the age of 75 and Malka who is at the age of 25 is transhistorical, cross-age and cross racial. The description of the intimate relationship between Stephen Stern and Malka serves as a palimpsest upon which Stephen Stern's memory of Nazi holocaust and Jewish persecution in 1940s are weaved with the harsh reality of racial discrimination against black African Jews such as Malka. Malka's case reveals a paradoxical truth i.e. the once persecuted white Jews change into persecutors of black African Jews in Israel, the Zion for Jews and the forced migration of black African Jews to Israel resembles the black slave trade to a certain degree.

In *The Nature of Blood* Othello sympathizes with Venetian Jews but Stephen Stern does not sympathize with Malka and the poverty stricken black African Jews.

Malka's interior monologue about the forced diasporan experience of her people and Stephen Stern's nostalgic recalling of his family, especially his two nieces are in a parallel relationship. Maybe at the age of 75 lonely and bereaved of family members Stephen Stern has suffered and witnessed so many tragedies and disasters. As a result he has lost the capability of empathy. *The Nature of Blood* ends with Malka's return to the black African Jewish ghetto in Israel and Stephen Stern's reminiscence of his nieces playing in their family garden before Jewish holocaust took place in Germany. Caryl Phillips presents readers layers of a palimpsest of Jewish persecution and its unempathetic repetition in Israel.

Phillips has demonstrated the interaction mode of the tripartite relations among himself, his white Jewish and black African characters. In his omnipotent narration Phillips has expressed his empathy to both races, the white Jews and the black African diasporas. But as Phillips has narrated in *The Nature of Blood* there is no effective empathetic communication between the white Jews and the black African diasporas including the black African Jews. According to Phillips cross racial empathy is the precondition for the development of cross racial solidarity. The interactions between the white Jews and the black African Jews depicted in *The Nature of Blood* provide a thought provoking context for readers to ponder upon the necessity of cross racial solidarity and the efficacy of empathetic feeling and humanizing emotions as tools in the fight for social justice.

Drawing on research in Leeds and Bradford, Deborah Phillips, Cathy Davis and Peter Ratcliffe argues that "ethnic segregation is at the centre of debates about 'race' and 'difference', integration and citizenship in multicultural Britain" (Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe 217). According to their argument, ethnic segregation is one of the reasons for terrorist attacks in Britain. "The London bombings in July 2005 coupled with the head of the Commission for Racial Equality's (Phillips T 2005) assertion that Britain seems to be 'sleepwalking' its way towards American-style ghettos; all have prompted a racialized political discourse on urban segregation through which minority ethnic clustering, but not white clustering, has been constructed as problematic and a hindrance to 'community cohesion'" (Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe 217).

In *Color Me English* (2011) Caryl Phillips also mentions the London suicide bombing on 7 July 2005. He considers it as a consequence of racial discrimination and segregation in the UK. The description of racial persecution of his thirteen-year-old classmate, Ali who is a colored immigrant from Pakistan conducted by white British boys in Leeds juxtapose with Phillips' reflections on London suicide bombing. Phillips argues that British racism, especially British anti Muslim hostility

has driven four young British men to "reach out and embrace an alternative place by seizing upon an extreme form of Islamic political identity and demonstrating its potency with tragic consequences" (Phillips, *Color* 13).

In *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960) George Lamming describes his dilemmatic attitude toward migration to Britain. Lamming confesses that he suffers the pains of leaving and the sense of shame about the betrayal of roots, he also expresses his yearning for migration, racial and cultural hybridization in the belly of the beast. Lamming's anti-colonial desire for migration, racial and cultural hybridity is in sharp contrast with the postanthropocentric reality of British multiculturalism. In contemporary British ethnic novels racial and cultural hybridity takes place in dehumanizing liminal spaces where colored immigrants and their descendants are treated in a sub-human or a non-human fashion.

In Caryl Phillips' novels "whiteness" has been marked to reveal and criticize the ideology of colonialism and patriarchal sexism held by British white males. In Phillips' novels cross racial solidarity among subalterns, the white British females and the black males, is an undeniable and unavoidable social reality the negation and the sanction of which leads to tragedies. Phillips' call for cross racial solidarity is not restricted to the relationship between the British white and the African black. Rewriting history and classic literature works, Phillips links the fate of Jews and the fate of black African diasporas, including the black African Jews together to warn against moral fatigue, the occurrence of new racism and the recurrence of the history of racial persecution to call for cross racial empathy and the establishment of cross racial affective communities.

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Together-in-Diaspora: Narratives of Spatial Identities in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons*

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Abstract Contemporary Anglophone Arab novelists seek to negotiate traumatic issues related to diaspora, adaptation, fragmentation, and identity transformation. They attempt to reveal how dislocated diasporic identities are weighed down by ambivalent wounded consciousnesses. This paper sets out to negotiate the issue of dislocation narratives of diaspora in Leila Aboulela's *Bird Summons* (2019), its representation, and its impact on transformation and self-discovery. It also reveals narrative experimentations and techniques as a way of artistic representation to expose the crisis and conflict of individual choice and existentialism. Aboulela uses a spatial metaphorical journey to open a space of spiritual freedom of the self through traveling and crossing boundaries to a religious space. In this regard, the protagonists of the novel travel to achieve a transformation within the consciousness of the individual intellectually and spiritually. It is in this sense that the diasporic characters of *Bird Summons* have finally eloped from an elusive matrix of inside and outside, being and becoming, social dissonance, and ambiguities of identity.

Keywords Narrative; diaspora; dislocation; identity; transformation; self-discovery

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In contemporary fiction, narrative is an act of communication, a human phenomenon, a way of collaboration, a style of expression, and a representation of events. It exists through individual interactions and continuous communicative processes. Roland Barthes states:

> Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's*Saint Ursula),* stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. Ali classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Roland 3)

Barthes' quote stresses on the universality of narrative and its ability in knowing, absorbing and expressing knowledge. This knowledge is built of various dimensions of spaces, inhabited by characters who have interior and exterior worlds. In this perspective, narrative discourse is a forking-path world, it encapsulates endless multiple meanings and contexts, it is not fixed and closed but transforms and changes as it is interpreted and reinterpreted in multiple and varied contexts. Moreover, comprehending the narrative discourse must include interior and exterior textual apparatus and parameters that inhere ontological, existential, political, social, and cultural tools that shape the fictional characters and the writer's text. Thus, the narrative discourse carries many textual and contextual layers and dimensions to excavate the inner spaces that are latent in the literary work. The communicative and interactive dimensions of narratives not only represent but also create and shape new existential and social practices relevant to the understanding of human existence and experiences. Thus, narrative discourse is a human practice of lived and shared experiences among individuals and between them and it is not only a communicative tool but also fundamental to humanitarian communications. In this vein, narrative in contemporary fiction has started negotiating new contexts related to current life issues, particularly in diaspora and migration studies. It has structurally and contextually adopted new parameters and apparatus to be in tandem with the fragmentation of reality, spatial dislocation, contemporary dilemmas, and traumas of its age. The representation of narratives of diaspora moves across

boundaries and spatial deixis in an atemporal matrix style; it overlaps, loops, mixes, and interlaces in a heterogeneous dislocated structure. Moreover, the narrative of diaspora is dynamic and movable; it opens up a space between different cultural, social, and ethnic groupings. All diasporic identities are not pure and rooted, they are multiple, alienated, dislocated, extraordinarily differentiated, and have resulted from the experiences of diasporic migrations. Wendy Walter believes that "the notion of diaspora can represent multiple, plurilocal, constructed locations of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness, and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home" (Wendy xvi).

The concept of diasporic narrative has been accumulated over time and ornamented by containing contemporary perspectives related to current issues of humanitarian contexts, individualistic dilemmas, traumatic thoughts, and feelings. It is a dialectical issue, both in literary debatable patterns and in the ambivalences and problems, the migrants face in their everyday life. The theory of diasporic narrative is argumentative and multifaceted, it oscillates between exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, belonging and rejection, 'I' and the other. In this vein, Homi Bhabhi demonstrates that "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Homi 1). It further stretches to include identities within the same individual, ways in which it transits and transforms according to circumstances, interactions, and situations, and in which hybrid identities are existed, adapted, assimilated, changed, or repressed through cultural and social boundaries and communications.

The diasporic identities are usually conflicted and heterogeneous; they mutate and change through transition, traveling between multiple spiral spaces and experiencing transformational change. In this vein, diasporic identity has become ever more fluid, hybrid, fractured, and arisen from diasporic migrations. Stuart Hall argues that "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall& Paul 4). This suggests that diasporic identity is fragmentary and subaltern; it runs through diverse social and cultural mutations to represent itself, always in a process of transformation and self-discovery. Hall believes that "they undergo constant transformation" (Hall 225). From this perspective, the dominated and marginalized identities try to find a stable space irrespective of traumatic experiences, deforms and, authority. They try to open a tunnel of freedom and resist being silenced, protest against the stereotypical images that are latent in their injured cons consciousnesse

diasporic identities strive to constitute a space of visibility, recognition, and identification to speak up in a space of interpersonal reality. Thus, they enter an anxious space of self-discovery, in which they try to forget the conflicts, lacerations, and crises of the images and memories of the past. Here, there is an openness to transform and change or to reconstitute autonomy on a new culture and basis. At this point, the diasporic identity crosses the heterogeneity of lived identifications, existential quandaries, and borders, crosses memories and spaces of in-betweenness.

In recent years, contemporary literature has experienced tremendous and influential transformations and changes in the postmodern era, sequential of which is the commencing of Anglophone Arab diasporic literature. Verily, the writers of this genre have negotiated intersected and interrelated issues and contexts related to society, culture, identity, and individuals have aimed to dig up liminal spaces and dislocated unstable points of identification. Anglophone Arab Diasporic writers have reconnoitered galaxies of synergistic discourses of traumatized identity, false identity, lost identity, self-awareness identity, the border between identity and others, and the quest for identity. In this vein, the narrative discourse of this genre excavates obscured spaces, looped trajectories, and various zones and at the same time how all these overlap, cut across, interact and open up a horizontal and vertical passageway of communicative and dialogical mechanisms.

Indeed, the writers of the Anglophone Arab diaspora de-chronologize the continuum of the narrative discourse and deploy paradoxical deictic devices such as 'there' and 'here', ', I' and 'the other' in their fictional writings. They embrace divergent existential, social, cultural, and political dimensions; they manipulate the text in a spiral and movable way rather than a static and independent texture. The disintegration and deconstruction of the fictional characters and the continuity of narrative discourse allow the writer to merge and pass through disparate spaces, locales, voices, and times. The amalgamation and collage of non-identical images and scenes decode the interior parameters of the text and reveal the exterior contextual apparatus of social, ideological, and dialogical relationships. Furthermore, the representation of Anglophone Arab diaspora writers is structured through crevasses, spatial-temporal dislocations, home, belonging, assimilation, diaspora, and in-betweenness. In this light, Dalal Sarnou opines that "they voice two consciousnesses: home and diaspora, English and Arabic, the past and the present" (Dalal 3). Here, then, a duality, a biofocality, a dislocality, a disorientality and a decentrality of the writer and its textual texture. Majed Aladylah maintains that:

Narrative discourse of Anglophone Arab writers entails divergent social,

> cultural, and political practices, they treat the text as a movable orbit, is not static and it is not self-contained, instead a space of dialogic interactions and a plurality of many styles of discourse. The fragmentation and defamiliarization of their narrative discoowesomeurses permit the writer to move in multiple modes, voices, spaces, and time. (Aladylah 4-5)

In fact, many Arab female writers are voluntary or obligatory dislocated physically, culturally and emotionally. They are on a journey of crossing cultural and social boundaries; they write to expose the impact of displacement and detachment, interrogate conflicted feelings of belonging and struggle towards self-consciousness and self-transformation. Geoffrey P. Nash argues that "a commonality within Anglophone Arab British women's fiction, whatever ideological spin is attached to it, is its frequent inscription of Arab migrant women's marginalization within British society. Soueif, Faqir, and Aboulela center their plots on a displaced Arab woman" (Nash 566). In so doing, they use their fictional narrative discourse to express problematic transitional issues connected to many notions of lived experiences and memories hovering in the realms of their displacement, existence, sense of alienation, and consciousness. Moreover, these writers attempt to have a voice that is heard and recognized, and its location in the formation of assimilated identities. They portray aggregated experiences and memories of dislocated and marginalized groups and the relations of authoritarian and dominant groups to these depicted narratives. In addition, Anglophone Arab writers try to bridge the crevasse between the cultures and open a space of shared humanitarian experiences and coexistence. Yousef Awad holds that:

> A contrapuntal vision, Arab writers try to bridge the gaps between cultures and to leave corridors of dialogue open. Their belief in the potential of open dialogue and its role in preserving harmony are prompted by their contrapuntal perspective shaped by their hyphenated identities. (Awad 18)

One of these voices who live in multi-cultural hybrid society is Leila Aboulela, she is a capricious magician and a protean novelist, a diasporic, and prolific Arab-British writer. Aboulela has written many novels like *The Translator* (1999), *Colored Lights* (2001), *Minaret* (2005), *Lyrics Alley* (2010), *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015), *Elsewhere, Home*, (2018), and *Bird Summons* (2019). She lives in Aberdeen in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Western society, questions the relationship between diaspora, identity, and subjectivity, depicts marginalized voices and tries to raise

conflictual issues related to cultural and social contexts. Aboulela negotiates the matrix of biofocality and difference that results from dialectical arenas including values and conflicting religious and cultural impacts on identities. This matrix revolves around coexistence, religious practices, moderate Islam, debilitating Islamophobia, Muslim communities, accepting the other, mutual understanding, and gender norms. Chris Weedon notes that "identity is made visible and intelligible to others through cultural signs, symbols and practices" (7). Aboulela wants to tell a story about the diasporic ambivalences, dilemmas, and disillusions of her people. She writes in a foreign language from a different country about scattered identities, torn between multiple spaces, and began a voyage of displacement, searching for coexistence, as assimilation and adaptation.

Bird Summons (2019) is a pastiche novel, a massive *tour de force*, a magic portrait of three fictional excavators, who embark on a religious and cultural journey of self-discovery and transformation. *Bird Summons* excavates unexplored panoramic trajectory spaces, skillfully and explicitly portrays and depicts fictional characters who experience a sense of self-discovery and transformational change through transition, travel and in-between multiple spaces and identities. These identities encounter, oscillate, and interact between conflictual feelings of dispersal and fragmentation, exclusiveness and inclusiveness, dislocation and relocation, estrangement, and attachment.

The orbit of *Bird Summons* goes through a diasporic spatial trajectory, and moves in a transformative asymmetrical curved path. Aboulela has defamilarized and deconstructed the linearity of the narrative sequence by using introspective, retrospective, and simultaneous techniques. In addition, she has structured the novel in an experimental manner by employing flashbacks; memories, and juxtaposition of multiple scenes through a spatial and existential journey of three women embarking on a voyage to the grave of Lady Evelyn Cobbold. Aboulela opens spaces of transformation of the inner self and consciousness amid nothingness and loneliness. Spaces that perform a significant role in the formation of identity; aim to reveal the internal memories, feelings, aspirations, and thoughts of individuals, then, the goal is the transcendence and the transmutation of the individual's interior consciousness. Aboulela intends to carve out free space and subjectivity for her fictional characters away from their culture and home in the diaspora. Additionally, *Bird Summons* employs diverse narrative techniques to break the restricted circles of home, society, and individuality. It also tries to unveil the hybrid and transcultural dislocations of portraying characters that have suffered from broken, scattered, and fragmented selves to an aspirational identity.

In this light, *Bird Summons* is a fictional sporadic journey of three different female characters: Iman, Salma, and Moni. They are on a voyage to a place where they are physically, individually, culturally, and emotionally dislocated. All these voyagers have similar existential diasporic dilemmas and pressures, they share the concept of dislocation within the new space, remaking and reforming their identities without erasing their home culture and roots. Moreover, these characters try to immerse themselves in a diasporic space, where they can achieve metamorphosis and self-discovery. Thus, they gradually begin to break the interior silence and restraints of the self and undergo a sense of self-transformation, spiritual peace, and self-realization of their two individual consciousnesses and two spaces. "We need our own space, our own break. Just once in a while" (Aboulela 78).

This exilic novel is like a magic carpet and a movable orbit in which the characters and the events run through shifting scenes and spaces. The migrant characters consciously search for better lives in the social, medical, economical, and existential circumstances and arenas. Their identities are polycentric of diverse icons, experiencing depression, disharmony, fear, homelessness, lost love, and imposed social constraints. These diasporic dislocated characters seek to move from subjugation of women, the authority of power, and social oppressions; they strive for self-conscious identity, stability, and autonomy to reconstruct a new identity in the diaspora. "Each of them was self-conscious, aware of her restored body, how good it felt to be whole, to be upright" (Aboulela 267). Consequently, the fictional portrayed characters act freely without hindrance and dive in the realms of self-representations and self-consciousness, as they are not coerced, suppressed, and dominated by exterior cultural and social impacts.

Bird Summons is narrated through the voices of three women who plan a journey to the Scottish Highlands to visit the grave of Lady Evelyn Cobbold- the first British Muslim lady who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca to honor Lady Evelyn Cobbold, and to educate themselves about the history of Islam in Britain. The novel is divided into seventeen chapters and an author's note, chapter one is narrated in the third person narrative in the past tense, the narrator talks about an Arab Muslim female, her name is Salma from Egypt, who tries to convince Moni and Iman to accompany her to visit Lady Evely Cobbold, because Cobbold

> Was a woman like us, a wife and a grandmother. Worshipped as we worshipped, though she kept her own culture, wore Edwardian fashion, shot deer and left instructions for bagpipes to be played at her funeral. She is the mother of Scottish Islam, and we need her as our role model. (Aboulela 2)

Aboulela asserts that Islamic religion and culture are inseparable, except for small partials of cultural practices, rituals, life serotypes, traditions that differentiate the nations, and cultures. Furthermore, the culture of Islam is tolerant, comprehensive, humanitarian and not discriminatory between races; it accepts the other and does not exclude the various cultures. The Islamic identity is not regional, it is transcendental, and it is inclusive to all cultures, races and languages.

The three travelling companions Salma, Moni, and Iman are immigrant Muslim women in Britain, they are members of the local Arab Speaking Muslim Women's Group, decide their spatial and transitional journey together and alone to Scottish Highlands "we will accomplish our goal and read Fatiha at Lady Evelyn's grave" (Aboulela 14). Moni is from Sudan, gives up her job in banking to care for her son Adam who has severe cerebral palsy without the help of her indifferent husband, and he wants her and Adam to join him in Saudi Arabia. Iman is a refugee from Syria, married many husbands and had given her nothing, her new husband died in the first revolt against Assad at the hands of police forces, wants to be a queen of her own household and to bring her mother from Syria. Salma is from Egypt, is married to a Scottish man and she has started messaging her former fiancé in Egypt. Each of them has a different experience, conflict, and dilemma, but they all share one object which is individual growth of consciousness and self-independence, "a necessity, a grab for freedom from pain" (Aboulela 32).

Moreover, the Egyptian immigrant Salma feels alienated and distanced from her assimilated children, husband, and the British culture "deep down his people would think that she was not really one of them, that she was not British enough" (Aboulela 42). In this regard, Salma feels that although she is married to a Scottish man and her children are Scottish, but she feels rejected and not accepted by his people. This reveals that her identity is erosional and marginalized, and lives in a liminal space. Salma's conflict is the cultural exclusion based on differences of religion, culture, and race "the cultural differences did become a problem for them" (Aboulela 107). Vijay Agnew demonstrates that "cultural differences, or the sense of being an outsider or a foreigner, can make the individual feel alienated and heighten feelings of sadness, nostalgia, and create a longing for home" (Vijay 42). Thus, her identity oscillates between not home and home, assimilation and estrangement, and exclusion and inclusion. Additionally, Salma swings between attachment to her children, and husband and her nostalgia for her home by texting her former lover, and her desire for liberation, and self-realization. "She would then feel that they were his children, and not hers. She was the outsider, the foreign wife,

and they were one unit" (Aboulela 41). In this light, Salma experiences a sense of denial, foreignness, and strangeness, and she is not able to adjust her identity according to her new culture. Thus, Salma's identity is fragmented, and incoherent due to diversification, exclusion, and homogenization. Hall suggests that:

> It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (Hall& Paul 4)

In this light, the diasporic identity is always in a state of changing, restructuring and searching for its own space, "we need our own space" (Aboulela 78).

In the narrative of *Bird Summons*, Iman is a refugee from Syria because of war and the uprising of the Syrian people against Assad. She leaves her country in the hopes of a new and better life and lives comfortably. She is not able to bring her mother to live in Britain, and all the members of her family are scattered in different places. She misses her home, family, and village "she found herself thinking of siblings and her village, the way it changed during the war" (Aboulela 52). Iman suffers from the loss of her identity, homesickness, aimlessness, isolation, and the fear of her well-being in a different culture and country. She does not want to remember the devastating impact of war and the flickering images of her past life to influence her present life.

> War should stay out of here. Shaking windows, wailing women, burnt skin…. Blood that was not menstrual, softness that was damaged flesh, stillness that was not sleep but death. She wishes she could wash her mind of all these things. She breathed in the smell of the garden, touched the flowers. This was the present, and she was here inside it. (Aboulela 69)

Iman is tied for the emotions of nostalgia for her home and her mother, but not for the traumas of war, and the dead past. She needs guidance, a new tunnel of identity, and self-discovery searches for relief from anxiety, sadness, and fear of the future. The traumatic dilemmas of her memories and experiences anger, torture and depress her, and she does not want her individuality, identity, and coherence to fall apart, she tries to comprehend the juice of life, and crosses the boundaries of the culture and

self, and goes through spaces of renewal and change.

> She was in Britain now and there were choices. More choices than watching daytime TV or children's movies. She could do this or that, be this or that. To know, to set herself on the right track, to strive, to achieve. One step at a time. (Aboulela 170)

Salma's diasporic spatial journey provides a transition from traumatic restrictions and sophistications of her presence and being to a space where, fully aware of the freedom of the self, a revival and the emancipation of the individual, " I have changed. I do want to stand on my own feet" (Aboulela 178). Besides, Aboulela insists on the freedom of choice for her character Iman and the capability of taking a decision of wearing or not wearing hijab to cover her head.

> If I'm not dressed for a role, then who am I? She said. If I do not know who I am, then can I know what I want? The hijab was not forced on me against my will, but I was not given a choice to wear it or not, either. (Aboulela 183)

Aboulela is a diasporic voice, stresses on the freedom of choice and existentialism of Arab females in home countries and diaspora, "Lady Evelyn did not wear the Hijab. She did when she went on pilgrimage " (Aboulela 185). She highlights the spiritual essence of religion and the true femininity that covers the human soul. Another point is that Aboulela does not proclaim that hijab is a symbol of unjustness and patriarchal domination over women, it is a personal choice and freedom, depends on the individual spiritual satisfaction.

Bird Summons is a marvelously knitted novel, a diasporic spatial tableau, that juxtaposes and welds ambivalent dislocated trio voices; undertakes a journey to reconstruct their identities. The third in-between voice is Moni, a Sudanese woman, who has a handicapped son, Adam to whom she dedicates her life and refuses her husband, Murtada who is completely indifferent and alienated from his wife and his disabled son to go with him to Saudi Arabia. Moni rejects on the bases that her son will not get a proper medical care he is getting in Britain. "No, says Moni again, I will not leave this country" (Aboulela 281). Moni's disapproval is based upon her attempts to negotiate her selfhood, freedom of choice and existentialism as a human being. "No one in Saudi would give her that" (Aboulela 27). Moni has led a struggle for her rebirth and metamorphosis; she wants to be recognized, feels confused, distracted, stressed and uncomfortable with her identity, keeps on fleeing

from her circumstances and she no longer wants to be ashamed of her disabled son and Adam should not be a burden on her. In effect, Moni decides to get away of her interior imprisoned space and has a sense of change and transformation, "to step away from herself and her problems. To be more than a mother of a disabled child" (Aboulela 261). Moni as a traveler heads for spiritual freedom, guidance, and independence, wants to be herself and self-conscious, "each of them was self-conscious, aware of her restored body, how good it felt to be whole, to be upright. How good it was to have a clear mind and balance, to have a tongue that could talk" (Aboulela 267). Moni, therefore, creates a space of adjustment and reconciliation; she acquires the strength of individuality to face the challenges of her identity's formation to new culture, environment, and society.

Leila Aboulela, an Anglophone novelist, tackles diasporic issues related to identity formation through difference and change. The mechanism of identity is slippery and dynamic and it is constructed according to its social, political, and cultural arenas. In fact, the identity of the trio women is weighed down with perplexed and paradoxical experiences; it strives for breaking the boundaries that have been confined to temporal and spatial spaces incised in their cultures and circumstances. Also, their identities do not act in accordance with the linear sequence of narrative discourse, but they move in a mixed spatial experience of dislocation and movement. Aboulela's protagonists undergo a metaphorical spiritual journey that is not fixed and complete, but a continuous transformation, in which there is no static identity. The trio fictional characters have evolved, understood, transformed themselves, untied the knots of their existence, loosened themselves from rigid and adamant spaces, and transcended any hindrance "but it was the transformation they had all longed for, their burdens slipped away. Iman became a human being, Moni unfurled and straightened. Strength coursed through Salma's body" (Aboulela 200). Thus, their journey is not only to the grave of Lady Evelyn Cobbold, but also into themselves, as they face the challenges of their circumstances, dilemmas, and conflicts, they emerge independent, stronger, and wiser. Hall states that "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 235). The trio individuals are dislocated culturally, physically and geographically. Their dislocation is a multi-layered transformation and discovery: discovering the life of freedom, choice, and metamorphosis, they embark on a journey that could change and transform them into human beings aware of the formation of their new identities in a new space. This internal and external transformation is not only physical but also spiritual, "the women must make their own choices. Away from

the city-with its restrictions, formality and rituals, both religious and secular- the spiritual freedom that the women encounter is vast and beyond control" (Aboulela 287).

In fact, Leila Aboulela has become a prominent novelist in Anglophone Arab literature, in *Bird Summons*; she addresses the predicaments of her trio characters inflicted by dislocation, diaspora, crisis of identity, fragmentation, alienation, and cultural dilemmas. Salma, Moni and Iman suffer in their home countries from stereotypical suppressions and oppressions that weaken their consciousnesses and in the host country from diasporic anxieties, cynicism, discomforts and disillusionments. In their spiritual journey, they emerge self-confident and have a voice to speak and decenter their former sense of being and existence. In analyzing the duality of consciousness and narratives of diaspora and dislocation in *Bird Summons*, it is clear from the outset of the journey that the identities of Salma, Moni and Iman are abound with conflictual paradoxes and double consciousnesses due to personal spiritual weakness, immature and confused knowledge of the self, and uncertainty. As such, they choose an escaping metaphorical journey with its feminist autonomous independent perspectives to reshape and reconstruct their fragmented identities. Their journey that is woven into narrative discourse pulls the reader into a magic realist fictional world of the story, crystalize their shattered psyches, stress, debased selves and subjectivity to keep moving and evolving. Salma, Moni, and Iman carry the spirit of the same conflict - are prototypical enlightened and open-minded, and they experience the difficulty of breaking free from the political, social, religious, and cultural dilemmas in order to be radically self-realized. The ideas of change, self-discovery and transformation are correlated with spiritual freedom. Eventually, they have been transformed through religious referent and context; they possess a new conception of the self that gives them a new space in the humane sense.

Finally, Aboulela is magical, intellectual, and creative, has eliminated the conventional linearity of narrative in *Bird Summons* by juxtaposing diverse spaces that dismantle the center. She peppers her narrative with a cocktail of multiple tenses narrated simultaneously "her screams and his cries of distress. I am sorry. I am sorry, Adam. She was the responsible adult and he was a child in her care" (Aboulela 219). This dislocation in narrative has undoubtedly destabilized the succession of events and the mobility of time. Consequently, Aboulela has laced the narrative with spatial metaphors that disorganize the trajectory of narrative discourse to serve the demands of her characters in rejecting the stable narrative. Salma, Moni and Iman try to carve out a space for their freedom and change in adapting the horizontal

evolution of their consciousnesses. In this particular sense, Aboulela incorporates a metaphorical journey to create a transformation within the consciousness of the individual intellectually and spiritually. It is in this sense that the diasporic characters of *Bird Summons* have finally eloped from elusive matrix of inside and outside, being and becoming, social dissonance, and ambiguities of identity. At the end of their voyage, the trio characters are freed from the restrictions of social, religious, and cultural conventions. They have made sense of themselves and the world around them; they have adapted new spaces of identity, self-understanding, and self-reconciliation and opened a new personal space of identification, spiritual transmutation, and metamorphosis.

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Metanarrative in Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*: A Psychoanalytic Reading

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Abstract This paper aims to explore the metanarrative elements in Philippa Pearce's classic children's novel Tom's Midnight Garden and how the story is analyzed from a psychoanalytic point of view. Fantasy is an important feature of children's stories and many texts in children's literature use fantasy to create an archaic realm for their setting. Tom's Midnight Garden is a time-slip narrative that blends both fantasy and reality. The novel talks about an unusual relationship between two individuals, Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew (Hatty) who are lonely but yearn for companionship in the modern world. The kind of dream telepathy that transpires between Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew lead to their strong connection not of the real world, but of their fantasy. The plot is re-visioned as a story narrated to a child at three levels: realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic. These features render the story a metanarrative pattern, that is, a story within the story.

Keywords Philippa Pearce; Tom's Midnight Garden; Metanarrative; children's literature; psychoanalytic theory

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Introduction

Storytelling is an important aspect of the inclusive development of children as it

enhances brain development and imagination, matures language and emotions, and strengthens relationships. In children's literature, narrative strategies are important in conveying instruction and delight for readers. *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) is considered as a classic text in British post-war children's fiction, as the very theme of childhood is an important element of this text. The novel blends both fantasy and reality in a fascinating way as it is uniquely featured in children's literature. Creating a story based on fantasy and making it appealing for readers is a challenging task for any author. Philippa Pearce (1920-2006) was successful in making this novel interesting for all types of readers, irrespective of age barriers. Roni Natov (2009), Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin (2009) suggest that Pearce uses fantasy to comment metaphorically on reality. For Natov, the story advocates healing (223), and for Rustin, it signifies the deeper truth of fantasy that makes possible loving communication between children and adults (226).

Cosslett (2002) studies that, *Tom's Midnight Garden* tells the tale of a boy named Tom in the modern post-war British society, entering the Victorian era in a time slip manner, while staying with his aunt and uncle in a city apartment that was a country house in the past (Cosslett 16). Tom develops a special bond with the place due to the presence of the midnight garden that he discovers due to his feeling of loneliness and isolation from family. Simultaneously, Mrs. Bartholomew the elderly landlady, also experiences a strong sense of loss, loneliness and isolation in her life. The sense of place experienced by the main characters in the story is similar to what Pearce had for the Mill House on the banks of Cam near Great Shelford, where she spent her childhood.

Metanarrative is a narrative technique predominant in postmodern fiction that refers to various dimensions relating to the manner in which it is employed. It denotes a narrative that represents another narrative, or a narrative that denotes itself and the way in which it is narrated. The term is also used to imply any fictional work that comments on its status as a literary text. It functions as a correlating theme that binds all aspects of a place like past, present and future in an impressive way and highlights the narrator's thoughts on the process of narration. It could also explain a particular historical experience. *Tom's Midnight Garden* fits itself into a variety of the above-mentioned notions related to a metanarrative.

Literature Review

Studies in metafiction have been nurtured over decades and goes back to 1970s when the term was first introduced in essays of Scholes and Gass (1970). In Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy Sklovskii* ([1921] 1965), mentions a device

through which the story telling itself is made part of the story told. In fact, Scholes (1970) coined the term "metafiction" to signify fiction that includes different perspectives of criticism in to the fictional process highlighting structural, formal or philosophical problems. There was a growing academic interest in metafiction as it was considered to be an important historical element of narrative fiction and as a trademark of postmodernism (Hutcheon, 1980; Waugh, 1984). From the mid of 1970 to the mid of 1980s, the conceptual framework and functions of metafiction evolved when scholars were trying to delineate postmodernism as an epoch and ethos (O'Donnell 301).

Metanarration as a term is often used interchangeably with metafiction, which more precisely comments on the "fictionality" or the "constructedness" of the narrative. Here the focus is mainly on the aspect of fictive composition. In postmodern metafiction, there is often a departure from standard narrative conventions, and highlights the dichotomy between the real world and the fictional world. Patricia Waugh (1984) identifies metafiction as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2). In her viewpoint, metafictional works are those which "explore a theory of writing fiction through the practice of writing fiction" (Waugh 2). *Tom's Midnight Garden* further complicates this issue by creating a blend of both the real and fantastic in its plot.

Mark Currie in *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998) comments on the relation between fiction and reality as one that seems to preoccupy the postmodern novel (Currie 2). He mentions the characteristic features of postmodern novels. In his observation, the relationship of fiction and reality is a central concern in postmodern narratives. They are often thought of as anti-realist and construct fictional world only to expose them as artificial constructions. Eventually, this process creates an ironical situation where both the fiction and the reality turns out to be fictional at the end. Other predominant features involve frame-breaking, crossing of some uncrossable boundary between different orders of reality or being or intrusion of author to interact with characters.

In Currie's observation, postmodern novels are metafictions: fictions about fictions; self-conscious fictions, fictions that incorporate critical and theoretical reflection into their fictional worlds. They become historiographic metafictions, that raise questions for the philosophy of history, or problems for reality or knowability of the past; fictions that draw attention to the artificiality of historical representations, or to narrative devices that shape historical material. Postmodern novels are intertextual novels that are highly aware of the condition in a world

pervaded by representations, and of their place in a tradition or a history of representations including other novels. They are citational, as they might allude to or internalize other texts and representations that are both real and fictional. They present a general cultural condition where cultural forms recycle, repeat, reshape and rewrite past forms. They use fictional intertexts, incorporating the boundary between fiction and reality within fiction, thereby dramatizing their own relationship with the outside world. They might identify a particular intertext in the form of a novel, for the purpose of rewriting it, especially from the point of view that was marginalized in, or not represented by the original.

A contemporary state of global culture dominated by new technologies is also visible in postmodern novels. Issues of identity and cultural difference is also shown against a backdrop of global, cultural standardization. This leads to experimental narrative forms that reflect the simultaneity of a global village, the loss of linearity in temporal experience, or tendency to experience the present as future representation or recollection (Currie 4). Narrative is identified as central to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self-representation or in the collective identities of groups based in regions, nations, race or gender. Narrative appears as a mode of thinking and being that is inescapable (Currie 6). Paul Ricoeur (1984) in *Time and Narrative* refers to humans as narrative animals, as '*homo fabulans*,' ie; the tellers and interpreters of narrative (Ricoeur 6). It is obvious that Pearce created the narrative pattern in a unique and impressive manner, showing her skill of narration at multiple levels.

Nunning (2004) proposes a distinction between "metafiction" and "metanarration" as an alternative categorization of self-reflexive utterances. The latter is more concerned with act and process of narration whereas the former appears in the context of fiction. The common characteristic of these two terms is its self-referntial character (2014). To outline the different forms of metafiction, Wolf (1993), introduces a distinction between fictio- and fictum metafiction to comment on the textuality and fictionality of the narrative in terms of its artificial facts (224).

It is evident that as a specific narratorial utterance, metanarration employs a number of textual functions (Prince 174). At the same time, it cannot be simply restricted to the narrator's "directing functions" (Genette 46). Metafiction emerged as an important topic in narratological research replacing the established defined terms such as "self-conscious narration" and "irony of fictionality." Concerning the formal variety of metafiction and its potential effects, Wolf (2009) developed a typology based on three dimensions: the form of mediation, the contextual relation and the contents of value (37). The first refers to the level of narration and speaker's enga-

gement in metafictional reflections. The second criteria refer to the fact that various forms of metafiction can be distinguished depending on how they seem to appear in a central or marginal position and how they are intertwined with the narrated story. Using Contents value, the third criteria, one can differentiate various forms of metafiction and whether it contains comments on the entire text or parts of it.

As more recent research shows, "metanarration" should be distinguished from "metafiction" (Neumann & Nünning 59). "Metanarration" and "metafiction" are two are key terms signifying self-reflective expressions, referring to discourse than to the story. The former refers to the narrator's reflections on the process of narration, whereas, the letter points to the comments on the fictionality or constructedness of the narrative. Both these literal terms are based on the model of metalanguage, a system of language positioned on a level above the ordinary use of words for referential purpose (Fludemic 15). He propounds the accumulation of metanarrative expressions as a "deliberate meta-narrative celebration of the cat of narration."

This study presents sufficient proof of state of the art and methodology and thus tries to demonstrate the significant conceptual differences in the terms proposed for the analysis of Pearce's novel. It clarifies why/how "the realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic features" underline the "metanarrative pattern" as well as what is meant by "pattern," as claimed in the abstract. This paper seeks to apply fully-fledged theoretical concepts such as "metanarrative," "metanarration" or "metafiction," and the definitions given are presented in a concrete manner. Arguments such as "metanarration is often used interchangeably with metafiction," provide a literary approach to some categories that have been otherwise clearly delineated in post-structuralist narratology.

Postmodern Experimental Techniques

Experimental techniques are common in postmodern metafiction, which includes rejecting conventional plot, challenging conventions to transform reality into a highly suspect concept, exhibiting and exaggerating foundations of their instability, and signifying that no singular truth or meanings exist, and that everything is relative. Metafiction might employ intertextual references and allusions to give multiple dimensions to the story. In *Tom's Midnight Garden,* the setting of the story itself is allegorical or symbolic as it is based on the author's own childhood memories of the place where she actually grew up. The grandfather clock, striking thirteen also adds to the sense of magic or fantasy. It foreshadows the adventure that Tom has in the midnight garden by slipping into and traveling back to the Victorian era. Also, Tom's time in the garden is allegorical of Mrs. Bartholomew's dreams as

the former's entry into the midnight garden depends on what she dreams from her past. The way Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew hugging each other goodbye on the day when Tom was due to go home also signifies their prior relationship in the midnight garden, although they met in real time only in that morning. To aunt Gwen's surprise, they hugged each other as two children, and not as a young boy and an adult. The reconciliation behind this hug suggests Tom's acceptance of reality and affirmation of events that happened in the garden with Mrs. Bartholomew's past life. The night before their meeting in real time, Tom calls out Hatty's name when he couldn't find her or the garden. But Mrs. Bartholomew heard Tom calling out her name which symbolizes his presence both in the garden and her memories associated with dreams. Hence, she felt like telling Tom about her identity as she could recognize their shared experience in the garden. The novel also suggests the prelapsarian stage and innocence associated with childhood, in the bond between Tom and Hatty. Tom feels chill in the big house when he comes to stay for the first time. Later, he becomes sick due to cold and is unable to distinguish between reality, fantasy, dream and hallucinations for a while.

The metaphor of hunger is significant in Tom's night adventures. The emotional hunger he suffered being away from home when Peter materialized by satisfying himself with heavy meals prepared by aunt Gwen and slipping into the larder at night due to sleeplessness: "he was suffering from night starvation" (12). The metaphorical hunger or longing to have a heavy meal of adventure resulted in finding the garden and his playmate. Not surprisingly, the theme of death is also relevant in the novel's plot. Tom's first meeting with Mrs. Bartholomew also suggests future encounters with her as Hatty at various stages of her life. He envisions her as old, small and bowed and dressed all in black (31). The black color is suggestive of the melancholy pervading her life from a very young age onwards. She lost her parents while she was a little girl and was under the care of a cruel aunt. Once Tom sees Hatty as a tiny little girl, wearing black dress, stockings and shoes; even her hair was black and had a black hair-ribbon. This signifies funeral black and Tom could sense her extreme grief haunted with the death of her parents. She lost her sons in the Great War and later her husband; as an old lady she lives a lonely life and awaits her own death.

A striking feature of the novel is in making Tom as the focaliser and not the narrator of the novel. The thoughts and feelings of other characters are not vividly shown. To understand the story, readers should see and feel through his eyes and sensibilities. Characters and places are presented from his stance. Pearce occasionally used free indirect discourse to convey Tom's thoughts. The blend of the narrator's

voice with Tom's feelings reinforces the reader's identification with Tom and thus the power of fantasy makes the story more real.

In children's fiction, time-slip is a salient feature, where the protagonist or other characters move along time without being aware of it (Beck 184). *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a time-slip fantasy narrative where Tom makes a time travel to the past Victorian era not being able to differentiate between past and the present. Initially, Tom takes the fantasy world of the midnight garden and the characters are real and as if living in his present.

Some literary critics consider themes of *Tom's Midnight Garden* as fantastic as well as realistic. Heather Montgomery (2009) remarks on the significance of the novel's theme that imparts an elegiac tone as it is filled with the feeling of loss and longing for the past (204). It points to the inescapable reality of growing up and growing old (Bryant 93). Montgomery comments that despite the melancholic tone of the novel, it is not tragic as it ends in harmony and resolution. Pearce's creation of the imaginary midnight garden is both physically and morally redemptive and befits the novel in pastoral tradition. Natov (2009) comments on the garden that illuminates heightened reality, in contrast with daily life and associated shortcomings (225). The pastoral setting of the garden helps Tom in consciousness raising and makes him capable of being an empathetic person. The restoring and regenerating capacity of gardens at individual, familial, community and national level is also significant. Rustins (2009) stresses the importance of metaphors of stages of emotional development that play a crucial part in children's fiction, especially in the genre of "fantasy" (209). Modernist literary methods employ interpretations of "realist" and "non-realist" modes of expression in fictional narration. In spite of the aloof felt by the post-war world due to fragmentation and the scale of urban society, the world also shared a culture that felt hopeful about strong possibilities of childhood. Themes of loss, sense of things slipping away, childhood innocence and its metaphorical association with Eden garden, hope, optimism of childhood, possibilities of regeneration and rejuvenation makes the novel a befitting feast for both children and adult readers. Pearce's treatment of these themes and its narrative pattern make the novel a critique of both the terms "metanarrative" and "metafiction."

A Psychoanalytic Reading

As we will try to show below, the novel can be read from a psychoanalytic point of view and can be seen as an exercise in psychological realism, dealing with difficulties of sexual awakening and emotional development. Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin (2009) mention that the novel is strongly informed by psychological

theory. Tom, the protagonist, is in his adolescence, experiencing a transition between childhood and adulthood, in which there is rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial development (Rustin 213). However, he seems to be unaware of his growth and shows mood shifts, experiences strong and intense emotions and is in a stage of confusion, fear and anger that are common at this phase. The very thought of being away from home and his brother during the summer holidays and living with childless uncle and aunt in a city apartment with no garden, makes Tom really upset. He is isolated from his dear ones and with the discovery of the midnight garden and playmate Hatty in the garden, his life and attitude began to change. Not knowing that the girl Hatty in the midnight garden is the same as old Mrs. Bartholomew in his real world, Tom happily gets engaged moving back and forth in reality and fantasy. For Mrs. Bartholomew, the only way to cope up with her loneliness was to dream about childhood, where she finds Tom equally longing for a companionship. Thus, Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew are connected mainly through their dream and fantasy than in reality.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his seminal work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1965) considers dream as a psychic phenomenon that consists of our conscious and unconscious desires of real life and emerges from an important emotional event. In Tom's case, loneliness, desire for a companion and a space for exploration propel him to enter into the midnight garden of Mrs. Bartholomew's childhood. Freud noticed that people dream for a reason, to deal unconsciously with the problems that the conscious mind cannot deal with. Memories continue to exist outside our awareness in an unconscious manner. He also remarked that dreams and its content represented a disguised fulfillment of a repressed wish. This is true in the case of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew. The traumas in Mrs. Bartholomew's life started with the death of her parents when she was so young, living with her uncaring aunt and later with the death of her husband and two sons in the war. The loneliness that she suffered is balanced through the dreams of her childhood and youth. In the same manner, the secret desires for a companion and larger space in Tom's mind are also fulfilled with Hatty in the midnight garden. Freud's concept of 'the uncanny' refers to the psychological experience of something strangely familiar which is evident in the way Tom and Hatty feel each other as ghosts. The dark figures that Tom and Hatty see during their skating expedition involve an eerie feeling and the image of Barty in dark form prior to their meeting and proposal of marriage.

Carl Jung (1875-1961) suggests that archetypes are universal, inborn models of people, behaviors or personalities that play a role in influencing human behavior. He identifies three components of the human psyche: the ego, the personal unconscious

and the collective unconscious. In the novel, both Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew are aware of their real existence in day time of their real world, whereas at night by entering into the midnight garden of Mrs. Bartholomew's memories of past, the suppressed feelings of loneliness and loss find a way out by exploring the garden and having the adventure between the playmates, Tom and Hatty. This is the reason why Tom could easily enter into the dream telepathy of Mrs. Bartholomew as they share these traits as part of the collective unconscious.

A better conceptual understanding is required to understand the interconnection between metanarrative and psychoanalysis and how the two notions inform each other. The field of psychoanalysis in relation to 'narrative' is extremely vast, and cannot be covered in the discussions allocated to Freud's and Jung's theories. It is meant to offer an interdisciplinary approach, and accordingly some theoretical background is provided in order to interlink the two disciplines. Moreover, it is good to explore other scholars' perspectives in a critical manner, by pointing to their own line of argument.

The sensibilities of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew who represent various stages of the British national identity are also evident in the novel. Another archetypal reference made by Jung represents the combination of anima and animus known as syzygy, the pairing of contra-sexual opposites, symbolizing the communication of the conscious and unconscious minds. The syzygy represents completion, unification and wholeness that is evident in the hugging scene of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew towards the end of the novel. This event represents multiple facts referring to Tom's coming to terms with reality, Mrs. Bartholomew's happiness in reliving her past with Tom, and on a national level where post-war Britain is connected with the glorious Victorian era. Thus, a meaningful connection between the conscious and the unconscious, the real and the imaginary, the child and the adult, the past and the present is materialized in the novel.

Mouhiba Jamoussi (2019) finds the connection between the self and the other, through a fantastic world constantly interwoven with the real, and a past tightly tied to the present. She focuses on the child-adult relationship, and on the effects of connection and disconnection on the individual (Jamoussi 2). Tom bids farewell to loneliness by entering into the garden and by getting connected with nature and its inhabitants. In his encounter with Hatty, Tom creates his own world where Hatty becomes his companion, playmate and story-teller. The garden is symbolic of connection, empathy, and healing that exists literally and metaphorically in every individual's life and consciousness. Maher Ben Moussa (2016) argues that Tom's empathy is an important factor in his growing up, in constructing his identity and in shaping

his relational self through reaching out to the 'other' Hatty (37). Tom is able to empathize with Hatty although she is from an older generation and from a world that is very different from his own but breaks the boundaries of time, gender and age. He identifies that Tom is empowered, transformed and matured through such a journey and finally he is able to end his exile with a capacity to understand himself and the "other" (Ben Moussa 40). In fact, time travel enables Tom to become a better human being.

Time Travel in *Tom's Midnight Garden*

Pearce's treatment of time is highly relevant in understanding the importance of the events that unfold in the real and imaginary world. On his arrival to stay with the Kitsons, Tom finds the big house unwelcoming and feels that "the heart of the house was empty–cold–dead … It remained empty and silent" (5). The only sound that Tom noticed is that of the clock: "tick, and then tick, and then tick, of a grandfather clock" (5). Tom is curious as he has never checked inside such a clock, but aunt warns him not to, as it belonged to old Mrs. Bartholomew and that she is rather particular about it. Tom realizes that the clock is not striking at the right hour and Uncle Alan says: "The clock kept good time—its fingers were now correctly pointing to five o'clock—but it seldom chose to strike the right hour. It was utterly unreliable in its striking" (6). Tom finds the voice of the clock so penetrating and senselessly wrong in striking. This reference to the confusion in time foreshadows the upcoming events that are likely to happen during his stay with Kitsons.

Tom's stay indoors and lack of physical activity affected his sleep. His sleepless nights and the striking of the grandfather clock turned to be normal. "He would go to bed at usual time, and then lie awake or half-awake for hour after hour… in his half-dreaming, he became two persons, and one of him would not go to sleep but selfishly insisted on keeping the other awake with a little muttering monolog" (10). It points to Tom's double consciousness or split personality that eventually reveals, and the movement between fantasy and reality like the pendulum of a clock. Uncle Alan insists that Tom should sleep from nine to seven in the morning. For him, "with the thirteenth hour somewhere between—was more than ten hours: it was eleven. He could be in bed for ten hours, and still have an hour to spare—an hour of freedom" (15). These musings over the time seems to be a deliberate action from Tom before he started his midnight adventures. Apparently, it seems that he plans the future events, but lacks cohesion and becomes unaware that he is in real time during the day and enters the fantasy world of the midnight garden when the grandfather clock strikes thirteen. Because of this experience, Tom is active during his stay in

the midnight garden, while during day time he plans for his next activity and waits for the clock to strike its magical time.

Unlike the grandfather clock that takes him back to the past, the clock in the kitchen takes him forward in a linear way. Maria Nikolajeva (2009) studies the concept of time by differentiating it with Kairos, the eternal or mythic time and *chronos* which is the measurable or linear time, while discussing the blend of fantasy and reality in Tom's world (218). There is always summer and fine weather in the midnight garden as it is evoked by Hatty's nostalgic memories. It also signifies the most dynamic time in her life being young and hopeful of a bright future. It seems that the garden is transformed from a spatial to temporal state representing childhood, as seen in utopian fiction. The grandfather clock is presented as a magical object with ambivalent function and in *chronos*, that takes Tom closer to departure while in *kairos*, it is his password to the garden. In the beginning, Tom is intolerant of uncle Alan's rationality or theories about time and fixed sleeping hours for a boy like him. In a discussion about the past and the possibility of living in it, uncle Alan responds: "It's just a saying, Tom— 'to put the clock back.' It means to have the Past again, and no one can have it. Time isn't like that" (56). Uncle Alan talks about the real, linear, chronological time, whereas Tom's thoughts are about the mythical time of his experience.

The image of the angel of the Book of Revelation, who stands with one foot on land and one on sea, and seen at the heart of the grandfather clock is symbolic of Tom's presence in the two worlds. The inscription on the face of grandfather clock 'Time No Longer,' identifies time as linear with a beginning and end, similar to a flowing river (Carpenter 58). Tom understood the real nature of time through the words revealed by the angel. He dreams of skating to the world's end and the end of Time. He knew that he did not miss any fraction of a second of ordinary time, but gained the liberty of extra, mythical time in the midnight garden. Tom makes reference to the river to Hatty during one of his earlier visits to the garden: "All rivers flow into the sea" (87) and Hatty envied the endless journey of the waters. This indicates the linearity of time in chronos, and Mrs Bartholomew's apprehension regarding her loneliness, old age and approaching death. It signifies the final unifying vision at the end, of the binaries between past and present, child and adult, male and female, inner and outer, conscious and the unconscious.

Peter, Tom's brother, enters in time travel, by reading about his adventures in the midnight garden through the letters sent by Tom. Peter is equally tempted to witness these incidents narrated in the letters and dreams about it. When it was time for Tom to be back home, Peter makes his entry into Tom's dreams and sees Hatty as

a young woman, unlike as a child defined in Tom's letters. This is a focal point that defines the future events in Tom's life. In the dream, Hatty and Tom went on skating to Ely cathedral and wanted to climb its tower. Before their trajectory to the tower, Tom reads a memorial tablet written 'Exchanged Time for Eternity' that refers to all secrets of his time travel and existence of the garden. Peter also believes in the existence of the garden as he reads Tom's adventures and manages to dream of his presence with Tom.

The bond between brothers and their strong telepathic feelings is evident when Tom visualizes they both are climbing the tower of Ely cathedral. Tom could sense Peter's presence even before seeing him. Hatty who is looking for Tom at the top of the tower sees two boys very much alike as they are dressed identically in pajamas. Tom realizes that Peter is thinning out and vanishes, even without looking at him. When Hatty inquired about the other boy, Tom says: "He was my brother, Peter … but he's real Hatty. He's real, like me" (196). This indicates that Tom is aware of the real and unreal. Tom is surprised by Peter's presence in his dream as he knew that he was back home by then. The vision of the two boys can be related to Mrs Bartholomew's dead sons. She develops a strong relation with these two and expresses her desire to meet them together at the end of the story. Tom's dream of climbing the spiral staircase and down the tower of Ely cathedral symbolizes his own self-discovery in psychological terms.

Natov (2009) remarks on the nature of mythic time and states that "time travel serves as a metaphor for the way we need to travel, fluidly, reflexively between our own childhood selves held together in our consciousness, or recalled from our unconscious through dreams and recognized by the conscious self upon waking" (223). Tom and Hatty's skating together with the same pair of skates also suggests their shared time travel and foreshadows the final reconciliation represented in Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew hugged each other and brought the two worlds together. Until then, Tom is involved in both worlds without realizing the difference between the two. The pair of skates that Hatty keeps with a note for him is discovered by Tom, which helps to meet the two worlds of reality and dream.

In the real time talk between Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew towards the end, the absence of the garden is discussed. An incident that happened the night before Tom is about to go back home, he tries to visit the midnight garden, but couldn't find it and desperately calls out for her. Mrs. Bartholomew tells Tom: "You woke me […]. I knew it was Tom calling for help, although I didn't understand, then. I couldn't believe you were real, until I saw you this morning." Tom said: "We're both real; Then and Now. It's as the angel said: Time No Longer" (224). This reveals the emotional

maturity that Tom has achieved through his midnight garden adventures, the power of empathizing and connection. Thus, the novel ends by affirming the power of feeling that makes this connection possible. Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew's longing for a companionship creates a space for their joint adventure through telepathy culminating in their well-being.

Treatment of Space in *Tom's Midnight Garden*

The manner in which Pearce creates the midnight garden from memories of Mrs Bartholomew is significant in understanding the connection between reality and fantasy, blending past and present. The place where the Kitsons stay is a big Victorian household converted into modern day flats. The space where the garden stood in the past has been used as a parking space in the present. The imagery of the garden is very powerful in providing the space for Tom and Hatty to meet and have their timeless adventure. The midnight garden is first seen by moonlight, with its life-in-death associations, and the idea of a grave-like place is represented through the yew trees. Rustins (2009) refers to the importance of trees to all children (209). Tom and Peter had plans to make a tree house at home during holidays, and Tom and Hatty made a tree house in the midnight garden. At the crisis moment in the story, on Hatty's wedding eve, the tree at the center of the garden is struck by lightning and she hears Tom crying out. Abel, the gardener, acts as a protector of the garden as well as Hatty. He is deeply concerned about her safety and initially hates Tom's presence in the garden. Later, he found Tom to be harmless.

Tom sees the garden at many times of its day and at different seasons. Its favorite season is summer, with perfect weather. During his visit, Hatty makes Tom watch the garden in different shades through the coloured glass panes. Hatty mentions the presence of the garden to Tom: "You look and see nothing, and you might think there wasn't a garden at all; but, all the time, of course, there is, waiting for you" (77). These words act as a kind of consolation for both Tom and Hatty that the garden exists always in our memories too. Tom is invisible to most of the people in the garden, but Abel gets a glimpse of him at times along with other innocent animals like cows, geese and dogs. This is symbolic of the fact that Tom as a child is innocent like Hatty and only god-fearing and innocent people could see each other. Tom's invisibility in the garden initially symbolizes his feeling that his family and others are insensitive towards him as he has to stay at Kitsons house without a garden and playmate. But Hatty in the garden is shown to be good at hiding from others. This shows her less chances of socialization being an orphan and uncared child, living with the aristocratic and rich Melbournes.

There are various religious and biblical references in the novel. The name Abel is biblical, as he is the son of Adam, the first of God's creation. The religious and spiritual implications are also relevant in reading and understanding the story. Hatty and Tom's adventures show their pre-pubertal existence in the garden of innocence. Raymond Jones (1985) comments on the double consequences of a child entering the Eden or the metaphorical garden, that end up in both restoration and entrapment (218). The portrayal of Hatty in the garden refers to her reluctance in growing up, as being an orphan under the care of her cruel aunt, and she has nothing much to look forward to in life. But, Tom's initial reaction after reaching the apartment and seeing his room with bars across the bottom of the window is one of anger and he bursts out: "This is a nursery! I'm not a baby!" (6) This is highly significant as it refers to his subconscious awareness of growth, both physically and mentally. His frequent visits to the garden makes him feel more entrapped in it, by providing a sense of restoration. Neil Philip (1982) sees the novel as the story of Eden and Fall, but Hatty is seen as a savior rather than a seducer in the garden for Tom.

Tom and Hatty's skating expeditions during the Great Freeze provides the opportunity for Tom to explore these places that existed in his mind. Tom's dream of traveling with James and Hatty on horseback also makes him think of the difference between traveling with uncle and aunt in a bus or car. He notices the changes that occurred between the past and the present. Abel's expression towards Tom is also noteworthy as he gives a private, friendly wink, unlike his previous serious looks and talks. This is suggestive of Tom's awareness of his growth as shown in others' reaction and behavior towards him. At the end of his stay at Kitsons, Tom decides to meet Mrs. Bartholomew to apologize for causing troubles to the residents of the apartment. They notice the change and maturity in his character, unlike the first time he comes to stay in that neighborhood.

Tom's Midnight Garden as a Metanarrative

Tom's Midnight Garden employs metanarration at various levels. Pearce is narrating the story of Tom to the reader in which the protagonist Tom co-creates another story with Mrs. Bartholomew. By entering Mrs. Bartholomew's dream, Tom goes back to the Victorian grounds and experiences the glory of the past. As readers, we too get a chance to revisit the past. Like Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew, the readers also enjoy the privilege of entering the temporal and spatial arena of differing and sometimes opposing domains, combining the real and the fantastic. From the beginning of his stay at uncle and aunt's house, Tom is writing letters to Peter updating him about his adventures in the midnight garden and Peter is closely following them through the

narratives of Tom.

The code language employed by Tom and Peter is typical of children in their letters. Tom signed his letters to Tom with the drawing of "an elongated cat, supposed to be a tom. It signified Tom Long" (7). As his writing progresses, Tom is planning the future actions in the garden with another code, "B.A.R." that stands for "Burn After Reading." When aunt Gwen comments that Peter won't be allowed to strain his eyes after measles and that writing long letters to Peter will make mother read it aloud to him, Tom writes "PRIVATE" and "CONFIDENTIAL" to make sure that the letter will reach only Peter. They want to keep the secrecy of the garden and adventures in it to themselves. Eventually, Peter feels highly tempted to go and stay with Kitsons to be part of the adventures in the midnight garden. While sleeping, Peter also has dreams of the garden, and the reactions on his face are noticed by his mother. This suggests the ability of Tom in conveying the events of his midnight adventure in a convincing manner to Peter who relives it, in his own dream. Both Tom and Peter felt upset when Tom could not write to Peter for the last two days of his stay at Kitsons. They become involved in story-writing/telling and reading/listening that Peter feels desperate as he doesn't know what is happening to Tom in the garden, whereas Tom feels guilty for not being able to write to Peter as promised. Peter's curiosity in listening to stories is further extended in Mrs Bartholomew's invitation to him along with Tom as both of them remind her of her own dead sons.

The events in the novel can also be decoded by re-reading it as Tom's experience of reading the books, that are "school stories for girls from Aunt Gwen's own childhood" (7). During his initial sleepless nights staying with Kitsons, Tom tries to sleep reading Aunt Gwen's school-girl stories. This provides the chance for Tom to be aware of the sensibilities of a girl like Hatty, and results in a positive development of his growth, morally and psychologically. Natov (2009) remarks that the inevitable loss and sadness of growing up and leaving childhood behind, can be resolved through fiction. For Rustins (2009), Tom's adventures in this story can be taken as a metaphor for the experience of reading and story-telling (209).

It is interesting to note that the novel takes a fairy tale pattern (Waugh 24). Like the story of "The Ugly Duckling," Hatty is not very well treated by her aunt while she was young and staying with her as an orphan. Later, Hatty gets married to Barty and her life changes. The aunt acts like the wicked stepmother stereotype in fairy tales. Hatty's life also reminds of the fairy tale plots where the disadvantageous character becomes advantageous at the end. The wicked ones suffer loss and receive the right sort of punishment for their cruel actions. Hatty's life with Barty is one like the fairy tale ending of "lived happily ever after," as Barty is a loving and

caring husband. But, tragic events like the death of their sons in the Great War and later Barty's death make Mrs. Bartholomew feels lonely and decides to move back to the house of her childhood to hide in the memories of her past.

During Tom's visit to the garden before meeting Hatty, he finds a white paper, folded and addressed in a childish handwritten: "To Oberon, King of Fairies" (40). This suggests that Hatty is living her life as if in a fairy tale, imagining herself as a character in a story. Tom's response on seeing it is different and he "did not want to be mixed up with talk of fairies and that kind of thing" (40). When Tom and Hatty meet for the first time, he sees her holding a twig of yew in one hand and half-eaten apple on the other, holding both like a queen's scepter and orb. She introduces herself as "Princess Hatty" to which he responds that "if you're a Princess, your father and mother must be a King and Queen: where's their kingdom—where are they?" (73) Hatty informs that she is held as a prisoner there, a Princess in disguise, as her aunt is wicked and cruel. These are indications of her imaginary mind, seeing herself as a fictional character. The half-eaten apple is symbolic of the fairy tale 'Snow White' and the mythical and religious overtones of 'Eve' in Eden garden. Hatty makes the garden a kind of her own kingdom. Tom feels that "all the persons that her fancy had ever brought into this garden—Biblical heroes and fairies and the people of legend and hearsay and her own imagination—all her friends fell away from her now" (94). He cries thinking of his powerlessness to comfort and save her.

While exchanging tales and secrets, Tom enquires about Abel, the gardener, while recounting the events after Tom missed entry to the garden. Mrs. Bartholomew tells him that "he had married Susan and they had a large family and lived happily" (224). This also serves as another fairy tale involved in the whole narration which also has a happy ending. Tom's experience in the garden is similar to 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.' Like Alice entering the wonderland, Tom accidentally steps into the magical, midnight garden. As a fantasy, the novel functions like a fairy tale where magic at the center reflects and comments on the real world. It intensifies and enriches recognition that is necessary for healing and restoring a sense of harmony in both children and adults.

Nikolajeva (2009) comments that in Mrs. Bartholomew's account of events, the whole story is seen from a different perspective (217). The novel is read as a story told by an old lady to a boy, a grandmother to a grandson, though Mrs. Bartholomew and Tom are not blood relatives. Rustins' (2009) comments on the last chapter of the novel "A Tale for Tom Long," can be re-interpreted that the whole story is Mrs. Bartholomew's tale for Tom (213). It is created from her childhood memories and multiple identifications with Tom as her own childhood self and the reminder of

her dead sons that are not necessarily and entirely true. The sermon that the old lady wants to share with future generations is kept untold in her mind, but conveyed to Tom through the dream telepathy. The novel recounts how a young boy is tempted to exchange time for eternity and the tragic story of an old woman who knows from experience that time is irreversible. Mrs. Bartholomew's words that "I knew Tom, that the garden was changing all the time, because nothing stands still, except in our memory" (221) reveals the wisdom of her life experience.

Mrs Bartholomew alerts Tom: "When you're my age, Tom, you live in the Past a great deal. You remember it; you dream of it" (222). Tom understands the facts in a better way—in the garden the weather is always perfect, time jumps back and forth—everything depends on what Mrs. Bartholomew wishes to remember from her past in the dreams. She recollects that never before that summer has she ever dreamt of the garden so often and so vividly and felt like little Hatty, longing for someone to play with. This is because of Tom's presence and longing for the same that ends up in their co-creation of midnight garden in their time travel.

The ending also suggests the possibilities of new beginnings. Mrs. Bartholomew's invitation for Tom and Peter to visit her again, and Tom's promise to bring Peter with him suggest the possibilities of the tale to be continued regarding the child adventure in the midnight magic garden. Pearce has beautifully created several stories, one of reality and the other of fantasy, and within each one different layer of other tales in creating *Tom's Midnight Garden* as a metanarrative.

Conclusion

From the discussions above, it is obvious that the novel *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a metanarrative and stories of children make use of fantasy to establish strong connections. It validates the psychology of children and adults, the way in which they live their life in fantasy and reality. In addition to that, it demonstrates how children create and live their own stories, and in old age how one lives her past life through memories and dreams, passing on their life as stories to future generations. The novel created as part of the dream telepathy of Tom and Hatty, appears and creates the illusion of reality. The presence of the note left by Hatty along with the skates for Tom is used as a device to bind reality and fantasy in a peculiar manner.

The story acts as a motivation for both children and adult readers to come to terms with the anxieties and sensibilities of their present or of the remembered childhoods. The novel succeeded in connecting the past and the present for the central characters and as result to find a balance between intergenerational gap. The past glory of Victorian England is linked to the modern post-war England as part

of the continuum. The myth of Fall of Man has been repeated and re-imagined in a novel manner, by focusing on the pre-lapsarian stage of Tom and Hatty and their innocent play in the midnight garden, reminiscent of Eden garden. The modern age and the associated fragmented condition is visible in characters and the space they occupy. However, they try to keep balance in their memories of past glory and relationships with each other. This is made possible through the time travel of Tom and Hatty in linking 'chronos' and 'Kairos.' Tom's realization of his experience in the midnight garden being part of Mrs Bartholomew's dreams and memories enables Tom to move forward in life by accepting reality and facts.

Although *Tom's Midnight Garden* tells the story of Tom and Hatty, it is also connected to the nation's history, and makes a link between individual and group. History is presented as part of the inescapable reality of life for characters in which they find solace and root for existence. No doubt, the story is intertwined with fantasy and reality as it is narrated at realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic levels. These features develop the story into a metanarrative pattern, creating a story within the story. Thus, *Tom's Midnight Garden* establishes a strong association between old age and childhood, the conscious and the unconscious, fantasy and reality, and past and the present.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Arab Open University, KSA for supporting this research.

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On the Narrativity and Dialogue Mode in Louise Glück's Poetry

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Abstract A crucial heterogeneous feature of Louise Glück's poems is the polyphonic narrative. This poetic discourse narrative strategy is embodied in the following three aspects: firstly, through the role setting and interpretive variation of the images of Western classical texts, it constructs the multiple interpretive tension of ancient and modern dialogues; secondly, through the dissemination, extension, communication, and integration of individual life experiences in the perspective of the other, it constructs the interactive subject field of subject-object dialogues; thirdly, through the penetration and interpretive resonance of private space in the public sphere, it constructs the temporal and spatial dialogues of universal meaning. These three aspects enable Glück's poems to realize the dialectical unities of individuality and universality, singularity and plurality, and synchronicity and desynchronicity, forming an intertextual structural system of polyphonic narratives and a paradigm for the formation of world literary classics.

Key words Louise Glück; poetic composition; narrativity; dialogue mode

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In literary studies, the narrative nature of lyric poetry is often neglected and hardly receives attention. It seems that narratology is only the exclusive privilege of narrative literature such as the novel. However, with his unique lyric poetry, Nobel Prize-winning poet Glück has fully demonstrated that lyric poetry is not only narrative but also dialogic. Thus, the narrativity and dialogue mode constitute an important artistic quality of Glück's lyric poetry.

In 2020, the American poetess Glück was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and recognized for "her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal" (Flood, 2020). This assertion argues that Glück's poetry achieves cross-pollination from the private space to the public sphere and provides artistic reflections on issues of universal humanity. It is worth exploring further: how does Glück's poetry move from individual narratives to universal meanings? From the perspective of poetic studies, one of the important strategies is to adopt polyphonic narrative and dialogue mode to write, which is reflected in the three aspects of dialogues, i.e. the ancient and modern dialogue, the subject and object dialogue and the temporal and spatial dialogue, and these three aspects enable Glück's poems to move from individual to universal, from single to multiple, and from ephemeral to common time, forming a polyphonic narrative structure system of intertextual dialogue.

I. A Dialogue between the Ancient and the Modern across Time and Space

Polyphonic dialogue is a literary and artistic expressive technique refined by Bakhtin in his interpretation of Dostoevsky's works. This technique is in response to the tendency of singularity, centrality, and subjectivity in the narrative of the text. Rather than an omniscient narrative, it gives the text a free space for dialogue and constitutes a composite, dialogic, and intermingled aesthetic experience of harmony and difference, noting that "the utterly incompatible elements comprising Dostoevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses; they are presented not within a single field of vision but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth; and it is not the material directly but these worlds, their consciousnesses with their individual fields of vision that combine in a higher unity, a unity, so to speak, of the second order, the unity of a polyphonic novel" (Bakhtin 16). This formulation accurately describes the theoretical mechanism of the polyphonic narrative and dialogue model. In a nutshell, he mainly emphasizes the construction of differentiated, pluralistic, and egalitarian narrative perspectives in the text as a higher level of unity of thought. This theoretical mechanism is still applicable to poetry writing.

As we know, in ancient China, poetry and literary creation are characterized by "poetry expresses aspiration," "poetry is related to emotions," "literature carries morality," and "literature is based on spirit." This is also true in the West, especially in romantic poetry such as the Lake Poets. They believed that poetry is the natural expression of feelings and that poetry has a definite ideological theme and a deep emotional quality. However, the polyphonic narrative theory does not think this way, as it dismantles the essential elements of determinism, depth, and centrality. This narrative strategy is applied to Glück's poetry, which mainly refers to the dismantling of the narrator's centrality in the text, the denial of discursive authority, the resistance to depth structure, and the release of the plurality of different voices through characterization, forming a resonant structure between the subject and object, the internal and external, and time and space. These constitute an important feature of Glück's poetic creation.

Glück's poetry did not start out with this feature but presents itself as a process of constant development and variation. In 1968, she published her first collection of poems *Firstborn*. Most of the poems in this collection are mainly parodies of T. S. Eliot and Yeats, and they focus on family ethics and human care, with some naturalistic themes and parodies of literary classics and historical figures.

In the 1990s, Glück's style underwent some transformation. For example, in her 1992 poetry collection *Wild Iris*, which shifted from the early stage of imitation to the stage of self-innovation, although she still drew from Western literary classics, the traces of imitation faded and more traces of creative transformation and innovative interpretation were injected. In 1996, she published *Meadowlands*, a collection of poems that continued the religious sentiment of *Wild Iris*, but with a unique twist. "Glück's poetry is so off-beat that the masks of lyricism and the underpinnings of tendency change frequently, while at the same time being passionate, and the bleak appearance of her poetry conceals the poetic beauty of a sunken world" (Liu Xiangyang 275).

Her poetical works became more mature after 2000, such as *The Seven Ages* (2001) and *Averno* (2006). These two poetry collections also focus on individualized life experiences, but they also focus on characterizing poetic imagery, transforming inanimate objects into living imagery, and then constructing a subtle sense of balance between the narrator's subjective experience and the experience of the other, conveying universal reflections about the world, with a more obvious style of polyphonic narrative and dialogic mode.

In order to form a polyphonic narrative field between individual emotional experiences and universal values and meanings, an important strategy adopted by

Glück is to build a pluralistic voice across time and space by transforming the role and imagery of classical images in Western literature and then generating dialogue and hybridization between the ancient and modern imagery genealogies. "Glück often draws on classical Western mythology or natural imagery that he has been familiar with since childhood to reflect on his personal experiences and modern life" (Zhong Jie 6). These classical and natural imageries are combined with Glück's own life experiences, and they are integrated, misinterpreted, and juxtaposed, thus innovatively discovering more poetic meanings and forming an intertextual theory or intertextual experiences. It is based on such a theoretical perspective that Glück, on the whole, is more interested in the modern interpretation of classical imagery of Western literature, which exudes different voices in poetry and forms a dialogue and polyphonic narrative between the ancient and the modern. For example, in the poem "Firstborn," she offers a dialogic interpretation of Shakespeare's literary classics:

> The weeks go by. I shelve them,
> They are all the same, like peeled soup cans
> Beans sour in their pot. I watch the lone onion
> Floating like Ophelia, caked with grease:
> You listless, fidget with the spoon.
> What now? You miss my care? Your yard ripens. (Glück, *Firstborn* 34)

From the overall context of this poem, it mainly adopts some daily life imagery symbols to narrate, such as "beans," "soup cans," "pot," "onion," "spoon," etc., which are close to life and nature, with a soothing rhythm. However, in the poem's normalized narrative, the image of Ophelia is suddenly embedded: "Floating like Ophelia, caked with grease." This line compares food to a woman's floating corpse, so, soothing becomes depressing, aesthetics turns into ugliness, and there is a precipitous fall in psychological experience, which suddenly makes the poetic text present a stronger sense of dissonance.

We know that Ophelia is the classic image of a woman in Shakespeare's Hamlet. She and Hamlet fall in love, but her father is stabbed to death by Hamlet, and in the sharp contradiction of her feelings between her father and her lover, and in the mad repression of being misunderstood by others, she is depressed, which eventually leads to insanity and falls into the water and drowns, and her body floats on the water. Glück's use of this classic imagery for dialogue between the past and the present, interspersed with time and space, suggests that the poetess' real intention is not to describe the lightness of these everyday words, but to use this

classic tragic imagery to present the fatalistic oppression of men on women and the tragic effect of a kind of mind-controlling desire to bring about a tragic fate.

Nourished by the Western literary classics, Glück's poetry embodies a unique concern for ancient Greek mythology, in addition to her appropriation of the classics of Shakespeare and other writers. As Professor Anders Olsson said in the presentation speech, "In several of her books, Glück speaks through mythical figures such as Dido, Persephone or Eurydice. They are masks transcribing private intimacies into something as universal as it is ambiguous" (Olson "Award ceremony speech").

Regarding this feature of Glück's poetry, Daniel Morris also points out that Glück "creates personal narratives of public significance, using the masks of legendary characters from the Bible (Moses), from history (Joan of Arc), from myths of the origins of poetry as based in loss (Orpheus and Eurydice), and from fairy tales (Gretel)" (Morris 3). This should be one of the most characteristic and valuable dimensions of Glück's poetry, in other words, she does not express her thoughts directly like the romantic poets such as Shelley and Byron, but speaks in her poems by cleverly borrowing figures from the Western classics, giving voice to different voices, presenting a private language as a multiplicity of discourses, and thus presenting different voice systems in her poems, and forming a kind of polyphonic narrative and the ancient-modern dialogue mode.

For example, Glück is fascinated by Persephone, the goddess and queen of the underworld in ancient Greek mythology, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, but later stolen by Hades, the king of the underworld, although her mother Demeter kept rescuing and searching for her, however, without success. Her father, Zeus, sent Hermes to rescue her, but before Hermes arrived, Persephone accidentally ate four pomegranate seeds, forcing her to stay in the underworld for four months of the year and to spend the rest of the time with her mother, thus bringing winter to earth. Rembrandt also borrowed this literary motif for his famous painting "The Plundering of Persephone" in 1631. In Glück's collection *Averno*, there are four poems related to the theme of Persephone, including "A Myth of Innocence," "A Myth of Devotion," and "Persephone the Wanderer." In Greek mythology, Persephone appears as the imagery of the wanderer and the victim, but Glück tries to convey in her poems a polyphonic paradox of the victim and the fallen, of the classical imagery and the modern imagery. We can look at the following lines from her poem "A Myth of Devotion":

Guilt? Terror? The fear of love?

These things he couldn't imagine;
no lover ever imagines them.
He dreams, he wonders what to call this place.
First he thinks: The New Hell. Then: The Garden.
In the end, he decides to name it
Persephone's Girlhood. (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 540)

It is difficult to make a relatively reasonable interpretation of this poem without being familiar with Persephone's mythological context and its origins. Instead of pure lyricism, Glück borrows mythological imagery to launch a reflective narrative in the poem. In the beginning, she described Hades, the king of the underworld, who had taken away Persephone. To make her adapt to the darkness of the underworld, Hades made a replica of the earth for her, with everything the same, the grass, the moon, the bed, the stars, and the sunlight. Nevertheless, when Hades saw this duplicated world, he still had a lot of knots in his heart, presenting a compound spiritual dialogue with multiple voices, just as described in the few lines listed in the poem: Guilt? Terror? The fear of love? He first named this fictional world the new hell, and then he thought it was inappropriate, and named it the Garden, which still seemed inappropriate. Finally, he decided to name it Persephone's Girlhood. It should be noted that the change of the name here also shows the complex evolution of his inner thoughts.

As a matter of fact, what he has fictionally created is indeed a new world different from hell, so it is not wrong to name it as the new hell, but the new hell is still hell after all, so it is described as a garden, which is more in line with Persephone's feminine aesthetic characteristics. Finally, to make it bear the symbolic imprint of the heroine, it was directly named Persephone's Girlhood. This process of dynamic variation shows Glück's ambivalence towards marriage, love, and life. She herself was divorced and her marriage did not bring her happiness, but for this painful emotional experience, Glück borrows the language of Persephone and Hades to state it, especially the happiness and guilt after Hades stole Persephone, and for these emotional experiences, the poetess uses polyphony to reflect the strong senses of substitution, virtualization, and dialogues.

In addition to using classical ancient Greek imagery and Shakespeare's works to structure the dialogue, Glück also looks to other modern Western literary classics for discursive resources, especially the literary works of poets such as T. S. Eliot. "Aside from the world of classical myth, Glück's principal literary reservoir is the rich heritage of English-language poetry. It can be what she has

called the 'inward listening' in John Keats, the solitary, demanding voice of Emily Dickinson, or the tone of urgency in T. S. Eliot. She is drawn to the intimate voice that invites participation" (Olsson "Award ceremony speech"). Glück personifies Keats' introverted voice, Dickinson's solitary voice, and T. S. Eliot's urgent voice, and these voices present not in a monolithic form but characterized and anthropomorphized in the poems, thus generating polyphonic narrative patterns from the textual discourse of the Western literary canon.

For example, in "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats repeatedly emphasizes that he fell in love with the darkness and the silence of death in listening. This "inward listening" is evident in Glück's poetry, for example, in her poem "For My Mother." The whole poem is not about how she loves her mother, but about the painful experience of listening inwardly and waiting alone in the darkness, and the voice of a struggling mind:

> It was better when we were
> together in one body.
> Thirty years. Screened
> through the green glass
> of your eye, moonlight
> filtered into my bones
> as we lay
> in the big bed, in the dark,
> waiting for my father. (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 74)

These lines show that what Glück misses about her mother is not how her mother cared for her and protected her, but rather focuses on describing the time when she was undifferentiated in her mother's womb, vocal resonance and inward listening of mother and daughter that goes straight to the heart. In addition, she describes the moonlight seeping into the bones as they lie in the big bed, waiting for their father in the darkness. The silence of the moment is better than the sound, the listening in the dark, the waiting in the dark, the self-soothing, and the lonely pain in the dark, are all evident in these lines. She does not try to show anyone, but returns from others to her own heart, from light to darkness, constructing an inner structure of listening and dialogue, as Bakhtin says: "Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is, on the contrary, open to inspiration from outside itself — but it is not in any case concentrated simply on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways

glance at another person. It could be said that Dostoevsky offers, in artistic form, something like a sociology of consciousnesses — to be sure, only on the level of coexistence" (Bakhtin 32). This is an important feature of Glück's use of classic literary images and artistic techniques in her poetic works.

II. A Multi-Directional Composite Dialogue

In addition to the dialogue between the ancient and the modern, another polyphonic mode adopted by Glück is the dialogue between the subject and the object, projecting the individualized life experience of the narrating subject into the object imagery and generating a co-existence of the subject and the object. From the existing research materials, some scholars consider Glück a confessional poet. However, it is worth noting that Glück is not strictly a confessional poet in terms of specific poetic texts. Glück made a bold innovation in poetic techniques, and she got rid of the one-dimensional autobiographical monologue. "In Glück's poems, the polyphonic speech acts and their internal multidimensional interactions (rather than the traditional one-dimensional autobiography of the Confessional school) are always crucial in the construction of individual identity" (Bao Huiyi 58). Confessions are one-dimensional central narratives, but Glück is indeed a multi-directional composite narrative, as Olsen argues, "In her writing two contentious truths can share the last word" (Olsson "Award ceremony speech"). This feature forms a logical echo with the content of the analysis in the first part. Specifically, the first part analyzes the dialogue mode of the ancient classics in modern interpretation, and this part focuses on the analysis of the dialogue mode of subjective experience from the perspective of Others.

Then, how does the poet's subjective life experience become a kind of co-existing experience in which the subject and the object intermingle? First of all, we have to sort out the specific connotation and basic characteristics of Glück's subjective life experience. In terms of creative themes, there are differences in themes and approaches in each stage of Glück's poetic creation, but most of them focus on three common life emotional experiences, namely, "loneliness," "pain," and "death." Such life experiences of disillusionment, brokenness, and despair originate from her post-modern spiritual interpretation of Eliot's "The Waste Land" and from the continuation of the inherited sense of loneliness in Dickinson's poetry. Then, how do these three individual life experiences diffuse into a universal value? Or how do they pass through the poet's textual space and enter a resonant space? It is through polyphonic dialogic narration, a technique that Glück uses to the fullest extent, bringing the language of others into the scope of her own language without

breaking the boundaries of this scope. Because of this, the narrative subject in her poems is often characterized by indeterminacy, drift, and variability, and the subject and object also present a dialogic domain. We can look at these interesting lines from "Echoes":

> Once I could imagine my soul
> I could imagine my death.
> When I imagined my death
> my soul died. This
> I remember clearly.
> My body persisted.
> Not thrived, but persisted.
> Why I do not know.
> ……
> if your soul died, whose life
> are you living and
> when did you become that person? (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 515-516.)

These lines are clearly about the recognition of the problem of life and death. Descartes once said "I think, therefore I am," but the focus of Glück's poetics is not "I think," but "I" is diluted, and her focuses on describing the paradoxical existence between soul, death, and body, as well as the spread of the subject's life experience. The poem reads, "Once I could imagine my soul / I could imagine my death./ When I imagined my death / my soul died." From these lines a series of cognitive reflections focusing on the subject can be triggered: Who am I? What is my soul? How do I know my death? Why does my soul die when I imagine my death? These questions are dissolving the subject's authority and deny her cognitive capacity. Moreover, the later verses listed in the text reflect on and question these earlier ones: "if your soul died, whose life / are you living and / when did you become that person?" According to Glück, death is the death of the soul, not the death of the body. Once the soul dies, life ceases to live.

However, she does not always know this clearly ("Why I do not know"), which is a unique poetic experience of the co-existence of life. In the poem, Glück dissolves the centrality of the subject narrator, denies the authority of the discourse of rational consciousness, and allows the plurality of different voices to be released through the argument of the categories of body, soul, death, and existence, forming a resonant structure between the subject and the object, the internal and the external,

and time and space. Moreover, through the polyphonic narrative of spirit and flesh, life and death, it switches from the "unidimensional subject" to the communal experience of the "interactive subject," as Husserl says: "The commonality experienced in the common experience is not but to the unity of the common life of the interacting subject, which in its phenomenological purity links all these spheres together (the reduction of the interacting subjectivity)" (Husserl 184). Using polyphonic narrative and dialogical modes to dissolve the dichotomies between the categories of subject and object, center and periphery, phenomenon and essence, Glück no longer splits and alienates subject and object from a philosophical epistemological perspective, but uses intentionality to form a logical connection between the two, constructing an experience of interactive subject consciousness with phenomenological reduction and essential intuition.

In this sense, Glück's poems are constructed from the perspective of life philosophy as a field of emotional experience between the narrator and the interpreter, so we cannot grasp Glück's poems only from the one-way dimension of time or space, subject or object, but should interpret them from the two directions of spatialized time and temporalized space. For this issue, we can use a few lines from Glück's "The Chicago Train" to argue further:

> Across from me the whole ride
> Hardly stirred: just Mister with his barren
> Skull across the arm-rest while the kid
> Got his head between his mama's legs and slept. The poison
> That replaces air took over.
> And they sat—as though paralysis preceding death
> Had nailed them there. The track bent south.
> I saw her pulsing crotch… the lice rooted in that baby's hair. (Glück, *Firstborn* 5)

These few lines simply outline a few images on the train, but these images show a polyphonic philosophy and a life philosophy of a dialogue between subject and object. Obviously, the train is in motion, but the train is relatively still. The scenery outside the window is beautiful, but the people on the train are a scene of death and ugliness. In her poem, Glück describes such poetic moments: throughout the journey, they are almost motionless, and the child is asleep with his head buried between his mother's legs. Poison replaced the air. They sat there, pinned as if paralyzed before death. The track bent southward, the mother's crotch was pulsing, the lice rooted in the baby's hair... According to everyday experience, this is a

harmonious and peaceful family, but in Glück's vision, there is nothing peaceful and happy about it, but presents some eerie scenes, she uses "barren skull," "the poison," "paralysis preceding death," and "the lice" to write about this family, which convey the message of death and disgust. This is not a factual object, but a subjective object, not a time of movement, but a time of stillness. Gluck described the time of subjectivity, as well as the subject's life experience and aesthetic perspective.

The main reason why Glück's poetry has become a contemporary Western literary canon is this system of interactive subjects in the poetic texts, which then generates a unique philosophy of life poetry. Instead of spatializing the object, she focuses on temporalizing the world from the perspective of life philosophy, as Bergson says: "Movement is no longer grasped from outside, but somehow, in "me," within it, grasped within itself" (Bergson 160). Both inward listening and inward grasping, Glück knows the world from her own intrinsic life experience, but she diffuses this experience from the perspective of the periods, pushing it to the common existence at the level of universal humanity. This is a process in which subject and object intertwine, and a process in which individual life experience resonates with the emotions of others.

Why is the dialogue needed? Because of the fear of being alone. Why do we need an interactive dialogue between the subject and the object? Because the pain of loneliness is unspeakable or unspeakable. From the individual's experience of pain, Glück dialogues with the pain of the other. Pain is my pain and the pain of others. Glück's pain is different from the pain of confession, but a kind of existential pain that transcends the individual. Although her poetic creation for more than half a century has been influenced by various trends such as Romanticism, Realism, Modernism, and Postmodernism, she has innovated her own heterogeneous characteristics. "Although Glück's poetics of life benefited greatly from the various literary trends that preceded her, she did not 'merge' with them, but rather go hand in hand with 'aesthetics' and 'truth' giving the philosophical aesthetics of life in her poetry its aesthetic value and universal significance" (Hu Tiesheng 182).

It is because Glück writes in her poems about the experience of suffering from the perspective of the life philosophy that spatializes time and temporalizes space that it has a polyphonic structure of polyphonic dialogue and makes the consciousness of life a universal consciousness. On the other hand, Glück's symbolic writing of pain, loneliness, and death is not a straightforward description but focuses on contradictions and conflicts, as well as the glory of humanity and the sublime spirit. "Glück's poetry has the paradox of simplicity and profundity, but in her silence there is a talent for difficulty and subtlety. Her poetry is adept at

describing emotions that are internally conflicting and struggling, emotions that are not readily acknowledged as an existence, but Glück grapples with and manages to overcome through her poetry"(Liu Wen 38). Concerning this characteristic, let's look at a few lines from her poem "A Village Life":

> When I was a bird, I believed I would be a man.
> That's the flute. And the horn answers,
> when I was a man, I cried out to be a bird.
> Then the music vanishes. And the secret it confides in me
> vanishes also. (Glück, *A Village Life* 68)

Village life is supposed to be quiet, but Glück finds her restlessness in the quietness. In the poem, the subject identity of the narrator is constantly mutating, as well as constantly denying and contradicting. Glück first writes, "When I was a bird, I believed I would be a man." This suggests that "I," as the narrator, do not have a stable and self-congratulatory identity, but rather a conviction that "I" would become a man, which is illogical. Both the man and the bird are not in the speaker's natural state but have the potential to mutate into a subject of the other. Immediately afterward, however, Glück narrates, "When I was a man, I cried out to be a bird." It can be seen that a man is not the symbol of the subject that the narrator "I" expects, and once she becomes a man, she again clamors to be a bird. Just as Qian Zhongshu described marriage, it is a besieged city where those inside want to come out and those outside want to enter. Life is always trying to live elsewhere, always standing on this mountain and looking at that high mountain. One can never be satisfied with the status quo, not satisfied with the limits of one's ability. Me of the past, me of the present, and me of the future have both differentiation and integration. Therefore, the village life depicted by Glück is not peaceful. She describes the kind of dialogical world in which the subject and the object are intermingled, where there is stillness in movement, change in stillness, the flow of the subject, and variation of the object.

III. An Explicit and Implicit Dialogue between Private and Public Spheres

The previous parts of the paper analyzed two types of polyphonic dialogues in Glück's poetry, the ancient and the modern, the subject, and the guest. Then, the third type, i.e. the explicit and implicit polyphonic dialogue, is the interpretation and transmission of personal private space in the public sphere. It is an accepted fact that Glück's poetry tends to present the structure of her personal private spaces.

However, these private spaces are different from the painful catharsis of the sick, but they provoke a common pain in the reader: "An important characteristic of Glück's poetry is that she transforms her personal experience into poetic art, in other words, her poetry is very private and yet very much loved by the public. But on the other hand, this privateness is in no way biographical, and this is what Glück repeatedly emphasizes" (Liu Xiangyang 271). Why does Glück repeatedly emphasize this point? Why is the privateness of Glück's poetry again not biographical? Why is this intimate element so beloved by the public? One important reason is that in her creative process, Glück's intention is not to express purely personal emotions and construct private spaces, but fundamentally to construct a polyphonic writing mode and spatial field between the private and public spaces, as she believes: "The poems to which I have, all my life, been most ardently drawn are poems of the kind I have described, poems of intimate selection or collusion, poems to which the listener or reader makes an essential contribution, as recipient of a confidence or an outcry, sometimes as co-conspirator" (Glück, "Nobel Lecture").

Her poetry is not a private monologue that speaks for itself; she expects the interpreter not only to listen to one voice emanating from her poetic texts but also to "conspire" with the author's words, to make a different voice together. It is the spiraling interlayer dialogue between the author, the narrator, and the interpreter that creates a polyphonic form in which multiple voices live together in harmony and disparity. It is precisely this feature that has enabled Glück's poetry to transform the structure of the private space of the individual into the public sphere and has made her poetry a classic of world literature.

First, let's analyze how Glück's personal implicit space engages in a spatiotemporal co-temporal dialogue with the public spatial realm. According to Henry Cole, "In her poems, life seems continually to be mirrored in the passing of the seasons. The self (or should I say the soul?) awakens inside a body, like a flowering plum tree, which will fade as autumn comes" (Cole 97). In Glück's poetry, the sense of individual life becomes animated and ethereal in time and space, and also in an inner dialogue with the world. Let's check a few lines of her poem "Averno" how this polyphonic experience is demonstrated:

I stood a long time, staring at nothing.
After a bit, I noticed how dark it was, how cold.
A long time—I have no idea how long.
Once the earth decides to have no memory
time seems in a way meaningless. (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 543)

In these lines, Glück brilliantly describes the effect of the dislocation and juxtaposition of individual space and the public sphere. What is the world? What is the meaning of the world? These questions depend not only on the "self-view" of the world but also on the "gaze" of the individual. As the narrator, "I" see nothing at first, but only later do "I" notice that it is dark and cold, and the most crucial and interesting thing is the last sentence, where the word "earth" is personified, and it has its memory. Once it decides that it has no memory, then time is meaningless. In the scientific sense, time is in absolute motion, and its meaning lies in the continuous existence of "the passing of time." But in Glück's poem, time may or may not have meaning, depending not on time itself, but on the "I" as a subject or the "earth" to which the subject is given meaning. We can subjectively choose to forget, but the fact is undeniable.

Time, therefore, is the extension of life, a continuous experience of being, as Bergson says: "Time is what prevents everything from being given suddenly and in one moment. It delays, or it is itself the retardement" (Bergson 94). It can be seen that in Glück's poetry, time is not presented as an object in absolute terms, but is now a momentary fragment, and its meaning depends on the fluidity of the subject's consciousness, so the classic value of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* lies in the "anti-temporal" phenomenon presented by the stream of consciousness in private space. On the one hand, Glück writes about the private space and the individual experience, but on the other hand, she writes about the indivisibility of the consciousness of life, as well as the spatiotemporal co-temporality of human beings when they face death. Therefore, the temporal co-temporality spreads the individual private space as a virtual symbolic space and discovers the potential reference from the infinite energy.

Second, Glück's poetry strives for a pluralistic resonance in the public sphere, but rejects the manifestation of an authoritarian, arbitrary, singular, absolute, and collective voice, saying, "In art of the kind to which I was drawn, the voice or judgment of the collective is dangerous. The precariousness of intimate speech adds to its power and the power of the reader, through whose agency the voice is encouraged in its urgent plea or confidence" (Glück, "Nobel Lecture"). Both the intimate space of the narrator and the interpretative space of the interpreter give Glück's poetry its depth and weight. On this issue, there is a consensus in the academic community; for example, it has been pointed out that *Wild Iris* writes in three different voices in the poetic texts: "Glück's poetry collection *Wild Iris* is told in three voices, the voice of a flower speaking to man, the voice of man speaking

to God, and the voice of God speaking to man, expressing the poet's ambivalent feelings about religion and death; the poems confronts the horror, hardship and pain of life, and reflects her feelings of helplessness, betrayal and loss with gloomy natural imagery" (Liu Wen 38). In addition, the poem "The Garden" is also characterized by a very typical polyphonic polyphony: "These voices questioning, inquiring, and competing with each other converge into a kind of Bakhtinian polyphonic lyricism, making the earthly garden carefully cultivated by the poet's gardener an arena of words: the garden is a breeding ground for words, and a theater where the confrontation of words is staged (but not refereed). The garden is a breeding ground for words and a theater where the confrontation of words is staged" (Bao Huiyi 56). These assertions hit the nail on the head of Glück's poetry.

To demonstrate this polyphonic narrative and dialogue pattern, let us look at a few lines from Glück's "Clover":

> You should know
> that when you swagger among us
> I hear two voices speaking,
> one your spirit, one
> the acts of your hands. (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 274)

Glück is still using penetrating language here to describe two different voices. From these lines, we can see that there is no single, authoritarian voice, but two compound voices are intertwined. One is a physical hand making sound symbols and their meanings, and one is a voice of the soul speaking. The experience of the speaker is not purely individual, but a composite experience generated through observation and communication with the object. In other words, we can only feel the symbolic experience of the physical hand in the public space, but in the dialogue space, we can see the private experience of the soul.

Moreover, Glück's poetic texts do not replace the public experience with the private experience, nor do they suppress the individual voices with the collective voices, but rather build a "spacing" between the private space and the public sphere. Julien says: "For me, the nature of distance is fundamental, and it is not as the case with difference, which is not apparent or descriptive, but productive. It creates and presents a tension between the two sides it pulls apart. To create tension is precisely what spacing must do" (Jullien 26). An important feature of spacing is the production and variation of discourse and its tensional effect, and it is this feature that allows Glück's poetry to be interpreted differently in different cultural contexts,

as we turn to Glück's "Fable":

> Then I looked down and saw
> the world I was entering, that would be my home.
> And I turned to my companion, and I said Where are we?
> And he replied Nirvana.
> And I said again But the light will give us no peace. (Glück, *Poems 1962-2012* 492)

What parable does Glück tell? Simply put, it is the parable of Nirvana. Apparently, this was a simple conversation. She thought she was about to return to her home, but was not sure, and asked her companion, who told her it was "Nirvana." This word is used in Buddhism and Hinduism to express heaven, the world of bliss. But she was not satisfied with this answer, and she thought that the light would not bring them peace. Why does this conversation seem odd? Because the first part is a factual dialogue, and the second part is a virtual dialogue. The world she entered (The world) is her home, the home of the Earth. What her companion told her was another "blissful world," a spiritual home. There is no darkness, no pain in the blissful world, only infinite light and joy. But the narrator, who initially believes that they are entering a home, denies that the light will bring peace when she learns that it is the world of bliss, or that she does not wish to enter such a home. It can be seen that the poet is confused, painful, and complicated about the concept of "home." She wants to return to the peace of reality, and the religious sense of self-soothing does not completely satisfy this desire, so she can only return to her nature in the earthly world. Therefore, Glück constructs a house of death, a public space, and a spiritual world in addition to the individual house, the private space, and the material world. The different worlds are misplaced in dialogue and spiral negation, showing a unique artistic effect.

Conclusion

Glück's poetry is recognized by a world readership because it presents a dynamic space of dialogic variation through the space of textual stasis, which Damrosch says: "The shape of the new canon can be illustrated in various ways, both within national literature and across them" (Damrosch 46). Readers in the world see Glück's poetry as bringing a universal experience of life that stems from a circular transcendental structure: a structure that allows Glück's poetry to be both independent and dialogic, with Glück's group poems forming a mode of dialogue between the private space

and the public sphere that can be effectively interpreted by readers. “Everywhere the claim of hermeneutics seems capable of being met only in the infinity of knowledge, in the thoughtful fusion of the whole of tradition with the present” (Gadamer 337). She not only constructs the dialectical unity of the traditional and the current perspectives but also the deep fusion of subject and object, private space and public space, thus manifesting the differentiated poetic elements, which also gives a universal value and significance to Glück’s poems.

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"Because in Truth, I'm Never a Victim": Identities, Perceptions, and Narrative Beginnings in Anita Moorjani's Cancer Memoir *Dying To Be Me*

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Abstract This paper focuses on Anita Moorjani's memoir *Dying to be Me* (2012) to outline the identity of the patient-narrator who narrates her illness story to reconfigure her life which has been altered by the sudden onset of Lymphoma. In recounting the subjective experience of her illness, Moorjani plots her growth as an individual who claims voice and agency and regains it by decolonizing the hegemonic tropes of medical science. The illness narrative maps the patient-narrator's journey from her illness to healing and subsequent restitution. The paper highlights the problems associated with the beginnings of such illness narratives and the efforts made by the narrator to locate an inception moment to narrate her story. The present article revisits the theoretical postulates of Arthur Frank, Arthur Kleinman and Shlomith Rimmon Kenan on illness narratives. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's concept of "narrative identity," Roy Schafer's concept of narrative and Edward Said's thoughts on beginnings and origin, the paper aims to delineate the problem of "beginnings," the dilemmas associated with identity and the various patient perceptions which shape Moorjani's memoir.

Keywords Illness narrative; patient perceptions; subjective experience; narrative inception; identity dilemmas

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Introduction

Although bio-medical intervention is necessary for diagnosing and treating illnesses such as cancer, the tendency of clinical narratives to eclipse the patient's subjective experience of illness and healing is well established. This paper is motivated by a notable new wave of records on terminal illness, specifically cancer. By taking this writing seriously as literature, it examines how the authors of such personal narratives come to write of and negotiate their experiences of illness between the extremes of cliché and extraordinariness in text and the wider public realm. The text we have selected for our study is Anita Moorjani's memoir *Dying to be Me* (2012). The author of this memoir is the narrator-protagonist of her story. This cancer narrative is written from the first-person point of view.

Moorjani's memoir *Dying to be Me* (2012) voices her illness experience and tells us about her perceptions of cancer. It also relates the importance of storytelling and the difficulties in putting into a narrative framework the author's experiences and insights when she is diagnosed with cancer. It is challenging to narrate a body fighting against cancer because a diseased body eludes language (Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller* 2). Additionally, Arthur Kleinman asserts, "illness is polysemic or multivocal; illness experiences and events usually radiate (or conceal) more than one meaning" (Kleinman 8). The body and the voice narrating the illness constantly change. However, the story binds everything together into a coherent whole. Illness stories turn events and chronology into purpose and meaning (Taylor 2). Illness both shapes and fragments the narrative. The author works out her identity by telling the story. She also offers herself and her story as a guide to others' self–formation. Moorjani writes, "the main purpose of sharing my story is so that others do not have to go through what I went through" (xiii).

Moorjani's memoir allows readers to seek confirmation of their experience in her story. There takes place socialization. It enables others who read or listen to

her story to identify, share with fellow sufferers, and overcome their solitude. The memoir is not only a window into her experiences of illness and construction of identity but also a service to others in a similar, vulnerable situation. Once a person is sick, he has to narrate his illness (why it hurts? how it feels?) to people around him who demand to hear about his condition. Illness demands stories. (Frank, *The Wounded* 54). Roy Schafer explains,

> we are forever telling stories about ourselves. In telling these self-stories to others we may, for most purposes, be said to be performing straightforward narrative actions. In saying that we also tell them to ourselves, however, we are enclosing one story within another. This is the story that there is a self to tell something to, a someone else serving as audience who is oneself or one's self... On this view, the self is a telling. (31)

Within the pages of *Dying to be Me,* Moorjani narrates her childhood in Hong Kong, her professional life and true love- Danny, her diagnosis of lymphoma, the clinical encounters, her tryst with alternative medicine and her treatment on the medical bed where she had her near-death experience and subsequent recovery. The present essay discusses the problems associated with narrating a cancer story. The first section of the paper will look at why it is challenging to identify and describe accurately the exact moment when cancer cells enter a healthy person's body. This section will analyze the concept and the need for beginnings in illness narratives and how the author attempts to narrate her story by selecting an event as the origin of her story. The second part of the essay will discuss the interplay and overlapping of diagnostic and narrative identity and the dilemmas associated with identity in Moorjani's story. The third part of the essay will delineate various coping mechanisms and patients' perceptions on cancer. It will discuss the influence of perceptions and emotional responses on the illness narrative and how the narrative gives meaning to these perceptions and serves as a way out of the negative stereotypes associated with cancer.

Through the Lens of Beginnings

The literary understanding of narrative perspective highlights the challenge of explaining a beginning from an epistemological standpoint. Beginnings are frequently cited as being arbitrary in narratives by literary theorists who have studied them. According to J. Hillis Miller, who draws inspiration from the writings of Said and Derrida, "the paradox of beginnings is that one must have something

solidly present and pre-existent, some generative source or authority, on which the development of a new story may be based. That antecedent foundation needs in turn some prior foundation, in an infinite regress" (57). Finding a precise answer to the question of when the story begins is challenging. Is it the dramatized scene, incident, act, or significant occurrence that occurs first in time? Is the opening sentence of a story its true beginning? However, any story, whether fictitious or nonfictional, public, or personal, must have a beginning.

Stories about cancer usually begin after diagnosis. In autopathographies[1], the narrative usually starts with a significant event or moment in the series of occasions connected to the narrator's condition. In cancer memoirs, authors look back on their experiences and attempt to convey to the reader the "oncogenesis[2]" moment, or the exact point when they stopped being healthy people, and their sensations began to resemble cancer symptoms. In Susan Sontag's words, they transitioned from the "kingdom of the well to the kingdom of the sick" (3). Moorjani's memoir *Dying to be Me* begins with the prologue, "The day I died." The author recounts with mathematical precision her experience of the day when she was rushed to the hospital. She writes,

> My organs were beginning to shut down as I succumbed to the cancer that had ravaged—no, devoured—my body for the past four years. It was February 2, 2006, a day that will be etched in my memory forever as the day I "died." (3)

Not with Moorjani's birth, the early symptoms of Cancer, or the doctor's diagnosis, does her story begins. The story starts with an experience etched in her memory as a compelling and vital event that enables her to develop her story. The patient-narrator, finds the moment where she recognizes herself as an individual on the hospital bed and believes that she can narrate her own tale without surrendering to the hegemonic declarations on the medical charts that portray her as a diseased body. She tries to identify a fixed point, a particular day, that can act as the foundation for the series of events that would form her narrative.

A chronic condition like cancer presents a challenge to narration since it compromises and distorts the coherence in the patient's life. Narratologist

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1 Autopathography is a combination of the term "autobiography" and "pathography." Autopathographies are autobiographical narratives of experiences with illness written by the patient.

2 Oncogenesis is the process by which healthy cells develop malignant characteristics and spread throughout the body. It is the development or growth of tumors in a body.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her essay "What Can Narrative Theory Learn from Illness Narratives?" puts illness narratives into the 'extreme test case' category in narrative studies. She argues, illness "collapses the sufferer's sense of order" and the "disintegrating body may threaten the very possibility of narration" (245). As a result, illness both influences and disperses the story. Anita's lymphoma is not only the subject of her story; it is the condition of her body through which she narrates her experience. In her illness memoir, continuity and disruption interact, and the story constantly tries to deal with the latter. Moorjani searches for a crucial point when her cancer begins in this interplay of disorder and order. The narrator is no longer the healthy person she once was at this particular juncture in the story, which signifies a turning point. Niels Buch Leander contends that "there can be no beginning independent of the particular narrative we bring to it" (19). He argues that the fact that the beginning identifies the event as such is significant since, epistemologically speaking, we never describe an event in its entirety; we only tell it under a specific description. "A beginning needs a supporting narrative, which can characterize the beginning as an event... So instead of starting at "the beginning," we must start with the description we want to use to position the event" (Leander 19). Moorjani must select a temporal point as the genesis moment to narrate her story of lymphoma and subsequent healing. Her memoir starts with the day she was rushed to the hospital. This moment is not the exact moment when cancer cells invade her body. It is not her biological beginning either. The day she was rushed to the hospital is the beginning of her narrative because it is apprehended as such by her narrating self.

According to Catherine Belling, "Pathographies begin not with the emergence of disease but with the emergence of the narrator-author as a diseased person" (Belling 232). Belling contends that the narrator in cancer memoirs establishes a precise temporal starting point for her narrative, the moment the tumor created the first sensation that could have been a symptom. Interpreting a sensation as a symptom is an act of emplotment[1] since it necessitates creating a cause and a narrative trajectory to situate the experience. Although Moorjani's story starts with the day when she was rushed to the hospital, it is not the beginning of her story. The opening sentence of her memoir, which as Stephen Kellman says, "thrust us immediately into the text" (146), is also not the beginning of the story. As readers, we don't know what happened before or what happens next. They can be considered significant events but not the absolute beginning. It can also be argued that 26 April

1 Emplotment, interpreted literally, is the process of weaving together a number of historical events into a story with a clear plot.

2002 can be viewed as the beginning of her story when "the lump on her right shoulder just above the collarbone" became much "more than a cyst or large boil." Anita writes,

> April 26, 2002, is a day neither Danny nor I will forget easily…It was late Friday afternoon, the last day of work before sharing a weekend together…. I'd had a biopsy, and I was getting the results that day. The doctor was very gentle and kind as he broke the news: "You have lymphoma, which is a form of cancer of the lymphatic system." (44)

Moorjani's diagnosis and the lump on her shoulder can be regarded as the genesis of cancer in her story. Cancer was anthropomorphized by the swelling and sensations she experienced. It is impossible for her to pinpoint the precise moment of rupture—the split second when, in Susan Sontag's words, she "emigrates to the kingdom of the ill" (3), when the cancer cells first invade her body. As a result, her story cannot begin when cancer cells infiltrate her body. The discovery that she has lymphoma is a significant event in her illness memoir. It can be considered as the inception of her medical story, or the origin of cancer in her story. But her narrative starts when she becomes the patient-narrator, fully conscious of her medical condition, rather than when she first felt the lump on her shoulder or was taken to the hospital.

"Is a beginning the same as an origin? Is the beginning of a given work its real beginning, or is there some other, secret point that more authentically starts the work off?" enquires Edward Said in *Beginnings* (3). Said postulates, "between the word beginning and the word origin lies a constantly changing system of meanings" (5). He adds,

> [beginning is] an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment ... beginnings are historical whereas origins are divine…the designation of a beginning generally involves also the designation of a consequent intention ... when we point to the beginning of a novel, for example, we mean that from that beginning in principle follows this novel ... The beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning. (xiii- 5)

The lump on her shoulder provides Anita with the inception moment to start her story of illness. The opening sentence in her prologue where she was rushed to the hospital is a significant event on which she could rest her narrative of illness and

subsequent healing. But it is not the beginning of her story. Her biological beginning is also not the beginning of her story because it depends on other narrations. The origin of cancer in her body cannot be the beginning of her story because she cannot know the exact oncogenesis moment. The origin lies somewhere away from the beginning; it is not in the moment of diagnosis nor her sensations of the lump in her body. The origin of her story, the oncogenesis moment, lies in her awareness when she starts "researching everything she could about cancer and its possible causes" (Moorjani 43). When she feels the lump near her collarbone, Anita writes, "In that moment, I refused—rather, I demanded that it be nothing more than a cyst or large boil. Yet the ugly little voice in the back of my mind, a predictor of doom, harped at me relentlessly, convincing me it was more than that" (43).

Anita's memoir begins when she is rushed to the hospital. She decides on that day as the starting point of her narrative. Her identity as a cancer patient is constructed after her diagnosis. But the beginning of her story, the genesis of cancer in her memoir- lies somewhere between her diagnosis and recovery- in Horatian terms- *in medias res*[1]. Moorjani being taken to the hospital or her early life being portrayed in the first chapter or the opening of the text, almost definitely have no bearing on the series of events that later unfold: it does not crystallize the events surrounding her illness, which molds her narrative. The story "originates without purpose or meaning in a space" she "contained but did not inhabit" (Belling 245). It begins *in medias res*- deep inside her awareness, not when she received a diagnosis or was transported to the hospital—at a time that neither human beings nor medical science can describe. However, this beginning is never static, and it shifts continuously with the shifting identities of the patient- narrator. According to Brian Richardson, no clear method exists to determine a story's precise beginning; instead, we must choose a guiding concept that will point us in the right way. Richardson asserts, "beginnings are provisional concepts, inherently unstable, typically elusive, and always capable of being rewritten" (125). Since beginnings are tricky and frequently subjective and ambiguous, our most realistic definition of where Anita's story actually begins will be one that is considered to be in flux. Anita's memoir challenges us to reconsider the conventional notions of 'beginnings' and to acknowledge the dynamic and subjective nature of the narrative inception, emphasizing that the genesis of a story lies not in a single definitive moment but in

1 In medias res, a Latin expression that means "in the midst of things," It is a literary term used to describe situations where a character enters a scene or a story in the middle of the action. The opening of a narrative work that starts in the middle of the action is known as an in medias res beginning. The words "in medias res" were originally used in Horace's Ars Poetica.

the ongoing process of meaning-making that evolves in the interplay between the narrator's shifting identities and the reader's interpretive engagement.

Renegotiating Identity

The analysis of illness narratives has consistently indicated a view of such narratives as fundamentally a portrayal of events, such as the events preceding the illness, the events associated explicitly with the illness, and the interconnections between all of these events. Identity is frequently defined as the ability to present a cohesive, developing account of one's life that includes all significant events, including those connected to the illness. In many ways, illness highlights the connection between identity and narrative because trauma and disease put ordinary identities—which are often taken for granted—under pressure. "Acting like a sponge, illness soaks up personal and social significance from the world of the sick person" (Kleinman 31). Numerous studies have claimed that narratives present events in a logical manner and that doing so helps people form identities. Narratologist Shlomith Rimmon Kenan in her essay "The Story of "I": Illness and Narrative Identity" contends, "we lead our lives as stories, and our identity is constructed both by stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves and by the master narratives that consciously or unconsciously serve as models for ours" (Kenan 11). In illness narratives, the old self which the upheaval brought by the illness has disintegrated is recreated. Moorjani's cancer memoir *Dying to be Me* sheds light on her lived encounters with cancer and her understanding of it. Her experience exemplifies the connection between her narrative identity, diagnostic identity, author/protagonist self, and attempts to establish a balance between her identities.

In her ground-breaking study *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry asserts that pain is intrinsically uncommunicable because it actively subverts language rather than merely rejecting it. "As the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. World, self and voice are lost" (Scarry 35). Therefore, Anita's attempts to portray her sufferings must have taken place during times of remission, when she was capable of recalling and eventually reconstructing the experience of suffering. Illness episodes are difficult to tell. In addition, most writers frequently limit their descriptions to the details they can recollect or that can be rationally justified. The majority of illness narratives, according to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan are linear and cohesive despite the challenges that illness narrative authors face when attempting to describe what is sometimes an almost impossible experience to describe. Rimmon-Kenan, who

considers this narration style problematic, questions whether narrative fragmentation wouldn't be the most appropriate form for the experience of fragmented narrative identity (Rimmon-Kenan, *The Story of I* 19). The disruption of identity caused by illness makes the author's narrative identity challenging to comprehend.

In stories concerning a person's illness, this implied distinction between what is experienced and what is recounted is particularly common. Anita lives more in or through her illness than in her memoir. The narration of her illness is trying to make sense of cancer, and it is symbolic and representational, even if the account is disjointed or contradictory. It can be argued that her retelling becomes a narrative when it is entangled in the pursuit of personal identity. Numerous theorists have suggested that narrative is an important way to give our lives significance and that making up stories about oneself relates to developing one's sense of self. According to Lindemann Nelson, "Personal identities are made up of a network of narratives that we weave around the aspects of our lives and selves that are most important to us. Some of these narratives are constant, while others change over time" (72). The conversations that are important to Anita, the roles and connections she cares about most, and the significant illness-related events that she has lived through and can recall serve as the foundations on which the narrative that makes up her sense of herself is built. The stories help her understand who she is and are her contribution to her personal identity.

Anita constructs her identity and self-concept through narrative configuration, and she tries to make her life a whole by viewing it as an embodiment of a single unfolding and developing tale. However, we can never know how our stories will end while we are still living because the plot is constantly altering as new events take place in our lives. Identity, then, is not stable or an entity but rather the ordering of events into a narrative whole that includes both one's past and future. Like many cancer patients, Anita experiences the early markers of identity threat—body indicators, strained relationships, and interactions with medical institutions—making her feel that she is a separate individual.

> I wouldn't even answer the phone because I didn't want to talk about my illness, I didn't want anybody's advice on how to handle what was going on inside me, and I didn't want to repeatedly answer the endless questions that people who care tend to ask. I stopped going out and stayed in the safety of my own home. (Moorjani 52)

In autobiographical literature, we find the aspects of the shared space of experiences

where identity is located. In Moorjani's memoir, cancer redefines this social environment, shatters close friendships, and rearranges the geography of social interactions. Anita's social environment as a patient is one of illness rather than health. With this alteration, she must renegotiate the meaning of her connections with her family and friends from a new vantage point. Anita's story reflects an ongoing series of efforts to analyze the significance of her personal experience. The idea of identification describes this process because it places the unwell person in the existing framework of continuous organized social relationships within which their experience will be defined.

The self-trajectory narrative takes a sharp turn at this point, where Anita realizes that her identity as a patient is different from what she was. So, to say, the narrative that was present before Anita's diagnosis is no longer consistent with what happens after. Due to this broken fit, a new narrative driven by a renegotiation of identity is desired. How the ill self relates to her identity after the diagnosis serves as the framework for the narrative. In the words of Roy Schafer, the self turns into "a telling" (31). This "telling" reconstructs the self. The appropriate definition of illness narratives is that they "heighten one's awareness of one's mortality, threatening one's sense of identity, and disrupting the apparent plot of one's life" (Couser 5). However, the telling restores the ill self's lost voice, identity, and agency. Anita's narration becomes a step in the direction of her new identity. "I believe that my cancer was related to my self-identity, and it feels as though it was my body's way of telling me that my soul was grieving for the loss of its own worth—of its identity" (Moorjani 180).

In Moorjani's memoir, the configuration of her subjective experience to plot a story that can be told to the self and the world progresses from an ill self-story to a recovery story. However, her diagnostic identity often overlaps with her narrative identity. The narrative gives her back her identity, which was fragmented due to cancer. Her diagnosis gives her a new identity in the world of medicine- the identity of a "patient." The diagnostic identity is inextricably linked with her narrative identity because it is her ill body which is simultaneously the "cause, topic and instrument of whatever stories are being told" (Frank, *The wounded Storyteller* 2). The body is diagnosed with cancer, and the body narrates the story. "I still had cancer and couldn't run from the knowledge. How was I to get away from my own body?" (Moorjani 45) The medical narrative which gives Anita her identity as a patient is woven together with her identity as the narrator who narrates her own story.

While narrating her story, Anita, the narrator of the memoir, introduces a "double" a fictional version of herself as a character in the illness story. This

character is the protagonist of the story, and it is through this character we, as readers, see what happens in the story. She enhances her understanding of the present reality and herself by narrating her tale in the roles of the patient and the storyteller. She can identify with them, reject them, or assert that a change or development has occurred by introducing new versions of the self. Through the narrative extension of identities, Moorjani is able to highlight a new aspect of herself that she wants to draw attention to at a certain point in the conversation. By offering contrasts and alternatives and exposing continuity and discontinuity in her character, Anita negotiates her identity.

Different identities come into play in the act of narration. But while telling her story, the narrative identity dominates her diagnostic identity. She makes her diagnosis a significant event in her story through her narration. Her diagnosis shapes her character as a "patient." The narration shapes her "identity as an individual." "The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character" (Ricoeur 147-8). To recognize ourselves again and move past the idea of the diseased self that stigmatizes and distorts our identity, we need to say who we have become and do so in public. Anita's cancer narrative illustrates her transformation and asserts a public claim on her new self. She has always had a strong sense of narrative identity, and in her diagnosis of cancer, she gains a new, corporeal dimension to it. A greater and more profound understanding of self and identity emerges from her illness.

Anita's memoir depicts her numerous, inconsistent, and disjointed experiences as well as the multiple identities created from and made up of those experiences. Her identities are never static; they are always in motion. Even though the narrator's "I" could be interpreted as a constant, Anita's identity as a character alters as a result of the experiences and occurrences of cancer. In Moorjani's memoir, the diagnostic and narrative identities intersect and diverge. Her illness narrative can be regarded as an identity narrative which, like narratives about ongoing lives, is the subject of revisions and retellings, ensuring that it is never complete but is always in progress. Moorjani makes the case that rewriting one's life is a crucial step in recovering from illness. Although a person with lymphoma may experience fragmented life experiences, with time, a strong sense of self and identity can continually be reclaimed and renegotiated.

Coping with Cancer: Patient Perceptions

Emotional and physical difficulties are hallmarks of cancer. Multiple clinicians,

harsh therapies, and unknown results all contribute to the complexity of treatments. Unfortunately, communication with cancer patients is sometimes not at its best. A patient's quality of care is more likely to be damaged because they often leave consultations feeling overwhelmed, with unmet expectations, apprehension about treatment plans, and uncertainty about who to contact with questions. The idea of "illness perceptions" was developed by contemporary empirical research in behavioral medicine to analyze, comprehend, and address patients' perceptions of their disease. Illness perceptions are defined as "the cognitive (i.e., beliefs, ideas, thoughts) and emotional (i.e., feelings) representations of symptoms and illnesses" (Kaptein and Broadbent 268-273). In chronic illness, perceptions of the condition play a significant role in predicting the prognosis and adjustments.

Anita's memoir provides insight into the existential predicament of dealing with cancer. The memoir presents cancer at first as a terrifying illness connected to observable growths, pain, and suffering. Anita begins to think that cancer was caused by everything. She starts fearing "pesticides, microwaves, preservatives, genetically modified foods, sunshine, air pollution, plastic food containers, mobile phones, and so on. this progressed until eventually, I started to fear life itself" (Moorjani 43). Her perceptions shift as the story continues, and she begins to think that psychological and emotional triggers were a factor in her developing cancer.

Creating new identities is a common component of cancer survival and may significantly impact relationships and general well-being. Integrating one's experience with cancer into one's self-concept often entails creating new identities. The new identities lead to new perceptions. Anita contends that her cancer impacted her sense of self-identity and believed it to be her body's way of conveying that her soul was lamenting the loss of its sense of self-worth. People with Cancer generally adopt the identity of a victim, patient and survivor. However, the identity which Anita never endorses in her journey with Cancer is that of a victim. She writes,

> Why did something so big— like this terminal cancer thing—happen to me just for not realizing my own magnificence? Simultaneously, I had this understanding: Ooh, I see—it didn't happen to me, because in truth, I'm never a victim. The cancer is just my own unexpressed power and energy! It turned inward against my body, rather than outward. (165)

Anita plays the part of a patient before transitioning into a survivor. She also serves as the story's narrator. But she never views herself as a victim because the word "victim" connotes helplessness in the face of one's illness, a lack of agency,

and perhaps a persistent vulnerability. Victim implies that one should perceive their disease as the consequence of external factors, which evokes feelings of wrongdoing, injustice, and helplessness. Anita sees her disease as a manifestation of her own unexpressed power and energy. She never uses the metaphor of punishment to justify her cancer. "I knew it wasn't a punishment or anything like that. It was just my own life force expressing itself as cancer" (165). She is constantly conscious of her cancer diagnosis throughout the memoir. To cope with it, she empowers her energies, makes an effort to manage her body and her attitude, and relies on both conventional medicine and alternative treatments. She never imposes the blame for her condition on herself or others.

Despite the increasing ability to treat and cure cancer, people still dread it and regard it as a death sentence. The treatment of cancer scares people more than the disease itself. In her memoir, Anita elaborates and confirms a range of emotional reactions to her illness. Fear is the one that gets the most discussion. Fear rules her life much before her diagnosis. She writes, "Prior to my diagnosis, one of my biggest fears in life had been getting cancer—it seemed to be occurring with more frequency to people I knew" (47). Her diagnosis confirms her fear which she had much before cancer invaded her body. She further writes, "The fear of cancer now gripped me in its vice; it seemed to shove my stomach into my throat with a clenched fist. The effects of chemotherapy frightened me even more. Every muscle tightened in a protective clamp and held onto life" (47). This fear shadows her decisions, and she denies undergoing chemotherapy and radiation.

Arthur Frank characterizes first-person narratives of illness as "dramatic." In his essay "Five Dramas of Illness," he gives us a five-drama framework, which is mainly found in autobiographical accounts of illness: the drama of genesis (what instigated the illness); the drama of emotion work (what emotional displays are required or prohibited); the drama of fear and loss; the drama of meaning; and finally, the drama of self" (Frank 379). The frameworks that have the greatest influence on Moorjani's account of her experience with cancer and her perceptions are 'drama of emotional work' and 'drama of fear and loss.' The drama of emotional work drives Anita's behavior to prevent her condition from affecting others.

> As my health declined, I didn't like the way others felt sorry for me and made allowances for me, as though I were different or not normal… But through all this, I put up a front. I laughed and smiled and made small talk, even when I didn't want to, because it was important to me not to cause concern or worry anyone else with my condition. I didn't want others to feel upset or

> uncomfortable because of my situation, so I continued to put the feelings and needs of everyone else before my own. (51-52)

In Anita's story, the drama of emotional work and the drama of fear and loss are folded imperturbably into the experience of illness. The drama of emotional work keeps the reader expecting a moment when the drama cannot go on any further. Frank postulates, "The dramatic tension is how long that discrepancy between feeling and enactment can be sustained—how long the person doing the emotion work can live with the self-estrangement caused by that work" (Frank, *Five Dramas* 387). Moorjani, in her memoir, experiences and reflects on her emotional responses to her malignancy. She goes through a roller coaster ride of emotions—grief, anger, fear, denial, impatience, a feeling of loss and hope in her battle with cancer. But the expression of fear and loss surpasses all her other perceptions as a patient. Her fear of chemotherapy, fear of the unknown, anxiety of not carrying out her roles in the future, and fear of losing her loved ones supersedes her other emotions. Drama of emotional work is followed by drama of fear and loss. She writes,

> I felt sorry that my presence made others feel so uncomfortable, so at this point I stopped going out in public altogether. Soon, I found myself locked in my own cage of fear and desperation, where my experience of life was getting smaller and smaller. Time slid by in a slippery descent. (53)

Her fear and desperation make her disillusioned with everything around her. She starts questioning her existence, her treatment, and the world around her. Every morning she wakes up with a "glimmer of hope" but every night brought with it a "greater sense of defeat" than the previous day (53). "Unshared loss and fear can destroy but when these emotions are articulated within narratives, the stories can take care of those who tell them" (Frank, *Five Dramas* 389). In sharing her overwhelming fears with her husband Danny and in writing her memoir, Anita saves herself from getting consumed by the ocean of apprehensions. Through articulating her fears and speaking about them, Anita makes her fear and sense of loss mere players in her story and not the entire story.

Cancer and predominantly the sense of loss and pain associated with it puts the patient in a liminal state, which is shown particularly well in Moorjani's memoir. There is fear and despair. But hope and strength also exist. The memoir narrates the experiences of illness and personhood as well as patient hood. It enables the readers and the author to comprehend the patient- narrator's perceptions about various

dimensions of her illness, body, self and emotional life. Moorjani's perceptions of her illness make her narrative more holistic than the reductionist medical narratives. These distinctions emphasize the crevices between the bio-medical reports on cancer and the patient's bodily experience of cancer as established by studies and research in anthropology, health humanities, and social sciences. Anita's perspectives and experiences are crucial for understanding how to improve patient-centered treatment and how care delivery can result in improved results in healthcare.

Conclusion

This essay concludes by stating that by narrating her subjective experience of illness in her memoir *Dying to be Me,* Anita Moorjani is locating herself in the narrative and reconfiguring her selfhood, which is disrupted by the malignant cells in her body. In her efforts to narrate the unnarratable, she tries to lend coherence to chaos and plot a logical, ordered narrative by organizing the disordered events and experiences associated with her illness. Moorjani's narrative originates in medias res- somewhere between the start of her story and the genesis of cancer in her body and the beginning constantly evolves. However, she attempts a temporal ordering of events to give her story—a beginning, a middle and an end, like all other narratives. It is her story which identifies her as a human subject rather than a bodily pathology. The narrative works as a repair work on the disruption caused by cancer. It reconciles her past with her present and enables her to envision a better future full of hope and well-being. The narrative illuminates the fundamental rupture in her selfhood and the alteration in her life caused by cancer. It also helps her to make sense of the cancer cells in her body, restore her identity and associations, have clear perceptions about her condition, and retrieve her story from the medical metanarrative.

Funding: This work was supported by the University Grants Commission, India. UGC Reference number- 2580/ (NET- DEC 2018).

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Unfettered Minds in Prison and Exile in Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

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Abstract One outstanding issue in African literature is prison and exile writings. In such literary works, freedom, prison and exile have different interpretations and symbolism, especially in relation to female writers. Accordingly, the research seeks to show the symbolism of prison and exile in Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. Albeit the selected works exhibit restrained bodies either in prison or exile, the study sheds light on the unfettered minds of Djebar's and El Saadawi's characters. It focuses on the positive side of both prison and exile. The analysis unravels that the real meaning of prison or exile, for women, like Sarah, Nadjia and Aicha in Djebar's texts and Firdaus in El Saadawi's novel, goes beyond the confines of its space. Despite the fact that women are imprisoned or exiled, they are free from the social shackles, while other free women are imprisoned or exiled by abiding to social conventions. Thus, the internalized prison is the most atrocious experience and the true exile is living in the past and accepting social practices. For Djebar's and El Saadawi's characters, prison or exile is regarded as a room of one's own to ponder about the true meaning of freedom.

Keywords Exile; freedom; prison; social conventions; symbolism

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Introduction

Freedom is a precious and sacred matter for everyone. It is celebrated by a

myriad of authors in English and non-English languages. All people are eager to reach it over many years and all over the world: East, West and Middle East and African people are no exception. Many African authors complain about their communities' miserable situations during the European colonization as well as in post- colonial era. However, their writings led to their boycott, persecution, incarceration, death and exile. Hence, among the prominent topics in African literature is prison and exile. Yet, the meanings of prison and exile are not merely limited to the common sense of both places with their conventional definitions related to political views. In relation to female authors, prison and exile have another symbolism. They are related to social shackles that suffocate women. Thus, from an analytical perspective, the present study seeks to unravel the symbolism of prison and exile in Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. It casts light on the freedom of the female characters' minds to escape social imprisonments and exile in the selected oeuvres.

Theoretical Background

In general, prison and exile are confinements linked to politics and political views. They are regarded as places of alienation and outcast. However, they have other interpretations and symbolism. They are not merely places of nightmarish experiences. They can be a cradle of creation and in-depth reasoning about social and existential matter.

Starting by prison, it is related to atrocious experiences; however, the present research highlights its positive side as a place of inspiration. Lehlohonolo Moagi, a political fighter from South Africa, says: "The mind is at its peak behind bars. Solitary confinement unearths some pure depth of thought, hidden beneath layers of vague existential contradictions. In jail you develop faith in reason, human knowledge and wisdom becomes a religion. Time is at your disposal. You interrogate appalling fallacies of modern thought" (qtd. in Nagel 72). In this case, prison provides a positive environment for writers and intellectuals inasmuch as they are completely devoted to writing unlike their situation in their usual life. Furthermore, for Barbara Harlow, "the site of political prison" is regarded as a "'university' for the resistance" (*Barred* 5). Hence, prison is an essential stage in political resistance, especially in Africa. In the same vain, Ngugi wa Thiong'o also has a say in relation to the positive side of prison out of his personal experience. He opines: "Cell 16 would become for me what Virginia Woolf had called *A Room of One's Own* and which she

claimed was absolutely necessary for a writer. Mine was provided free by the Kenya government" (64). Thus, prison is viewed from a positive perspective as a room of creation and thinking.

Apart from its connotation as a physical confinement, prison can also be spiritual. In relation to women's rights, prison has a mental meaning because patriarchy is considered as a prison for women. In this case, many feminists call for the abolishment of mental prison. For Mechthild Nagel, "the outside may prove to be more imprisoning than the cell itself" (73). Accordingly, the physical cell of the prison extends to any place in the society that provides shackles to people's freedom. For this reason, feminists promote women's emancipation from the prison of patriarchal societies. Hammed Shahidian, an Iranian feminist, says: "feminism is a movement to abolish patriarchy, to protect human beings from being prisoners of fixed identities, to contribute towards a society in which individuals can fashion their lives free from economic, political, social and cultural constraints" (11-12). In other words, patriarchal practices generate mental prisons for women. Henceforth, feminists attack such prisons to get women's freedom. In addition, Nawal El Saadawi, out of her personal experience as a prisoner, explains the meaning of prison in her introduction of her book, entitled *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, in the Arabic version by saying: "But the prison today is no longer a visible wall, prison has become something I breathe in the air, a siege around the mind and intangible and invisible control" (8). For her, mental prison is more problematic than the cell of prison. It is implemented in the patriarchal society to suffocate women's thoughts and ideas.

Like prison, exile is not only limited to geographical isolation. A person can be exiled in his own country through psychological exile. For Edward Said, exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted [...]. Like death, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography" ("Reflections" 137-138). Furthermore, the feeling of estrangement is not only outside the land and home, but it can be within the same homeland. According to Edward Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*, "Exile is one of the saddest fates [...] it not only meant years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, but also meant being a sort of permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home, and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and the future" (47). Thus, the bitter experience of geographical exile can be extended to every person's mind to be exiled within his own community and

inside the borders of his country.

In fact, many researches shed light on the negative consequences of exile on people. However, this research focuses on its positive aspects, particularly in relation to exiled women. Edward Said says: "the exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" ("Reflections" 147). Thus, instead of being a curse, exile can be a blessing because a person goes beyond the confines of homes and barriers. In this case, it provides a new vision far away from the original homeland. Said ascertains: "Seeing 'the entire world as a foreign land' makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and his plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music- is contrapuntal" ("Reflections" 148). Accordingly, exile provides refugees with an external perspective to have various visions about their reality. Exile is not only a source of alienation. It can be a source of inspiration and new vision. Said says: "Exile [...] is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past [....]. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people" ("Reflections" 140-141). Therefore, such a triumphant ideology can be a starting point for feminists.

Actually, Edward Said did not theorize about gender and exile. Yet, his ideas have been extended to postcolonial feminism to tackle the relationship between psychological exile and feminism. For Said, home is safety; however, exile is not inasmuch as "the achievement of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever" ("Reflections" 137). Nevertheless, not all memories of home are linked to tenderness, like the case of feminists. Nawal El Saadawi, as an outstanding displaced feminist, says: "I live behind invisible walls and live in alienation and exile within the homeland" (8). As a feminist writer, she suffers from mental internal exile in her country and she was forced by the government to flee Egypt because of her ideas.

In fact, few studies tackle the relationship between feminism and exile. L.H.M. Ling, in her article "Said's Exile: Strategic Insights for Postcolonial Feminists", endeavors to extend Said's meanings of exile to enrich postcolonial feminists' strategies of liberation from the patriarchal system. For her, "Said

recognized only the Self's sexual fantasies about the Orientalised Other but he rarely extended these insights to gendered, sexualised power relations among Others or from Others to the self" (139). She views that Said's connotations of home as a place of love, tenderness and security as opposed to exile as a place of uncertainty, unsettlement and alienation are not adequate for feminist agenda. In other words, home can imprison women as a woman, wife, daughter, and sister, while exile can be a place of inspiration to reflect about the meaning of freedom. Ling says: "For feminists, memories of home may not be suffused with as much tenderness as suggested by Said [...]. Postcolonial feminists experience pain [...] when forced to leave home, especially when instigated by patriarchal, colonial power politics. But they may not find themselves in the same kind of suspension and liminality as defined by Said's exilic condition" (142). Feminists provide new perspectives to Said's dichotomies of home and exile. Thus, "women writers in exile do not just discover creativity and stimulation in exile but also a voice for *their* stories, *their* concerns, *their* dreams" (142). Exile can liberate feminists from the shackles of patriarchy. Accordingly, "the decision to become an exile could also be motivated by the politics of gender. Women who choose exile often do so in order to escape from oppressive nationalist, religious, and patriarchal discourses and laws" (Heitlinger qtd. in Zeliza 14). Yet, in what way these theoretical ideas about exile and prison are relevant to Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*?

The Analysis of Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

Among the female African authors who tackle the notions of prison and exile in relation to feminism are Assia Djebar and Nawal El Saadawi. They provide different novel perspectives to the conventional meanings of prison and exile to foster women's emancipation and freedom from patriarchal practices.

First, Assia Djebar, in her collection of short stories *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, depicts different experiences of imprisoned and exiled female characters in pre and post-independent Algeria. The collection was first published in French, then translated into English. In the first short story, "Women of Algiers in Their Apartment", the protagonist Sarah, who was an ex-prisoner in Barberousse prison, views that the real prison for women is not the cell, but an internalized prison created by the patriarchal system. She narrates the story of her blueish scar and her days of imprisonment. Sarah also informs Anne about

her torture in prison, and her anguish when informed about the death of her mother while she was inside the prison.

However, instead of talking thoroughly about her real miserable experience in prison, Sarah speaks about her mother's imprisonment in patriarchal society. She says: "[Her mother] would be silent and work all day long. She never stopped. She'd scrub her kitchen; when everything was done, she'd soap down the flagstones, the walls, she'd air the mattresses, wash the blankets again. She'd polish and clean and scrub […]. An obsession like any other, after all" (48). For Sarah, her mother is imprisoned inside her house by feminine mystique all the day. Furthermore, Sarah says: "Every evening when my father came home, my mother would arrive carrying a copper bowl full of hot water and she'd wash his feet" (49). Hence, all her life is dedicated to housework. Sarah speaks on behalf of her mother and all women. She wants to change traditional roles of women to be free outside their apartments.

By comparing herself to her mother, Sarah states: "I can go out all I want, lead my life one day at a time, improvising as I go and in whatever way I see fit really, try as I might to enjoy all my freedom" (50). Unlike her mother, she controls her life and is free to do whatever she wants without respecting the traditional patriarchal rules. She states: "Go to hell, you two! And yet I knew I would never in my life wash anything like that [...].That's how my mother died: silently, following a simple chill" (49). Accordingly, she endorses feminist ideas of freedom and emancipation. In fact, the most outstanding feminist speech of Sarah is as follows:

> For Arabic women I see only one single way to unblock everything: talk, talk without stopping, about yesterday and today, talk among ourselves, in all the women's quarters, the traditional ones as well as those in the housing projects. Talk among ourselves and look. Look outside, look outside the walls and the prisons![...]The woman as look and the woman as voice[…]not the voice of female vocalists whom they imprison in their sugarsweet melodies[…]But the voice they've never heard, because many unknown and new things will occur before she's able to sing: the voice of sighs, of malice, of the sorrows of all the women they've kept walled in […].The voice that's searching in the opened tombs. (50)

Sarah refers to women's imprisonment of the voice and body. She spurs Arab women's freedom by getting outside their houses which are regarded as prisons.

She comments by saying: "[T]his is the moment that Ishmael will really wail in the desert: the walls torn down by us will continue to surround him alone!" (51). She aspires to push women to break the walls of patriarchal prison to let only men inside and disturb Ishmael as one of the icons of religion. Thus, in order to be outside their prison, women need to talk, speak and collaborate between themselves to repudiate patriarchal shackles.

Apart from the first short story, the idea of patriarchal prison is also present in "Day of Ramadhan". Nfissa, in the shortest story of the collection, narrates her atrocious experience of imprisonment in France. In a family conversation, Nadjia, Nfissa's sister, projects Nfissa's incarceration to her real life in Algeria. She says: "You may have been imprisoned, but I too was in prison, right here, in this very house you think is so wonderful!" (121) Nadjia complains about her miserable situation inside her house which is considered as a prison, especially after her participation in the Algerian War of Independence. In fact, on one hand, women joined the war to liberate themselves from the French colonizers. On the other hand, they wanted to free themselves from patriarchal Algerian men. However, unlike their expectations, albeit they got their independence, they remain imprisoned in their private sphere because they live in patriarchal society. Rita Faulkner asserts that "the project of bringing past voices to light […] is a liberating process, whether the walls be those of the prison or the harem" (853). In this regard, Algerian women suffer from both prisons: colonizers' prisons and the confinements of patriarchal practices that suffocate women's freedom. Katherine Gracki ascertains that:

> These women fighters threw themselves into danger and bore wounds testifying to this instead of staying in their traditional place during the war. As a result of their courageousness, however, they found they had no place in a postwar society which preferred to repress the memory of their participation rather than face the difficult task of integrating this new type of woman into the social fabric. (836-837)

In fact, Djebar, through her female characters, advocates the destruction and elimination of walls of patriarchy to get women's emancipation in post-war Algeria.

Like prison, exile in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* has another connotation which is different from the conventional meaning. The story "There is No Exile" is about refugees in Tunisia in 1959. Aicha, the narrator, lives with her family in exile because of the Algerian War of Independence. While her

father conveys his ideas about their exile in Tunisia through saying that "there is no exile for any man loved by God" (72), Aicha thinks deeply about the meaning of true exile in relation to women's position in Algeria. Albeit "[e]xile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deviations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" ("Reflections" 140), Aicha keeps thinking about Algerian women's position. Nuruddin Farah says:

> For me distance distills, ideas become clearer and better worth pursuing. [...]. One of the pleasures of living away from home is that you become the master of your destiny, you avoid the constraints and limitations of your past and, if need be, create an alternative life for yourself. That way everybody else becomes the other, and you the center of the universe. You are a community when you are away from home- the communal mind, remembering. Memory is active when you are in exile.

In this regard, exile is good to look from outside to see the situation clearly.

In the story, Aicha views that "there are those who forget or who simply sleep. And then there are those who keep bumping into the walls of the past. May God take pity on them! Those are the true exiles" (73). According to her, abiding to patriarchal practices that oppress women, integrating traditional and conventional views in women's lives and living in the past are the true meanings of exile. For her, although she is exiled, her mind is free. She expresses feminist ideas and repudiates an arranged marriage by her family. Accordingly, exile helps her to see things clearly, especially in relation to feminist issues. In this regard,

> Exile […] has become a predominant factor in the reformulation of feminine identity of Maghrebian women[...].These writers use exile to create new spaces of active agency for women disempowered by the triple patriarchal tyrannies of French colonialism, postcolonial authoritarianism, and religious fundamentalism [...] thereby turning exile into a 'productive contradiction' in which the mechanisms of alienation are transformed into mechanisms of liberation. (Chancy qtd. in Zeleza 15)

In this case, exile is helpful for women to diagnose the negative shackles of patriarchy and is regarded as a suitable atmosphere to ponder about women's freedom. Consequently, exile and prison in Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* go beyond their conventional meanings of space to extend to

psychological states to think thoroughly about the real meaning the freedom.

Like Djebar's collection of short stories, Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* also portrays prison in a different way. The novel was first published in Arabic and then it was translated into English. In fact, the novel is based on a true encounter between El Saadawi, as a psychiatrist, and a prisoner, called Firdaus, in Qanatir [Bridges] prison. The story depicts the plight of Firdaus from her childhood to her adulthood in patriarchal society that forced her to become a prostitute. In the prison, while flashing back her life to El Saadawi, Firdaus thinks about the true meaning of life, especially a woman's life in patriarchal society. Albeit her body is fettered, her mind is unfettered and in its peak. Regardless of her profession as a prostitute, El Saadawi through Firdaus, transmits a feminist message to all women in patriarchal societies. Firdaus' story is "an allegory for women's struggle against patriarchy" (Coin 429) and *Woman at Point Zero* is "not merely a novel: it is a message of resistance for all women" (433). Thus, it can be said that her ideas about freedom concern all women. Fedwa Malti-Douglas also asserts: "Firdaus's narrative, presented on its own, permits her plight to become more universal. She is everywoman" (32). In this regard, Firdaus' ideas about freedom are relevant to every imprisoned woman by patriarchal practices.

Because of her family members' and husband's oppressions, she escaped from her house to be first forced to be a prostitute. Then, after comparing her life as a married woman and prostitute, she opts for prostitution. She proudly announces: "[B]ecause I was intelligent I preferred to be a free prostitute, rather than an enslaved wife" (124). Firdaus views that a prostitute has more advantages and freedom than married women who are imprisoned by social fetters. Firdaus states that "men force women to sell their bodies at a price, and the lowest paid body is that of a wife. All women are prostitutes of one kind or another" (124). For Firdaus, married women are oppressed by patriarchal practices. Kate Millet asserts the following: "[A] woman underwent-civil death upon marriage, forfeiting what amounted to every human right, as felons now do upon entering prison" (67). Hence, a married woman is like a prisoner. However, Firdaus enjoys her life "of being completely independent and living her independence completely, of enjoying freedom from any subjection to a man, to marriage, or to love; of being divorced from all limitations whether rooted in rules and laws in time or in the universe" (118). In this regard, Firdaus, in real prison, conveys a message to all women to think about their true freedom inasmuch as prison "narratives are actively engaged in a re-definition of the self

and the individual in terms of a collective enterprise and struggle. The prison memoirs [...] are not written for the sake of a 'book of one's own' rather they are collective documents, testimonies written by individuals to their common struggle" (Harlow, *Resistance* 120). Although her ideas are radical, Firdaus addresses all women to think about patriarchal practices to liberate themselves.

As a prostitute, she refuses the authority of men. She repudiates Marzouk's proposal to protect her inasmuch as each prostitute should have a pimp. After beating her severely, she killed him. Then, she says: "I want nothing. I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. Therefore I am free" (137). She feels very proud of her crime because she succeeds in keeping her freedom and breaking the barrier of fear. For Firdaus, "No woman can be a criminal. To be a criminal one must be a man […] I am saying that you are criminals, all of you: the fathers, the uncles, the husbands, the pimps, the lawyers, the doctors, the journalists, and all men of all professions" (136-137). In this case, men, in any patriarchal society, are criminals because they oppress women.

As a result of her crime, she is condemned to death. Yet, for Firdaus, her condemnation is not because of her real crime. It is a punishment for her discovery of the patriarchal reality. She says: "They condemned me to death not because I had killed a man there are thousands of people being killed every day- but because they are afraid to let me alive. They know that as long as I am alive they will not be safe […]. My life means their death. My death means their life" (137) and "men do not fear [her] knife. It is [her] truth which frightens them" (140). Firdaus' realization of truth about patriarchy is a threat to men. Firdaus breaks the barriers of patriarchy. She says: "I am free. For during life it is our wants, our hopes, our fears that enslave us. The freedom I enjoy fills them with anger" (137). For her, women are enslaved and imprisoned by fears and patriarchal practices. Therefore, although Firdaus is really imprisoned, she feels herself free, unlike free women outside the prison who are imprisoned by patriarchy.

Like prison, exile has different symbolism for El Saadawi. She was imprisoned by the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat because of her feminist and political views. Then, she was officially obliged to flee Egypt in 1988 to live and teach in different countries. She regards prison as a place of creation where she writes her book *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* through smuggling toilet paper and eyebrow pencil. Her book was published in 1983. In her book, she says about her country: "Here rebellion is a fault, here awareness is a sin, here knowledge is a sin, here a person enters prison in the dark without crime

and without investigation. Here, a person dies prematurely. Here, the mind is suffocated and talent and the courage of creativity are buried" (9). Thus, for her, people are imprisoned by their lack of consciousness. Although they are free in real life, their minds are imprisoned and there is a need to liberate them from such fallacies.

Regardless of figurative prison, real prison and exile are the punishment for many conscious activists who awaken people's consciousness about freedom. In this regard, El Saadawi experienced prison and exile in her homeland and outside because of her ideas. Despite the fact that her ideas are radical, she encourages people, in general, and women, in particular, to free their minds from patriarchal practices. She says: "Each time our country went through difficult times, young men and women volunteered to fight or to serve in zones that were exposed to danger […].Once the crisis was over, these men and women, these heroes and freedom fighters, became criminals to be hunted down and put in prison or forced into exile" (El Saadawi *Walking* 59). Hence, imprisoned and exiled people pay the price of their consciousness. Yet, their prison and exile are fertile places to ponder about the true meaning of freedom.

In fact, albeit exile is regarded as a bad experience, it helps El Saadawi to express her ideas freely without censorship. She "has left Egypt under threat of death, and finds herself in the USA […] .Saadawi has achieved a confortable distance, a safe space from which to view the parts of her life in need of healing and repair" (xi). Hence, outside her country, El Saadawi can see her situation and women's position in a crystal way. She celebrates her exile through writing. Rebecca Walker says: "*Walking through Fire* is Saadawi's middle passage, her song of exile" (qtd. in El Saadawi *Walking* xi). Writing for El Saadawi is a sacred matter and she accentuates her writings in exile. She says: "After leaving Egypt I started to write. The threat of death seemed to give my life a new importance, made it worth writing about. I felt that the closer I moved towards death, the greater became the value of my life. Noting can defeat death like writing" (*Walking* 3) and "through writing my self breathes, expresses itself. My pen breaks down the wall of isolation between my body and the world" (19). Thus, El Saadawi's exile ostensibly seems as a bad experience, but it spurs her to express her feminist ideas to empower women. Therefore, exile and prison for El Saadawi have a positive meaning unlike their usual negative connotations.

Conclusion

The research sheds light on the positive side of both prison and exile by being

places of creation and innovation. They help prisoners and refugees to purify their ideas about freedom, especially in relation to women's position in society. Accordingly, the analysis vindicates that albeit female characters in Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* suffer from incarceration, their minds are free from social shackles that confine other free women. Both authors spur women to ponder about the true meaning of freedom to liberate their minds and voices from social conventions. Thus, there is a need to decolonize the mind or to release the mind from mental social imprisonments. Yet, the analysis of the selected oeuvres is open to further future research.

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An Essence of Postmodern Truth(s): Analyzing "Motherhood" in *Red Clocks* by Leni Zumas

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Abstract In a world where postmodern feminism aims at inclusivity and intends to do away with the politics of defining categories, the overturning of the landmark 1973, *Roe vs Wade* judgment complicates the very notion of reproductive rights and justice. It further brings under scrutiny the institution and practice of motherhood and abortion. Literary fiction dealing with the issues of abortion is numbered but within that limited oeuvre, *Red Clocks* (2018) by Leni Zumas approaches these issues from an essentially postmodern perspective. The trope of multifarious vantage points of four major characters, the Biographer, the Mender, the Wife, and the Daughter; with the overarching life story of the polar explorer Eivør Mínervudottír simultaneously offers conflicting and converging notions of motherhood, agency, and freedom. The speculative setting of the novel adds to the crisis and the dystopian air further problematizes the issues. By employing the method of close textual reading and anchoring on the theoretical models of feminist critical dystopias and feminist epistemology (postmodern narratives) this research paper intends to investigate the narrative space of the novel to depict the variegated shades of motherhood, the nuances of abolishing the abortion rights and the autonomy over the body.

Keywords dystopian fiction; postmodern feminism; motherhood; abortion; agency

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Introduction

Overturning the landmark judgment of 1973, *Roe v. Wade*[1] ruling that enabled women to exercise their constitutional right to an abortion till Foetal viability[2] (medically considered to be around 28 weeks of pregnancy) (Vishwanath), the US Supreme Court has manifested a dystopian vision narrativized a few years back in Leni Zumas' novel *Red Clocks* (2018). The originalist (Walther) justice Sam Alito's statement, "Abortion presents a profound moral question" (Thomson-DeVeaux) and his emphasis on the idea that abortion is not a constitutional right complicate the human/constitutional rights binary. In a booklet published in 2014 entitled *Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights: A Handbook for National Human Rights Institutions*, United Nations asserted that reproductive rights are human rights and further persuaded its practical and successful attainment through an attempt at reducing unsafe abortion and post-abortion care (50). Ironically, this humanist vision got maligned within a purist flux of conservative values and allowed garish narrative speculation to be a part of "lived experiences."[3]Zumas envisioned a future where abortion rights were taken away from women in all fifty states in the USA and the manifestation of parenthood was limited to heteronormative couples. It questions the liberal bedrock of postmodern existence where inclusivity dictates the terms of being and multiple truths prevail, deconstructing the socio-cultural metanarrative. Though Elisabeth Woronzoff in her review calls the book "safe" and identifies the lack of intersectional investment as a lacuna, this does not invalidate its contemporary significance. If postmodern truth(s) dictate flexibility the fixation on the deliberate use of intersectional components is retrograde. When asked where the research for *Red Clocks* began, Zumas replied that the novel started as a research project where her feelings, observations, and failures were being documented but

1 In this landmark decision, the Supreme Court of the USA declared that the woman's right to abortion would be protected by the right to privacy as reflected in the Fourteenth Amendment.

2 Fetal viability is the ability of the fetus to survive outside the uterus. It is considered as a marker for safe abortion.

3 Lived experience refers to the depiction of experiences and choices of an individual and the knowledge they emanate.

soon, the personal exposition shifted to the historical beliefs concerning pregnancy and more (Prieto). The exposition classifies Zumas' movement into heterogeneity. She introduces a not-so-far, oh well, contemporary America.

> The United States Congress ratified the Personhood Amendment, which gives the constitutional right to life, liberty, and property to a fertilized egg at the moment of conception. Abortion is now illegal in all fifty states. Abortion providers can be charged with second-degree murder, abortion seekers with conspiracy to commit murder. In vitro fertilization, too, is federally banned, because the amendment outlaws the transfer of embryos from laboratory to uterus. (The embryos can't give their consent to be moved) (Zumas 30)

The interconnected lives of four women (the Biographer, the Wife, the Mender, and the Daughter) presuppose the fluidity of the meaning of motherhood. With different aspirations in life, these primarily unnamed characters attempt at experiencing the process. While the Biographer looks for an IVF, the Wife wants to leave her family behind. The daughter is trying to get rid of an unwanted pregnancy. And the Mender illegally attempts to help others to abort while suffering from the dilemma of revealing her true identity to her daughter whom she had given up at birth. Zumas uses a brilliant trope for weaving her narrative. At the beginning of every chapter, she allows the readers a glimpse of the life of the polar explorer Eivør Mínervudottír from the unfinished manuscript of the Biographer. This sentence should be rephrased. The rephrased sentence will be: Mínervudottír's inconsequential death by the end of the book recreates a Sisyphean atmosphere where the struggle towards the height becomes enough to fill a man's heart (Camus 119) as she was found lying dead on a pane of ice and the the search party left her body behind. The Blacksmith wrote to his wife, "It is odious to lose a woman's body to this wilderness, […] but we hadn't the strength to retrieve it" (Zumas 343).

The traditional utopias were regarded as grand narratives with no deviation whatsoever. But with dystopias, deviations became the tradition, the improbability of utopias was replaced by practicability, and the desperate attempt at ruthless cleansing created more crevices. The incarceration of young girls in *Red Clocks* irrespective of their class or legacy reverberates the desperation for uniformity. "Even the daughter of Erica Salter, member of the Oregon House of Representatives, was locked up in Bolt River Youth Correctional Facility. A message had to be sent" (Zumas 308). Thus, the homogeneous category ceased to exist and a postmodern fragmented condition surfaced (Gomel 20). This postmodern air, with a sense of

existential crisis, offers a prevalent setting for a critical dystopia, a subgenre that explores overlapping narrative spaces. The article eventually expands the notion of critical dystopias and the validity of including *Red Cocks* within this niche.

In the introductory section of her work, *Motherhood: Feminism's Unfinished Business* (2021) Eliane Glaser shares an experience of meeting with a sixty-year-old woman at a park as the woman asked her about the ages of her children and said, "'The most important job in the world,' she said. 'Enjoy it while it lasts'" (1). The deification of motherhood as an institution and the primacy of reproduction as a teleological human condition render it an apodictic status. It looms large within the cultural discourse and roots deep into the psyche. Hence, for a woman to terminate a pregnancy or to voice her aversion to parenthood leaves her marginalized which is an outcome of epistemological violence. Since the second wave, radical feminism identified "the tyranny of reproductive biology" (Firestone 206) as one of the strongest tools of repression and foreshadowed technological advancement as means for liberating women. This phrase appears in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) by Shulamith Firestone as she firmly believed that the idea of pregnancy is "barbaric" (198) and the source of all oppression for women. This can only be resolved if the practice of ectogenesis is perfected by transferring the embryo into artificial gestation. Despite this early recognition and scientific (anthropological) stronghold concerning the evolution of the position of women from the hunter-gatherer to contemporary times, feminist scholarship has always been either surreptitious or uncannily silent in addressing the question of *motherhood*.

This research paper intends to approach the crystallized, ideological constructs around motherhood, reproduction, abortion, and the optimization of a woman's body, from the theoretical perspective of postmodern feminism (as an extension of feminist epistemology) and critical dystopias. Contextually locating the idea of motherhood through employing the method of close textual reading and hermeneutics, this research paper will attempt to put forward the pluralistic understanding of truth(s) and perspective(s). The inquisition meanders within the tripartite structure of three primary questions: "Who is a mother?," "What is a mother?," and "What is motherhood?"

Feminism, Science, and Motherhood

In children, we cheat death. What assigns veneration to the act of reproduction to put it beyond the discourse of biological instinct and practice of living organisms is the human consciousness of the finitude of life as we know it and the uncertainty

beyond death. Anthropologically speaking, procreation is the only tangible attempt of leaving a piece of ourselves behind and ascertaining the continuity of the species. One trivial argument stems from the process of sexual reproduction by associating it with the idea of pleasure. But evolutionary theory and scientific disambiguation have established the fact that the practice dates back to the eukaryotes, single-celled protists that appeared approximately two billion years ago and one point three billion years before the development of pleasures assessing neurons (Otto). Evolutionary psychology establishes the nuances of procreation as an extension of cognitive programs on multiple grounds and addresses several threads, the choice of mates, the idea of pair bonding, behavioural changes, and more; but eventually, converge on the ground of the survival of the species. As for human beings (mammals), reproduction leads to the birth of a new organism with a mix of genetic variations from both parent organisms with a closer biological and physical tie to the female (Shackelford 477). But there lies a crevice between reproduction and mothering. The gender-neutral desire to procreate finds a gendered explication in the performance of being a mother, which usually gets defined as instinctive and confined to women. Sarah Gibbens opens her article entitled "Is Maternal Instinct Only for Moms? Here's the Science" (2018) with an experiment performed by renowned anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy on herself and her husband to measure the levels of oxytocin released by their brains on the events of seeing their grandchild. The similarity in the neuroendocrinological transformation helps her establish the motherly instinct beyond the confines of gendered identity. Feminism has always been sceptical when it comes to addressing the nuances of motherhood as it raises the fundamental question of the existence and continuity of the human race. Undoubtedly, the biological process that partially mitigates the worst existential crisis of death must invite problematic narratives and thrive on axiomatic protocols. Besides, motherhood inevitably brings in a second individual in question (Hrdy in Glaser 9). The principles and responses get guided by the consideration of the well-being of the child as well. The questions around motherhood and reproduction, therefore, need sensitive academic intervention. In an article published in *The Guardian* in 2018 entitled "Is motherhood the unfinished work of feminism?," Amy Westervelt asserts the gender essentialism associated with motherhood and how despite being one of the cornerstones dictating the subjugation of women as identified by the radical feminist theorists, for ages, the discussion on motherhood gets sidelined in contemporary academia. Decades of academic feminism with researchers, theorists, and scholars like Rich, Patricia Hill Collins, Sarah Ruddick, Miriam Johnson, and Alice Walker; the issues of motherhood appear in fewer

than three per cent of papers, journal articles, and textbooks of modern gender theory (Westervelt). The exchange between feminist scholarship and motherhood is complicated but the extended threads of the phenomenon (reproductive rights, abortion, reproductive health, and more) find considerable recognition. Within the western epistemological canon, the teleological purpose of human existence has long been considered to be reproduction (Nielsen). By extension, the purpose of a woman's existence is associated with reproductive compatibility and the following responsibilities of child care. Movements toward gender equality have revised this understanding. Anthropologist Lisa McAllister has observed a shift in this predominant perspective. She identified the search for success as a biological motivation in human beings and that the more successful ones tend to leave more offspring behind (McAllister in Gibbens). Previously, what was considered a marker of success for a woman has changed. In contemporary "society, we don't measure a woman's worth as much by a woman's ability to mother or have children anymore" (Gibbens). Therefore the drive of reproduction, which has long been considered axiomatic, meets an epistemological turn and hurls individuals with no biological instinct of having children. The current status problematizes the definitive metanarrative of motherhood and questions the epistemological stand around the idea.

In "Feminism and Motherhood: An American Reading" (1992) Ann Snitow discussed the trajectory of motherhood within feminist studies in extensive detail from 1963 to 1990. The work commences with a discussion of "demon texts" like *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and ends with a note on *Abortion, Choice, and Contemporary Fiction: The Armageddon the Maternal Instinct* (1990). To explain the purpose of the study Snitow writes "that feminism set out to break both taboos—those surrounding the experiences of the mothers and of the non-mother" (33). The Equal Right Amendment (1972) phase of the feminist movement practically realized the anticipated gulf between mothers and non-mothers when it came to the exclusivity of the experience. The culture of blaming mothers, instead of allowing them a space to share their experiences has been problematic as liberation from the shackles of patriarchal oppression demanded radical ideological shifts. The ambivalence around motherhood eventually boiled down to the reflection of "what choice might mean if there were two imaginable lives for women - with and without children" (Snitow 33). The characters in *Red Clocks* include both and Zumas pays equal attention to their development. The woman who gave up her child for adoption, the woman who desperately wants to become a mother, the woman who wants to leave her children, the woman who wants to abort, the

woman who adopted, the woman who wants to follow the archaic tradition of parenting; all of them got subjected to empathetic, practical, psychological and nuanced investigation. Mattie's attempt in a nutshell to understand and imagine the conditions under which her bio-mother had given her up vindicates this inference, "Her bio-mother could have been young too. She could have been headed to medical school, then to a neurochemistry doctorate program, then to her own research lab in California" (Zumas 120). This flexible paradigmatic position empowers the intervention of feminist epistemology as a part of narrative strategies to deconstruct the crystalized ideals. Zumas' approach showcases intermittent inclusion of findings from evolutionary studies (empirical). Susan's decision of marrying Didier was influenced by his height as the choice of a tall partner ensures access to food high on top of the tree (Zumas 27). Even her reflection on the choice of a skinny woman from a man's perspective is a rational choice as "voluptuousness signal that a body was already ensuring the survival of another man's genetic material" (Zumas 79). Ro's choice of a sperm donor is meticulous and scientifically grounded as well. The prevailing sense of scientific awareness in these characters promises a space for a shifting epistemology where purely emotional decision-making is consciously getting subsided. Among the refreshingly emerging genres of speculative fiction, feminist dystopias (Hickey) which emerged in the 1970s, have played a key role in introducing epistemological twists by surfacing major issues concerning the oppression and marginalization of women.

Red Clocks as a Feminist Critical Dystopia

Robert O. Evans identified dystopian narratives as cautionary tales with a focus on what can now be done to achieve a better future (Evans in Sargent 6). This might be reasoned by Anne Cranny-Francis's definition of dystopia as "the textual representation of a society worse than the writer's/reader's own" (125). Margaret Atwood's explication behind the inspiration for writing *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is an insistence on the fact that she had not written anything that did not have a historical grounding (Evans). In the essay "The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake 'In Context'" (2004), while revisiting two of their classic dystopian works of fiction, Atwood identified what differentiates speculative fiction from science fiction and that framework depicts an emphasis on the "more or less to hand experience" (513). While dystopian fiction as a subgenre of speculative fiction anchors on probable narratives, some of the previous works of this genre have shown uncanny realistic reflection within a few decades of their conception, like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), *Brave New World* (1932), *White Noise* (1985) and more. But with

the conception of a fractured space-time and a shift in Newtonian perception of space, the all-encompassing notion of the utopias changed. The concept of the modern utopia projected a pseudo-progressive dream, but as ideological projects, they craved the certainty of the Newtonian paradigm, and this adherence to a deterministic space created deviations (Gomel 20).

The epistemic uncertainty of narrative space (Gomel 20) spawns this fragmentation, and the multiplicity of perspectives renders it subversive, despite its proximity to realism. The idea of holistic happiness or singular dejection could not be discerned. If the primary contention of a critical utopia is the awareness of its limitation (Moylan 10) then critical dystopia is an overlap between radical dystopian imagination and traditional genres to give birth to more open narrative spaces (Baccolini and Moylan 43). Zumas brings forth the everyday troubles of the four primary characters in the text within a socio-cultural trope that simultaneously reads probable and distant. *Red Clocks* qualifies as a feminist critical dystopia precisely because it satisfies the three preconditions set by Ildney Cavalcanti, i.e. the negative critique of heteronormative patriarchy and feminist theory, the textual self-awareness in generic terms, and inspiring an explosive reaction as it might shape the critical-feminist public readership (Baccolini and Moylan 48).

Besides critiquing the removal of the right to abortion for women, the novel foreshadows the limitations of identifying "women" as a category within modernist feminist scholarship. The Biographer's struggle to get pregnant is presented against the Wife's (Susan) natural and effortless conception of two children and the Daughter's desperate attempt at abortion. The work stands critical of some of the foundational concepts of feminism as well. Roosevelt's apprehension of being made fun of by Susan on knowing her attempt to visit the Mender subverts the notion of "sisterhood," "If she told Susan about seeing the witch, Susan would act supportive and serious, then laugh about it behind the biographer's back" (Zumas 65). The idea of agency, coupled with self-doubt in the character of the Biographer receives similar treatment. Throughout the novel, Roosevelt keeps on questioning her compatibility as a single mother as the rest of the characters heedlessly infuse mistrust.

> How can you raise a child alone if you don't even find out what they're doing to your area? (Zumas 5)
> How can you raise a child alone when all you're having for lunch is vending-machine maize puffs? (Zumas 32)
> But how can you raise a child alone when you can't resist twelve ounces of

> coffee? (Zumas 91)

The trope of reducing women to reproductive machines and allowing motherhood to triumph over womanhood shapes the dystopian corpus of the text. Sporadic events add to the horror of the tale. The incident of one of the college girls throwing herself off the stair to terminate her pregnancy depicted helplessness and desperation.

> […] Ro/Miss said in class she hoped they understood who was to blame for this rib: the monsters in Congress who passed the Personhood Amendment and the walking lobotomies on the Supreme Court who reversed Roe v. Wade. "Two short years ago," [...] (Zumas 49)

The multiple facets of motherhood and the treatment of the abortion question from variegated perspectives satisfy the condition of creating critical awareness. The readers were prepared for this ghastly outcome throughout the book, and its contemporaneous manifestation further strengthens the speculation and potential of these narratives.

Angus McLaren in *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (1999) defines the feminist campaigns of the 1970s (as a part of the second-wave feminism) to address the collectively identified problem of abortion for women as a primary agenda and the legalization of abortion in 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision by the US Supreme Court celebrated and recognized women's agency. Coincidentally, the same period witnessed the development of feminist dystopian fiction as a prominent subgenre of speculative works in texts like *The Female Man* (1975) by Joanna Russ. The development of postmodern feminism (during the third wave) reshapes the question of choice (concerning the body and mind alike) and the "collective problem" discourses to ascribe merit to the subject positions. While Russ' novel takes up different aspects of the feminist crisis through various characters, contemporary works use similar tropes to showcase variegated shades of the same problem to arrive at an inconclusive flux of multiple truths.

Metanarratives give birth to counter metanarratives. Feminist movements are no exceptions. A close reading of the waves of feminism narrates how the problems identified as the generic representation of the feminist crisis have been limited in their exposure. Women as a homogeneous category ceased to exist. The development of concepts such as "intersectionality" in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw, streamlined the nuances of the postmodern position. One of the cornerstones that defined womanhood, i.e. motherhood too had undergone serious questioning.

Postmodern feminism realized the incomplete perception of mothers either as degraded figures or as another vulnerable human institution within "depleted fictions, sentimental claptrap or political occasion" (Caesar 123). In the age of surrogacy and IVF, there emerges a serious need to reconsider the understanding of motherhood. Motherhood studies have recognized motherhood as not a single practice or a monolithic category of practice, but rather a mutually exclusive, multifarious series of acts (O'Reilly, *Maternal* 532). Though Zumas has been blamed for ignoring the marginalized community (especially women of colour) in this work (Smith), still the readers are offered a kaleidoscopic scope of witnessing "motherhood."

Feminist Epistemology and motherhood

"Women are made and meant to be, not men, but mothers of men" (Hubbard 39). Nancy Chodorow condenses the trouble around the primacy of motherhood through young girls who get engendered early in their lives to develop a desire for motherhood and femininity (Zalewski 19). Western science and philosophy have always glorified this identity of a woman and epitomized it to an extent where everything else fades away. The psychoanalytical argument augments the girls' affinity towards their mothers long after they grow up, unlike boys who break free from the bond early, enabling them to care more for others, thus rendering it suitable for them to perform motherly responsibilities (Zalewski 19). These modernist epistemological notions devalue the significance of subjective dilemma for a woman and the advantage of paradoxical existence. The grand narratives of socio-cultural appropriation are subtly contested, substantiated, and subverted by Zumas.

The Wife's recurrent fatigue and disgust concerning parenting and her sense of guilt help the readers locate one of the untold and consciously neglected truths about mothering, vis-à-vis parenting.

> They are yipping and pipping, her two. They are rolling and polling and slapping and papping, rompling with little fists and heels on the bald carpet.
> They are hers, but she can't get inside them.
> They can't get back inside her.
> They are hurling their fists—Bex fistier, but John brave. (Zumas 23)

The presence of these children both functions as rewarding and confining. Susan's desire to come out of the marriage with Didier constantly gets hindered by her concern for the children, "She takes a long breath. 'Are you saying they

wouldn't benefit from our relationship improving?'" (Zumas 109). Eventually, at the moment of separation, the identity of being a mother could not trap her in, rather she embraces herself and soars. Zumas deftly unknots the good mother/bad mother binary (as offered by radical feminists). The reference to Didier's mother who blamed him for his father's abandonment is a case in point as for Didier, the responsibility converges upon the shrink who convinced his mother into believing that.

Despite innumerable warnings, Ro desperately wanted parts of what Susan had and wished to do away with. Her desire to become a mother and her fixation on achieving it through artificial insemination foregrounds the strength of epistemic constructs. Since the beginning, she notes down the accusations she was subjected to as a single woman and somehow ends up falling prey to these constrictive measures. Her search for the fulfilment of being a woman centered on motherhood and she could push her limits to all extents to conceive.

> [...] she wants an ashy line down the center of a round belly; she wants nausea. Susan's marks of motherhood: spider veins at the knee backs, loose stomach skin, lowered breasts. Affronts to vanity worn as badges of the ultimate accomplishment. (Zumas 89)

Her rational questioning of this obsession ends up in an answer of instinct, a "throb" (Zumas 90) that wants to make another human being. Chapters depicting the process of IVF, choice of sperm donors, and preparatory treatments; read like a series of physical, psychological, and emotional turmoil. In the face of all misinterpretation, she stands resolute,

> When her first caseworker at the adoption agency said "You do realize, I hope, that a child is not a replacement for a romantic partner?" the biographer almost walked out of the interview. She did not walk out, because she wanted to get onto their wait-list. That night she threw a potted cactus against her refrigerator. (Zumas 170)

The pathos intensifies against the rapidly shrinking opportunity of availing of single parenthood as her chance to adopt was fast withering away.

Through Mattie's parents who adopted her when she was months old, Zumas sketches the unadulterated essence of motherhood (and parenting). The mother's conscientious inquiry of her pregnancy and eventual moral support reaffirms this

contention. Within the traditional discourse of motherhood "caregiving" plays a key role. Ro could put aside her envy at Mattie's attempt to abort. She wanted to ask for her child, but could not. Rather her inherent motherly instinct manifests itself through her selfless affection for Mattie, from taking her to Portland to offering her post-abortion care, "Ro/Miss goes out, comes back. Turn the overhead light off and the bedside lamp on. 'Close your eyes'" (Zumas 322). One more shade of motherhood is explored through the Mender's affection for her animals. Her conversations with them and the aspect of anthropomorphized imagination reinvigorate the nuances of motherhood.

> Malky's been gone three days. Long for him—she doesn't like it. The sun is dropping. Killers in the woods. Malky is a killer himself but no match for coyotes and foxes and red-tailed hawks. Every creature, prey to someone. (Zumas 68)

Adrienne Rich *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) has differentiated between motherhood as a patriarchal construct (institution) and motherhood as a lived experience. From the perspective of a feminist standpoint as a component of feminist epistemology, the second conception of motherhood claims more validity. Later Sara Ruddick in *Maternal Thinking* (1989) elaborated on the notion of experience. But within a fictional scope, the application of standpoint theory might appear limiting. But as the genre of speculative fiction thrives on tangible and probable mimetic experiences; the experiences of the characters as depicted by Zumas can be taken into consideration to understand the component of experience within motherhood studies. Throughout the novel, the institution of motherhood emerges as a set of practices rather than something innate. Ruddick's illustration of motherhood as a practice allowed scholars to deconstruct mothering from the identity of the mother (as configured within the traditional, socio-cultural institution of motherhood) as it can be performed by anyone who is committed to meet the demands of the needs of maternal practices (O'Reilly, *Twenty-First* 6).

Feminist Epistemology, Abortion, and Agency

"The profound moral question" (Thomson-DeVeaux) that was anchored upon by the Supreme Court of the USA, presents, in a nutshell, the ideological stagnancy and obfuscation around abortion. The feminist understanding of reproductive choice has been associated with the agency of their bodies and a choice of reproduction. The 1970s movement used the slogan '"Mein Bauch gehört mir," "l'utero è mio e

me lo gestisco io" (My belly is mine; the uterus is mine and I manage it myself)' (Neyer 170) with a claim for their right to abortion. Besides the secular anti-abortion argument and the conviction that an unborn child is a living being and its termination invites the charges of second-degree murder, the interpretation of the act of abortion gets subjected to other tempting but flawed arguments. When the daughter was preparing for a school debate in her eighth grade as a member of the pro-choice team, her father, instead of appreciating her efforts, presented a set of inherently fallacious statements to convince the daughter of the importance of eliminating abortion rights. When his argument about adopted families who await children failed, along with the need for validating an embryo as a living being, he resorted to *argumentum ad passiones* (an argument that appeals more to emotion than to reason) to win her over.

> "What if your bio mother had chosen to terminate?"
> "Well, she didn't, but other people should be able to."
> "Think of all the happy adopted families that wouldn't exist."
> "But Dad, a lot of women would still give their babies up for adoption."
> "But what about the women who didn't?"
> "Why can't everyone just decide for themselves?"
> "When someone decides to murder a fellow human with a gun, we put them in jail, don't we?"
> "Not if they're a cop."
> "Think of all the families waiting for a child. Think of me and your mom, how long we waited."
> "But—"
> "An embryo is a living being."
> "So is a dandelion."
> "Well, I can't imagine the world without you, pigeon, and neither can your mother."
> She doesn't want them to imagine the world without her. (Zumas 120)

Mattie is the only character seeking an abortion in the text and her journey allows the readers a glimpse into the dystopian world. Though the text's focus is on the abolition of the Roe v. Wade (1973) judgment, the overarching objective still summons a ruthless purification in the pursuit of restoring "dignity, strength, and prosperity to American families" (Zumas 32). Besides the *Personhood Amendment*, Public Law 116-172 i.e. "Every Child Needs Two" (Zumas 31), would come into

effect to obliterate the idea of single parenthood. This devolution into the annals of Victorian morality concerning sexuality and family allows the text a wider scope.

Zumas distinctively offers a narrative space that reduces the fundamental aspect of existence for women to tools of reproduction and stays true to the rudimentary principles of dystopian narratives. She voices her disgust for capitalism that connects worth to productiveness and limits a woman's worth to her capacity of bearing a future human (Prieto). Within the ambit of capitalism, the abortion question does not get limited to the aspect of corporeal autonomy. The available practices of legal abortion do not aid the poor and working-class women who suffer from the lack of means to pay or the chances to access the clinics (Arruzza 14). Reproductive justice thus demands free, not-for-profit health care. The purgation for women of colour works more efficiently than that of white middle/upper-middle-class women. The character of Yasmine, a friend of Mattie is an oblique but concrete reference to this problem. She was forced into a youth detention centre for attempting a self-induced abortion and a coerced hysterectomy. Her silence voices the truth behind The Pink Wall and the politics of representation.

Zumas explores the idea of subjectivity and agency on multiple levels. The story of Boadicea, the queen of the Celtic tribe called the Iceni who summoned her army to fight against the Romans (Zumas 7), is the first agentic, embedded narrative that presents a glimpse of Ro's vision and philosophy. Despite being an independent woman, she falls prey to the epistemological violence of the socio-cultural patriarchal order. She associated her worth with her compatibility to conceive. In one section of the book, the misbehaving student in her class forced her to couple her failure as a teacher with her inability to become a mother,

> Usually she has no issues with discipline; this outburst makes her feel like a failure.
> Well, she is a failure. She and her uterus fail, fail, fail.
> [...]
> The biographer and her ovaries fail, fail, fail. (Zumas 141)

The lists she kept to remind her of things or to write down issues that perturbed her bring forth the amount of socio-cultural stigma she was subjected to and her conscious effort to unlearn (Zumas 201, 222, 240). The radical feminist Jeffner Allen believed that motherhood is dangerous to women as within the patriarchal construct a woman exists as a womb and a wife, which invariably assigns her the identity of a mother. Motherhood is dangerous to women. It continues the structure within which

females must be women and mothers, and conversely, because it denies females the creation of subjectivity (Allen 315). Ro denies her subjectivity in her pursuit to become a mother. While elaborating on the nuances of the 'docile bodies' Michel Foucault illustrated the motif behind control. How a body within a system of power and knowledge is optimized to serve a utilitarian purpose (Rabinow 182). For a woman, motherhood is that optimization and the creation of knowledge around the construct dictate epistemological control. A similar crisis was experienced by Susan when her identity as a mother and a wife suspended her individuality. Though Zumas successfully resolves the issue by assigning her the strength to walk out of the marriage and accept nature as she finds fit. The symbol of the plastic bag has ingeniously been used here, as it had initially appeared to Susan as a charred animal and she could never erase the image from her mind. But finally, she could embrace the raw nature as a manifestation of her very being.

> The wife kneels on the path.
> Rent a car. Open a bank account. Bring yourself to care.
> She reaches for the black earth.
> Her body yearns, inexplicably, to taste it.
> Brings a handful to her lips. The minerals sizzle on her tongue, rich with the gists of flower and bone. (Zumas 326)

The character of the Mender is foregrounded as a contrast to the rest of the characters and their agencies. From her choice of lifestyle, through her denial of Lola's advances, to her efforts with helping women and abstaining from seeing her daughter; she emerged as one of the 'feminist subjects'. But her sense of freedom, connection with nature, and mobility assigns her the identity of a deviant, a witch. She lived as an outcast and was blamed for things that had nothing to do with her but the public consciousness of castigation. Her self-estimation concerning the public opinion that distinguishes her as weird, absurd, and a witch (Zumas 41) helps her navigate better. By the end of the book when she was released from the false accusation of trying to abort Mrs Fivey's unborn child and in the process made her drink a potion that resulted in her falling through the stairs, Gin returned to nature, to the space that she identified with and welcomed it in all its glory.

> The mender rubs leopard's-bane salve into her burning calves. Lies in the dark with the cat on her chest. No more human voices the rest of the day. She wants only Malky's growl and the mehhh of Hans and Pinka. The bleat of the owl,

> chirp of the bat, squeak of the ghost of the varying hare. This is how Percivals do. (Zumas 337)

Judith Butler in "Contingent Foundations" (1995) analyses the idea of postmodern feminine subjectivity as a future of "multiple specifications" and asserted that only by liberating the category of women from a fixed referent we can arrive at the realization of "agency" (Butler 50).

Conclusion

One of the primary impetus behind reproduction is the concept of genetic transmutation for generations to come. But this becomes erroneous owing to the inevitable mixing and shuffling ("Zooming in"), and the "meaningfulness of life" (James) is not limited to it. An awareness of human evolution puts forward the loss of estrus as one of the defining components in shaping the sexuality of the species. The hypothesis emanating from this theory tangibly disestablishes the exclusivity of reproduction from the act of coitus and depicts its function in developing pair bonds (Wagener) between humans and strikes a blow at the foundation of the moral narratives. The vulnerability of human newborns and their need to be looked after added to the subjugation of women. It attested to a sense of exclusivity to the care-giving performance (a major component of motherhood). Coincidentally, the initiative of the "ape mothers" to allow "others to help in the rearing of their infants" ("The Evolution of Motherhood") considerably impacted the evolution of humans.

Feminist epistemology as a discipline is flexible and though the foundational approach is to introduce the gender framework to the existing body of epistemology, still it aims at dismantling the existing sinewy knowledge narratives. It's the act of asking questions that helps one grow. *Red Clocks* asks these questions and not even once attempts to answer them. The search for an answer controverts the crux of postmodern feminism and feminist epistemology which is in synchronization with the temperament of contemporary scientific investigation. It walks towards unravelling the intricacies of the nature of being, through finer assessments to arrive at inconclusive conclusions. And eventually, everything might co-exist, as Vandana Shiva once said that in the quantum world, it is impossible to get rid of uncertainty as there exists no binary, no either/or. For the Quantum realm, the conjunction in use is "and" (Harvard GSD 00:16:16 - 00:16:37). By definition, critical dystopias are non-deterministic. A close observation of Zumas' use of the all-encompassing embedded tale of Eivør Mínervudottír not only unearths one woman's exclusive

journey but also guides us through the different phases of her life since childhood. From a constricting patriarchal setup, she soars high through compromise and struggles to live the life of a polar explorer. Zumas has weaved a spacetime of co-existence where the binaries cease to exist and the difference is the only constant.

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by the "University Grants Commission (190511074986/NET-JRF: JULY 2019)."

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Love and Power as the Substitutes for *Objet Petit a* in Han Suyin's *The Enchantress*

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Abstract Han's *The Enchantress* has been widely viewed as a romantic-historical fantasy, partly due to their complicated psyches of the exotically depicted protagonist in the novel. In addition, the protagonists' complex psyches exert a significant impact on their self-development. However, to date, the extent to which the protagonists' psyches are responsible for their action and subjectivity has not been investigated. Hence, this article concentrates on examining the protagonists' desires through a psychoanalytic lens proposed by Jacque Lacan. Lacanian concept of *objet petit a* is utilised to study the protagonists' constant search for the lost object of desire. Hypothetically the present study argues that through a psychoanalytic lens, *The Enchantress* is neither a romantic-historical fairy tale that enthrals numerous readers, nor a demonstration of the possibility of the cultural exchange between the East and the West. Instead, it is a psychological drama of *objet petit a*. Hence, I aim to identify the substitutes for *objet petit a* and expound how protagonists' psyches affect their selfhood and narrative progression in the novel. In short, the psychoanalytic approach proves to be an effective method to examine the mother-child relationship in Han's literary writing and enriches the academic study on Han Suyin.

Keywords love; power; *objet petit a*; Han Suyin; *The Enchantress*

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Introduction

Han Suyin's *The Enchantress* (1985) tells an exotic story of the eighteenth century and revolves around the lives of twin brother and sister Colin and Bea Duriez from their home country Switzerland to China, then to Thailand. In the story, science, fact, passion and magic are closely intertwined in different settings. Although the novel is widely viewed as a fantasy, the author's skilful portrayal of the protagonists' complicated psyches should be given due attention. When Colin and Bea are little, their parents are killed by a witch-burning mob. The twins' frequent reference to and recall of their parents' sudden death indicates its huge impact on their psyche and subjectivity. However, the protagonists' psyche and subjectivity are overlooked in the existing studies of the novel.

This study therefore aims to fill the gap by looking at the protagonists' constant quest for love and power from a psychoanalytical perspective. To this end, Jacques Lacan's concept of *objet petit a* is employed in relation to his three orders of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real to analyse the protagonists' psyche and desires which greatly affect their action and subjectivity. Lacan holds *objet petit a* is the lost object of desire, which will never be attainable (qtd. in Dor 187). Although it is impossible to attain the lost object of desire, the subject spends his whole life to pursue it through different substitutes. In the process of recapturing the fantasy of the lost object of desire, the subject becomes a desiring subject and develops his selfhood. Hence, the concept of *objet petit a* from Lacanian framework is relevant to the discussion of the protagonists' action and subjectivity in the novel.

More specifically, it is discussed that Colin is in search of love as the substitute for his repressed desire for the primal union with his mother and twin sister, while Bea desperately seeks for power and strength as the displacement of her lost union with her mother. The twins' persistent search for their *objet petit a* is found to pervade the whole story and promote the development of the story in the novel.

Literature Review

The Enchantress has been widely reviewed since its first publication in 1985. *Los Angeles Times* reviews the novel as "an exotic, imaginative tale of the 18th century" and the author "successfully mixes history and poetry in an elaborate, magical adventure story" (qtd. in Han *Enchantress*)[1]. Although the review clearly states the novel is an intoxicating blend of fantasy and history, many other reviews put more emphasis on the historical elements displayed in the novel. A review from *Pittsburg Press* focuses on Chinese history and it claims "only an author who knows China and has completed an immense amount of research could write a novel with the sweep and grandeur of the enchantress … Studied with lavish scenes of wealthy mansions and Oriental court life" (qtd. in Han *Enchantress*). On the other hand, the review made by *The Washington Post* extends the Chinese history to the European history in the eighteenth century. It writes:

> "The Enchantress" touches on many interesting subjects, especially the 18th-century fascination with all things mechanical, and deals with other topics: the worldwide impact of the Jesuits; the perilous condition of Jews in Europe; trade and cultural exchange between the Occident and the Orient; Asian palace life, including the many esoteric methods of torture and execution. (Levine)

It cannot be denied that the historical elements in the novel make readers explore the authentic exotic worlds. However, it is Han's embedment of fantasy that makes the novel particularly distinctive from her other novels, which are usually based on history. Ling finds Han extends further in the direction of fantasy than her previous fiction (418). Han's focus in the novel could be "the fusion of the West's scientific rationalism and the East's natural mysticism into a single utopian vision" (Austin 22). Hence, the novel has been often regarded as a romantic-historical fantasy.

Based on the available literature on the novel, it is interesting to note that though the novel is regarded as "the breathtaking new bestseller" (qtd. in Han *Enchantress*), it does not receive a well-deserved attention in academic study. This mainly results from the generally accepted view that all Han's works are "on a basic level concerned with the question of East/West relations" (Wang 5). Such a view restricts the study on Han Suyin to her best demonstrations of East/West relations, namely her autobiographies, at the same time her novels are regarded as

1 The reviews are cited from the introduction page of the novel: *The Enchantress*, New York: Bantam Books, 1985.

the extension of her autobiography (Wang 316).

After scrutinizing the above reviews and study on the novel, I find what is conspicuously absent in the scholarship is the research into the characters' psychic world. The focus on the protagonists' psyche enriches the reading of the protagonists' action and subjectivity which are closely connected with the narrative of the novel and illustrates the ideas we may not have seen so deeply without psychoanalysis. Through a psychoanalytic lens, *The Enchantress* is neither a romantic-historical fairy tale that enthrals numerous readers, nor a demonstration of the possibility of the cultural exchange between the East and the West, but a psychological drama of *objet petit a*. The twins' persistent search for love and power turns out to be their pursuit of *objet petit a*, the lost object of desire in early childhood. The startling magical communication between the twins can be understood as their unconscious mind in the light of psychoanalysis.

By analyzing Han's *The Enchantress* from a psychoanalytical perspective, the study challenges the prevalent view on the novel that it is a fairy tale mixed with history and essentially related to the cultural exchange between the East and West. It also contributes to the academic study on Han Suyin, whose writing has been scarcely researched in an academic manner (Wang 1). The existing literature reveals that since the twenty-first century, most academic researches on Han Suyin's writing are conducted from the perspective of post-colonialism (Lee, 2014, Chin, 2021, Tickell, 2021), identity (Zhao, 2016, Qiao, 2020) and feminism (Du, 2012). However, psychoanalysis is seldom employed to examine Han's writing. Hence, the study enriches the academic study on Han Suyin.

Lacan's Theory of Desire: *Objet Petit a*

The concept of *objet petit a* is central to Jacques Lacan's theory of desire. According to Lacan, *objet petit a* [1] is "the object of desire and the object that is the cause of desire—the lost object" (qtd. in Dor 187). Lacan explains *objet petit a* as follows:

> This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking. It must, therefore, be an object that is, firstly, separable and, secondly, that has some relation to the lack. (*Seminar, Book XI* 103)

1 The letter "a" refers to "autre," which means other. Small other is different from the radically "Other," because a person's relationship to objet petit a, the lost object of desire is quite individual and private, only impacting that person, instead of others (qtd. in Tyson 28).

Lacan's explanation illustrates "separable" and "lack" are two significant factors in relation to *objet petit a*. In other words, *object petit a* signifies the lack inherent in human beings, whose incompleteness produce the desire for fulfilment. In this relation, the desire for fulfilment appears when the subject enters the Symbolic Order. The subject's entrance into the symbolized reality implies the use of language, and the use of language indicates an absence, a kind of lack, because the subject does not need words as stand-ins for things if he feels he is still inseparable from those things. Once the subject feels the loss, he is trying to search for that feeling of complete fulfilment through different substitutes such as love, power, money, and knowledge. To better understand what the lack is and how the lack emerges, it is necessary to have a brief review of Lacan's three orders of the human psyche—the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

The Real, for Lacan, is closer to the unconscious in relation to selfhood, prior to the Imaginary and the Symbolic (Hadi and Asl, "The real" 149). The Real is inaccessible to thought, because speaking out the desire marks the subject's entrance into the conscious experience. This means the Real does not belong to the social world. Desire originates in the emergence of the subject from the Real of infantile experience (Kirshner 83). Therefore, the yearning for total satisfaction of desire in this stage is rather strong. Such total satisfaction in the Real is termed as *jouissance* by Lacan. However, *jouissance* cannot be accessible to human existence, since bringing back a lost link to the unsymbolized Real is an impossible fantasy. In other words, *jouissance* is beyond the pleasure and reality principles.

The Imaginary is a stage that follows after the subject breaks the unconscious period. In the early months, the child cannot distinguish itself from its surroundings because it has no idea of self. However, the mirror stage appears when the child is around six or eight months. The child, during this stage, can recognize the whole image of itself in the mirror and develop a sense of self as a whole. Thus, the mirror stage is an early stage in the child's identity development (Hadi and Asl, "The Objectifying" 66), and is also a period of "transformation" (Lacan, *Ecrits* 1). According to Lacan, the mirror stage initiates the Imaginary Order (qtd. in Tyson 27). The Imaginary Order is a world of images and wholeness. The child in this order experiences through images instead of words, and it still feels no loss because of its imaginary satisfying union with its mother. It fancies it controls the surroundings and its mother. It feels it entirely relies on the mother for all vital needs and the mother can satisfy these needs. Hence, the child still has a preverbal fantasy union with its mother in the Imaginary.

When the child starts to acquire language, it enters the Symbolic Order.

According to Lacan, the child's language acquisition means many significant things (qtd. in Tyson 28). One important thing is that language can assist the child in shaping his or her identity, since it is an essential system of meaning-making. The first meanings include rules and regulations that the child must obey. The first rule is the law of the father. The law of the father makes the child realize the realm of the Other. The child's entry into the Symbolic Order thus indicates it must be separated from others, and the most challenging separation is the separation from the intimate union with its mother the child experienced in the Imaginary Order. This separation constitutes the child's initial experience of loss and initial repression of desire for the union with its mother in its unconsciousness. However, the initial repression of desire haunts the child whole life, because the child has to live under the authority, the law of the father. Also, the subject will spend his life unconsciously recapturing that lost feeling of union in the Symbolic realm. Acquiring more power, achieving more fame and fortune, finding an ideal mate or whatever the symbolized language tells the subject he should want, but he will never be able to regain that feeling of completeness with the world that disappeared from conscious experience.

The three orders of human psyche reveal that the lack, which originates in the unconscious, but is mediated in the Symbolic Order, refers to *objet petit a.* Because it is impossible to restore the lack in the unconscious, the subject substitutes the existing symbolic objects for the lost object of desire to recapture the fantasy of complete satisfaction. This implies desire is a significant aspect of human existence, provided it is kept in the symbolic reality. Additionally, desire is also closely related to selfhood development. In this respect, once the desire is voiced out, the subject enters the Symbolic realm and develops selfhood built by his quests and desires. In Han Suyin's *The Enchantress*, Colin and Bea both recognize their own desires and spend their whole life searching for them. However, in the process of searching for their desires, Colin lives with his desire under the law of the father and develops as a desiring subject, while Bea is finally lost in the Imaginary realm, identifying herself with an image of the other instead of herself.

Displacements of the Lack in *The Enchantress*: Love as the Substitute for *Objet Petit a*

In *The Enchantress*, the early death of Colin and Bea's parents has made a tremendous impact on them. As Colin acknowledges, the fire that burnt their parents makes him and his sister different (Han, *Enchantress* 277). The mother's running after the father into the fire forces the twins to end their fantasy union with the mother and accept that it is the father that the mother desires. Therefore, they have to abandon the position as object of the other's desire, but assume the position of

desiring subjects to recapture that feeling of the lost union by choosing substitute objects of desire. In essence, the fire makes the twins realize the significant role of their mother in forming their selfhood.

Colin's love for Apricot reveals his repressed desire for the fantasy union with his mother. Apricot is a housemaid in the Fang family, for whom Colin works, and is assigned to take care of Colin's daily life. Whenever he is makes love to with Apricot, he suddenly recalls his mother running after his father into the fire, and due to this image, he cannot enjoy sexual pleasure. Apricot on the other hand, superstitiously believes that Colin's sexual dysfunction is caused by Bea, a fox spirit. Though Apricot's intuition is somewhat true, the present study contends that Colin's sexual inability is partly ascribed to Bea (this view will be discussed later), but might have originated from his desire for union with his mother. According to Lacan, the process of becoming a "self" and entering the Symbolic Order is the function of the father. In the Imaginary Order, the child fancies itself as the mother's desire, since the mother satisfies all its vital needs. The mother's desire is mediation for the child, but this mediation "is given precisely by the father's position in the symbolic order" (*Seminar, Book V* 184). The father appears as "a possible object of the mother's desire" (Dor 103). The father, therefore, intervenes in the mother-child relationship as a depriver of the mother. That is to say, the father is supposed by the child to be a rival in its relation to the mother. So, the child's desire is inevitably encountered with the law of the father through the mother. This suggests the subject have to follow the law of the father, when he satisfies his desire. In other words, the law of the father requires the child to take a substitute object for the lost object of desire in the symbolized reality. His mother's running after his father into the fire clearly tells Colin that the desire of his mother is not himself, but his father. Colin's sudden recollection of the scene indicates his unconscious intolerability to the fact that his mother no longer belongs to him. Besides, it also implies that Apricot is not the suitable substitute object for his repressed desire for the mother, since Colin's love affair with Apricot is more likely to be viewed as his "urgent thrust of manhood" (Han, *Enchantress* 180).

Compared with Apricot, Jit is a much more suitable substitute for Colin's lost object of desire. Jit, a daughter of a small official in Ayuthia, has Chinese blood in her, as well as Thai. She is a gentle beauty who resembles Colin's mother. When Colin first sees Jit, his mind is "wiped clean of everything else." Colin also affirms no one else but Jit alone is beautiful. Colin's love for Jit even motivates him to overcome his inborn lameness to accept the boxing challenge from Prince Chiprasong and win the boxing match in front of his most loved girl. When Jit

is trapped in the court by Prince Chiprasong, Colin is driven mad and can hardly endure life without Jit. The following excerpt reveals the unique significance of Jit attached to Colin:

Jit, my shield against fear, against guilt. Through her, I became whole. And this is the greatest boon, that a man, infinitesimal speak in the great universe, comes to acknowledge his own self and is content. (Han, *Enchantress* 305)

When the fantasy union with the lost object of desire starts to slip into enactment, anxiety will appear (Kirshner 91). Colin's acceptance of Jit as his shield against fear and guilt indicates Jit is a substitute for his lost object of desire since she can make Colin gain his unitary selfhood and satisfaction in the Symbolic realm. However, Colin's sense of being whole through Jit is only a fleeting displacement of completeness because Jit is merely "Bea's gift" given to Colin. After Jit dies from giving birth, Colin creates an android in the shape of Jit and pleads with Bea for making a soul-keeper for Jit to bring her back. Jit is Colin's desire for his primal lost object, but the object of desire is lost once again. The android resembling Jit is just another substitute of Colin's *objet petit a*. However, Bea's refusal to make a soul-keeper for Jit forces Colin to accept that "Jit had been Bea's gift to me. I would never be free of Bea," and "in the end, we shall only have each other, however many others come between us" (Han, *Enchantress* 350). Hence, Colin's acknowledgement of his inseparable connection with Bea reveals Bea is also Colin's primal lost object.

Bea, Colin's twin sister, has a special union with Colin from infancy to adulthood. They belong to one part from the womb. According to Colin, his lameness is caused by Bea, when they were in their mother's womb. Bea held Colin so tight that the midwife could not separate her hand from Colin's foot. So, Colin's foot "had kept the imprint of her grip upon it" (Han, *Enchantress* 186). The imprint on Colin's foot implies Bea's permanent association with Colin. At an early age, Colin always thinks he will marry Bea "as father married mother" (Han, *Enchantress* 6). Although Pastor Burandel tells him it is a great sin to do it, he still believes that it is acceptable in the other world. The other world for Colin is the magical world that only belongs to him and Bea, which is like the womb. He can be "fettered to her forever" and enjoy "love and tenderness and beauty" there (Han, *Enchantress* 189). The magical world is analogous to Colin's unconscious world. Colin can return to the preverbal wholeness and satisfaction by re-joining with his sister in the world. Colin's intense longing for Bea explains why Colin's inability to make love with Apricot is partly attributed to Bea. Apricot can only meet Colin's

biological need, but Bea is fancied to bring Colin preverbal completeness.

Colin's wish to marry Bea like his father's marriage with his mother means the voicing out of his desire. In this regard, voicing out his desire marks the permanent missing of his original Lack (Hadi and Asl, "The real" 150) and also his entrance into the Symbolic realm. However, Colin's desire for his sister has to be repressed consciously and displaced by other objects in the Symbolized reality.

The girl whom Colin meets in the flower boat could be viewed as a substitute for Bea. When Colin is courting her in the flower boat, he feels satisfied:

> As our bodies entwined, as the tide of lust rose in me, so that I felt—true or not— that every inch of her was palpably my own, I had the sensation that this was Bea, my sister, whom I was thus engaging. Bea in my arms. (Han, *Enchantress* 201)

His intimate partnership with the girl brings him back the feeling of union with Bea. However, when he accomplishes what he needs to do and becomes separated from the girl, he suddenly feels "Alien, alone, joyless." Though he enjoys the sexual pleasures with the girl, he never returns to her again. He knows that he must "live with the knowledge of this yearning and refuse it" (Han, *Enchantress* 204). Undoubtedly, "this yearning" is Colin's persistent desire for Bea, for the lost fantasy to achieve total satisfaction. Colin realizes such a yearning makes him guilty under the governance of pleasure and reality principles, so he never comes to the girl again.

In conclusion, Colin spends his whole life unconsciously pursuing his lost object of desire, his intimate union with his mother and twin sister. His fancy for the reunion with his twin sister is morally forbidden and pointed out by the pastor. So, he endeavours to repress such a desire, although he can regain a temporal satisfaction of the lost feeling with Bea from a girl in the flower boat. Nevertheless, his fancy for his mother is substituted by his love for Jit. The mysterious relationship between Colin, Bea and their mother is clearly voiced out in Bea's words:

> Between my brother and me is a bond we must both maintain and resist. We have to shut our minds away from each other, since now we both have lovers; and we shall have to live with this interdiction all our lives. Perhaps others do, who bury deep within themselves their lust and hunger for a sister, a mother, to be more than sister or mother. (Han, *Enchantress* 267)

Displacements of the Lack in *The Enchantress*: Power as the Substitute for *Objet Petit a*

Though they are twins, Bea is quite different from Colin. For Colin and Bea, the parents' death means the eternal loss of the union with the mother. Colin realizes that his mother's running after his father into the fire represents the father is his mother's desire instead of himself. But the parents' death has a different mental impact on Bea. Lacan's argument that the psychological problem is often associated with the failure of the paternal function (Kirshner 88) provides a proper explication to Bea's psyche. For Lacan, the phallus symbolizes the dominance possessed by the father. It is a metaphor for patriarchal power. Since the phallus is the sign of the Symbolic Order, it also indicates the loss (qtd. in Tyson 31). The loss, for a girl, means not only the lost position as object of the mother's desire, but also the position of not having the phallus. She, therefore, possibly identifies with the mother, noting her inferiority like the mother. And she also knows where she can get the phallus, that is, the father, who has it (Dor 108). As to Bea, her parents' death not only ends her intimate union with her mother, but also interferes in her identification with her mother and desire for the "phallus" from her father. Her mother's love for her father exerts a significant impact on Bea. Bea learns that her mother turns blind to the magical world for fear of hurting her father, and her mother's desire for her father takes away her mother's power. Therefore, Bea attributes her mother's death to her mother's love for her father, and she cannot identify with her mother's role as a wife. Additionally, Bea's passion for the father is unconsciously lost because of the mother's death. Thus, her desire to search for a lover as a father substitute to obtain the "phallus" is never motivated when she enters the Symbolic world. Instead, Bea desires to seize power on her own, in other words, to possess the phallus by herself, to maintain her fulfilled union with her mother. Colin also points out the different influences of their parents' death on them. He says, "The fire that burnt our parents has not charred my soul, as it has charred yours. I have no Gift to protect from love" (Han, *Enchantress* 277). Therefore, possessing the "phallus," the power and strength like a man can bring Bea back to total satisfaction with her mother. Such a fancy is deeply rooted in Bea's unconsciousness after her mother's death.

The parents' death in the witch-hunting mob also teaches Bea the importance of possessing power. Bea's mother is marginalized because she is treated as a witch practicing the ancient magic of her people, the Celts. Because of his marriage with a "wrong' woman, Bea's father has also been marginalized by his family, "one of the twelve families in Neuchatel who decide everything" (Han, *Enchantress* 87). He is

deprived of his large inheritance. Bea's parents' state of being marginalized means powerless, causing their death in the mob. Hence, the loss of power for Bea causes her loss of parents and homelessness.

Besides, Bea's half-brother Valentin is another threat to her love for mother. Bea hates him from an early age and tells Colin that "he is other" (Han, *Enchantress* 2). Bea believes that Valentin causes her mother's suffering since he is the son of a rapist. Bea's mother was dragged for penance at the chapel due to her sin of being raped and with a child. She was forced to leave her hometown. However, a new place does not make her life much better. When she worked in the factory, other women did not speak to her because of her fatherless child. More terribly, Bea's mother was treated as a depraved woman, a whore to be publicly whipped and put into jail. Hence, Valentin reminds Bea of the inferior status of women. The mother's relationships with the father and Valentin teach Bea that love means inferiority, and a woman needs to be strong as a man. Therefore, Bea is desperate for power and for proving her strength as men. Only when she possesses power and strength like a man, can she recapture the primal unity with her mother.

Bea is desperately in quest of the power and proving her same strength as men to make decisions, change the world and build an empire, even at the cost of her life. She renounces the conventional role of a woman as a wife and mother, the inferior and the marginalized. Patriarchy encourages women to contribute their value to their husbands and children. However, Bea realizes her soul and life cannot be subordinate to love husband and children (Han, *Enchantress* 250). She is firmly under the belief that no one can dominate her, "Udorn does not own me. I own myself" (Han, *Enchantress* 268). Thus, Bea's decision to keep a lover after her marriage with Prince Udorn suggests Bea's persistent longing to prove her power as men. Bea is not shackled by the traditional belief on women. Therefore, she does not think she is "wicked, immortal" as Abdul Reza claims based on the patriarchal criteria. She does not want to be the secondary, which she terms "a clever android" (Han, *Enchantress* 249). She thinks taking a lover is only a way of pleasing herself as a man pleases himself with women. That is, she wants to do what men usually do. Hence, keeping a lover for Bea relates not to love, but to the freedom to decide the life she really wants.

Bea even fights as a warrior like a man, when Ayuthia is invaded by Burmese armies. She follows Taksin to fight for and save Ayuthia. Bea's frantic quest for the power and for proving her strength as men can be perfectly demonstrated by her own statement:

> It is men who decide how much or how little education and liberty a woman will have. But I want to decide for myself. I want the same power, because my strength is the same...
> Ability to decide, Colin; to choose, why, even to change the world, as men do. To be listened to, as a man. (Han, *Enchantress* 250)

Bea's desire for power is also clearly revealed through her choice of her lovers, including the Chinese Emperor Tsienlung, Prince Udorn, Lord Abdul Reza and King Taksin, all of whom represent power. When she sojourns in China, Bea wants to conquer the Chinese Emperor Tsienlung (Han, *Enchantress* 206). She confirms she will have the power to give all Colin wants, if she succeeds (Han, *Enchantress* 186). Although she marries Prince Udorn, she still seduces Lord Abdul Reza to be her lover. Lord Abdul Reza is a prince, a merchant, and a diplomat, and he is capable of helping Bea and Colin successfully flee to China, and later to Thailand. Besides the power owned by him, Abdul Reza also reminds Bea of the Chinese Emperor Tsienlung. Conquering Abdul Reza for Bea thus compensates for her failure to conquer the Chinese Emperor to some degree.

Bea marries Prince Udorn not for love, but for power. She tells Colin, "Love is dangerous for woman. I must not lose myself, as did Mother" (Han, *Enchantress* 237). However, Prince Udorn is not her end to seek power. Reaching the desired object only results in the emergence of another strong desire in the process of satisfying the loss (Hadi and Asl, "The real" 151). Bea's final target of searching for power is King Taksin. King Taksin is "a man of strength, of vision, and ambition" and can "change men, bring down kingdoms and empires or build them" (Han, *Enchantress* 313). Bea firmly believes that he is the real king to save Ayuthia. For Bea, King Taksin substitutes her lost object of desire. However, Taksin never shows concern to Bea, because Taksin's glance never turns her way. When Bea pleads with Taksin to follow him to defend Ayuthia, Taksin "continued to look away, stolid like a great block of stone, immoveable" (Han, *Enchantress* 319). Although Bea is eventually allowed to follow him in battles, Bea finds "he will not look at me. Never, does his glace turn my way" (Han, *Enchantress* 344).

Bea is once under the gaze of Uncle Theodore, Lord Abdul Reza, and numerous noble men in Ayuthia. Nonetheless Bea cannot conquer Taksin like other men. When Bea places her hand on Uncle Theodore's arm and lets her hair fall towards his face, Uncle Theodore "gazed fondly at her, then blushed" (Han, *Enchantress* 103). When Bea is in pale blue-green silk, Lord Abdul Reza looks fixedly at Bea in the same way as Uncle Theodore does. The gaze from Uncle Theodore and Lord

Abdul Reza at Bea reflects their sexual desire for a woman. According to Hadi and Asl, the gaze can be a tool to achieve self-actualization because individuals grow once the self realizes it is not where it wants to be ("The Objectifying" 63). So, the gaze from men makes Bea realize such a gaze is not what she wants. Bea notices her great power over men as a woman, but she wants to be "somewhat different" (Han, *Enchantress* 250). She wants to be a desired "phallus" as men. Traditionally, the gaze is the privilege of the man, whereas the woman is relegated to the passive spectacle (Asl and Abdullah 127). Bea subverts the conventional dichotomy of a male subject and a passive female object. She actively makes full use of her role as a female object to conquer men. Therefore, Bea's look at Abdul Reza is a sign of power over him (Han, *Enchantress* 132). Bea also longs for the gaze of King Taksin. However, Bea's yearning for such a gaze reveals her desperation to be the desire of the supreme power rather than a sexual desire. Bea asserts her power as a man by conquering the most powerful men.

King Taksin's indifference to Bea means her failure to restore the union with the power, driving her mad and lifeless. After King Taksin is killed, she even creates an android resembling him. The android becomes the most suitable substitute for Bea's desire for power and strength. She finally lives on the android King and fancies she becomes the object of the King's desire and recaptures the feeling of the union with the power. However, such a recapture lies outside of human existence. Bea becomes unable to function as a member in society and totally immerses in the Imaginary Order. Her achievement in getting *jouissance* goes beyond the conventional enjoyment, because *jouissance* "is coupled with death drive" (Teymouri et al. 115), and "operates without regard for the welfare of the individual, for his or her meaning or symbolic identity" (Kirshner 85).

It is worthy of pointing out that whether it is Colin's frantic search for love or Bea's desperation for power, it closely relates to the role of mother. To some extent, Han's detailed narrative about the mysterious relationship between the twins and their mother in the novel is attributed to her sensitivity to her relationship with her mother. Her autobiography, *The Crippled Tree* (1965) tells us she does not have a good relationship with her mother since her infancy. The death of Han's second brother Sea Orchid made her mother unprepared for her birth. Her mother refused to feed her after the delivery, indulged in alcoholism, and even cursed at her death. Such an unloving mother-daughter relationship lasted their whole life. It is noteworthy that the mother-child relationship in Han's novels is neither expected to be a loving one. Anne in *The Mountain is Young* (1958) was sent to Missionary School in Shanghai, China, and later to Britain.

She never lived with her mother and knew little about her mother, though her mother financially supported her. In *Till Morning Comes* (1982), there is always "a wall of glass" between Stephanie and her mother (Han 144). In *The Enchantress*, the mother was a caring parent, but died when the protagonists were young. Han also tells us in her autobiography that she could be neither her mother's "Loved One," nor "feminine and domesticated" like other European girls, because she felt abandoned by her mother and had to thrive by herself (Kuek and Fan 210). Hence, it can be easily found that in some sense, Han's depiction of the mother-child relationship in her literary writing can illustrate the role of the mother in the formation of the child's subjectivity.

Conclusion

The Enchantress is usually read as a fairy tale. However, psychological elements are integral to characterization and narrative in the story and Han foregrounds the play of mother-child relationship in her protagonists' psyche. If we are so used to the taken-for-granted view about the novel, we may scarcely notice the inner world of the protagonists. The article offers a new method of reading *The Enchantress* through Lacan's concept of *objet petit a*. *The Enchantress*, under a psychoanalytic lens, can be read as uncovering Colin's and Bea's constant search for love and power, the substitutes for *objet petit a*. The abrupt death of the twins' parents exerts an overwhelming influence on their psyche. Colin's fantasy that he is the desire of his mother is ruined by his mother's running after his father into the fire. His repressed desire for his mother unconsciously drives him to find a perfect mate to recapture the union with his mother. For Bea, the parents' death tells that her mother's death is indebted to her love for her father, in other words, love means loss of power. Therefore, Bea is thirsty for power. To possess power means to regain the primal happy union with her mother. *The Enchantress* is consequently structured by the protagonists' persistent search for *objet petit a*. The psychoanalytic dimension of the story helps drive the narrative. In such a context, the novel takes a different meaning. It could be viewed as a psychological drama instead of a fantasy. A Lacanian framework is helpful in elucidating the characters' behaviours and subjectivity. Additionally, the article indicates that Han's literary works are not merely centred on East/West relationships, but also could be good texts for psychoanalysis due to her sensitivity to the mother-child relationship. In this sense, the psychological analysis of the protagonists in Han's literary writing would enrich the academic research on Han.

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Mythical Motifs and the Modernity of Neo Mythology in the Works of Abai

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Abstract Mythology was fascinating first of all as a perfectly harmonized artistic system with its own laws and logic. A myth can reveal the essence of all the main problems and contradictions of the present, as it can accumulate in itself everything that goes beyond time and personal values. In mythological texts, figurative and expressive techniques are intertwined into a single whole, while creating a clear picture of events, with diverse plot twists. Greek and biblical myths have been deeply researched over the past two centuries, and the myths about the Muslim world and the ancient Turks, who are our ancestors, and the Altaians (the ancestors of the Turks) of ancient times have remained unexplored and untouched. Since this category of myths still remains unexplored, it is of interest for study and detailed consideration. At one time, they did not reach the same popularity as, for example, the myths of ancient Greece, so they were forgotten for centuries.
Keywords humanities; fiction; realism; literary movements; neo-mythologism

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Introduction

Currently, realist writers share the opinion of critics about the "The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years" ("The Buranny Railway Stop"), in which mythology and science fiction were mixed. One famous scientist called his work "Zhanpidas" a "secret" book with an unusual artistic type. It intertwines "mystery," "animal epic," philosophical interviews and realistic stories. In turn, another scientist drew attention to the intertwining of the socio-psychological novel with the myth. In his works, Abai was able to summarize the best traditions of the world and present the general Turkic mythical creativity in the best possible light. As the history of world literature shows, the use of folklore and ethnographic materials by bilingual authors occurs in the context of the "National Folk Element." The writer's appeal to mythological symbolism and folklore served two functions in his oeuvre: ideological and aesthetic, and national. His work was studied by such figures as A. Nauryzbaeva (34), U. Dalgat (22), L. Lebedeva (3) et al. The mythological motif and folklore elements in his works penetrated directly into the very essence of the text, often expressing an obvious opinion. Due to this specificity, Aitmatov scholars introduced the term "Aitmatov mythologism" into literary circulation. The term was introduced because no one had tried to connect such different, at first glance, concepts, which, as it turned out, were very tightly intertwined into something extraordinary (Doszhan 41).

"The human eye is not full; the eye bone becomes heavy-copper or holy." Abai often uses the plots of legends to promote his point of view, expressing his own thoughts with the help of a legend. The author embodies the main heroic actions on the basis of his thoughts, his worldview. The plot of the eastern legend is needed by Abai not just to tell a story, but to portray and convey an important issue from the past, the solution of which must be found (Suinshaliev 8). The plot of Abai's unfinished saga "The Legend of Azim" resembles the story of Hassan, a jeweller known by readers from one of the Arabian tales—"The Thousand and One Nights." The poet does not tell the story to the end, he tells only about how a deceived young jeweller passes stories from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth (Demchuk 24). The stories are about becoming rich, finding an easy way out, giving up the usual profession and showing the fate of a young man who hasn't stayed away from the bar.

The story notes the naivety, inexperience inherent in a young man. He also exposes crooks who have no regard for human life, cheats a murderer, drives him to his death, throws him bones and does not hesitate to steal his gold. Thus, Abai's works have social significance, because they reflect mythical, romantic and realistic plots that can be found in real life.

Materials and Methods

In the world literature, the works of T. Mann "Joseph and his brothers," F. Kafka's "The Castle" became one of the greatest discoveries in German literature. Their work turned to mythical thinking and became an example of the effective use of myth in fiction. The novel by G. Marquez "One Hundred Years of Solitude," which is based on world and biblical myths and Hindu mythology, in which the mythical creation became widespread in Hispanic literature, shook the world social and spiritual consciousness. The truth proved in the humanities lies in the proximity of artistic prose to philosophy, therefore, when a unique idea in it acquires the "wings" of imagination and gives literary expressiveness, then an era of complete stagnation of the former realism begins and new literary trends gradually begin to emerge. Neo-mythologism occupies a central place in the work of these giants of thought. In his work, the neo-mythologist writer refers to archaic, classical and everyday mythology; a cyclic model of time; mythological bricolage, a quotation collage from other works (fr. collage literally, glueing) and many other literary techniques.

It is the attempts to connect the consciousness of one with the consciousness of another or to synchronize the consciousness of another with the consciousness of another, as it was shown by our writers who introduce these numerous innovations into the literary tradition, that indicate that there is a kind of modernist harmony in literature. The fact that once the Kazakh collective consciousness became rich-poor, and the modern Kazakh-speaking—Russian-speaking, in itself contributed to the transformation of the myth into an Anti-myth. Before the formation of the Kazakh neo-mythology and the approval of its generation, the creative development of the myth in the domestic literature proceeded in three directions. One of them is the use of purely mythical plots, the other is the use of mythical images, the third direction is the use of mythical archetypes in the text to reveal the image of the hero. Owing to these three directions, modern literature can develop mythology in even more diverse directions and freely use it to create new works.

The Kazakh mythological system since the beginning of the twentieth century, thanks to the creative searches of writers, slowly, and at the same time quickly moved to mythical creative thinking. Abai Qunanbaiuly stands at the origins of this

system. Abai, who laid the foundations of the new Kazakh literature, also continued to introduce old traditions—myths with the author's concept, which is based on the core of the work of art. Many literary critics have noted that Abai Qunanbaiuly used legends, mythical, symbolic images and plots in his works in a modified, revised and improved form in accordance with the author's concept. The myth lives in the origins of the art of words. Therefore, mythological concepts and plots occupy a large place in the oral literature of the Kazakh people. Mythological plots, images, personifications in the myth are a "golden spike" revolving around representatives of Kazakh literature. In the Soviet period, the Kazakhs were considered a people who did not have their own myths and legends, who did not have written literary traditions. But after a while, such writers as Abai proved that the Kazakh literary world is as rich as the world of Greek mythology.

Results and Discussion

In the practice of the development of fiction, there has long been a tendency to use mythical plots, legends and stories in literary works as needed. The storyline in Kazakh mythical literature is consonant with world and Turkic mythical works. They can intertwine colourfully in some storylines, and in doing so, it is sometimes impossible to distinguish where the myth ends and the author's literary world begins. It is obvious that mythology does not have a clear boundary between the external world and man, thought and feelings, substance and idea, the objective and subjective world. These boundaries appeared much later, and in mythology they were all perceived as a single understanding of the world. In the system of poetic thinking of the Kazakhs, there is often a search for some support in the mythological origins that could confirm the authenticity of mythological facts. One of the first who discovered the universal content and deep philosophical thought embedded in the legends is Abai. He first used mythology in his poems "Iskender," "Masgut," "The story of Azim." Undeniably, the deep origins of mythologism lie in the depths of oral literature, folk poetry (Suinshaliev 10). In the poem "Iskender," Abai exposes the arbitrariness, belligerence and peacefulness of Alexander the Great. He masterfully revealed these seemingly incompatible qualities in one person. The story of King Iskender the giant was called "the flying word of praise" because Abai created such a unique work that fully revealed the whole essence of the legends about this king (although in the legends his image was quite negative). In his story Iskender he showed that the master of the mind is on the side of the philosopher. Abai tells about life, about thoughts, about the deeds of Iskender. Such a "selfish, dissatisfied, with violent eyes, speaks of his mind against a hostile soul":

Don't be proud of the fact that you are strong, know,
When you are strong, you are reserved!

In this poem, there are various assumptions about where the original source of the plot of the "Eye Bone," taken by Iskender from the guards of the "gate to God," came from. Without a doubt, the poet was well acquainted primarily with the Eastern classics, including the work of Nizami, which stands next to him in terms of mastering this episode. It is not surprising that in this episode, the fragment about the eye bone used as a symbol of shamanism is an ancient nomadic plot that entered the Talmud about an ancient Jewish legend. Abai, as a great educator, uses in this work the entire history of such a commander as Alexander, and the legend associated with him in order to express the idea of morality in life. This was done in order to reveal the image of Alexander, tell his story, and give readers the opportunity to draw conclusions about him themselves. Abai's philosophy in this work was impressive, deep (Tlepov 18).

Abai Nizami "Did not become a repeater, imitating Iskander-name." He created a completely different "node" of opinions and made efforts to present the legends about Iskander in the "real" world of his work. In the poem Iskender, the famous philosopher Aristotle is portrayed as a simple man. And his thoughts, words, and actions do not have such a high, sacred meaning as in most legends of that time in Eastern literature (Auezov 41). "Masgut" by Abai and "The Story of Azim"—are sagas based on the plot of legends common in eastern countries. The content of Abai's "Masgut" is described in the novel of I. Turgenev "Eastern Legend" (Auezov 45). There is a similarity between these two works, namely, the basis of both stories is an eastern folk legend. But each author interpreted it in his own unique way. I. Turgenev in his work simply outlined the plot of the legend about the salvation of the elder, while not particularly adding anything new to the plot. Abai, on the contrary, used the legend plot to write an absolutely new work. The "Masgut" described various problems and troubles that fell on his life path. In fact, almost all the events in the plot, even if they seem unimportant, carry serious thoughts that the author wanted to lay down with his work. Myths and mythical images representing the spiritual world of mankind were used not only for a new artistic purpose, but also to solve the pressing problems of the era, to find a way out of seemingly hopeless situations. The main features of the spiritual development of the historical era were revealed through the myth. Symbolic images were created, collected by mythological motifs. In addition, mythical images were created that reflect the spirit of the era.

K. Gabitkhanuly (34) explains the words expressing mythical knowledge as follows: “Islam, Christianity, Buddhism in different epochs spread at different levels in our culture, notably, they became the basis for the creation of a new traditional religious culture, such as the cult of the beast and bird (totemism), the cult of natural phenomena—the sun, moon, stars, etc. (fetishism), the cult of fire, witchcraft (magic), the cult of ancestors, Tengri, Umai, shamanism, etc. It cannot be denied that it has a certain influence on our language, writing, traditions” (Gabitkhanuly 35). From when should the history of the study of Kazakh mythology begin? Here it is necessary to have special studies devoted to these topics, since the history of the beginning of research itself can be quite extensive. The scientific idea about the problem of neo-mythologism in national prose, about the poetics of myth is often formulated either according to the opinions of Russian-speaking scientists of the CIS, or on the examples of foreign literature. The issues of mythical creativity in Kazakh prose, its essence and nature have been widely studied in literary studies and folklore studies in recent years. National literary studies are intensifying the study of the prose of the author, who created mythopoetic models for their work. It is no coincidence that neo-mythology, vividly manifested in our literature, arouses great interest with its constant search for reliable facts, with its secret knowledge of being, features of describing life, logical assumptions in conveying historical knowledge to its readers. Therefore, studying each “historical decade” of this unique phenomenon in the Kazakh literature of the XXI century, the recognition of the characteristic archetypal signs and properties of mythological layers that differ from each other during 2000-2010 and 2011-2020 becomes an urgent issue of modern Kazakh literary science. At the same time, the study of mythical motifs in neo-mythological works of Kazakh writers is, in particular, the study of archetypal symbols: the recognition of mystery in artistic texts, the assessment of aesthetic artistic potential in the world literary space.

The beneficial influence of the national neo-myth on the creative potential belonging to a particular ethnic group cannot be denied. Today, Kazakh prose writers in their work have begun to pay special attention to ancient myths and give the reader new stories, which are based on old legends that carry an important part of human life worthy of emulation. The dominant archetypal, mythological and mythological forms encountered by modern Kazakh prose writers include totem/aruak, trickster, cultural hero, national image and eternal moments. Catharsis in the works of prose writers (gr. κατάβασις and lat. descensus ad inferos, and ger. Höllenfahrt) the mythologeme of being in hell and anabasis (ancient gr. ννάβασις—the literal meaning (ascent, and the actual meaning in art and literature) the mythologeme of

the historically traversed path is intertwined together, creates the basis for nature and civilization, its own and other, rural and urban self-consciousness, embodies the motivating staff. The researcher Arslan-Ayaydin speaks about the embodiment of the hero and the embodiment of mythological motifs of life, Twins, death and life in modern Kazakh-Russian-speaking domestic writers (Arslan-Ayaydin et al. 59).

Modernist (innovative) neo-mythologism, adapted to the process of the existence of a certain nation, invests in the essence of the creative content, the boundaries of reality and thought. The artistic image is based not on a life model, but on the mythological conditionality of the creative unconscious. A nation that has not found its place in life opposes "other religious principles" that are forcibly imposed, based on the category (categories) of its own aesthetic values. German writer G. Hesse (19), the author of the work "Steppenwolf," wrote about this: "[...] we live in the ether, / we do not know what youth and old age are,/ we are not devoted to age and gender / we are astral (lat. astralis, gr. Aster-star) is located in the deep bowels of the ice" (Hesse 19). Russian scientist-mythologist D. N. Nizamiddinov in his work "Mythological Culture" talks about two conventions in literature and art, claims that the life reflected in a work of art and the existence of the hero in it do not coincide with reality in real life, and calls this the first conditionality. The second category of conventions includes myths of the epic genre, oral and literary examples, legends, fairy tales, fables (Nizamiddinov 14). Yes, "one of the main thoughts for the writer is to find the value of the human race, to strive to obtain this truth" (Platonov 13). In the late XX-early XXI century, Kazakh writers conventionally used the myth in their works, recognizing it as the highest value of the human race.

The famous scientist K. S. Ergobek spoke about how myth has come to be known in our literature: "The literature of every nation is evolving, improving, the artistic heritage of humanity, creativity is returning to folklore. Every time we return, we go beyond the national framework, immerse ourselves in universal thoughts. Together with other peoples, Kazakh literature is now striving for this process. On the way to folklore, the first example of the use of a folk epic in a work of fiction cannot pass by the experience of the novel 'Sulushash'" (Ergobek 79). In their creative processes, Kazakh prose writers see only the first stage towards an understanding of folklore and the mysterious world of myth. And we feel that the national "jewellers of the literary word" have passed the school of long and noble searches on the way to the realization of their neo-myths. Thus, mythical stories began to serve as a ready-made artistic form in Kazakh prose. All Kazakh writers who participated in the literary process of that time recognized the myth as an artistic knowledge, turned it into a literary interest, encouraged the artistic content to ac-

quire a new character. Thus, in the literature of the nation, the disclosure of mythical lines, forms of answers to the eternal "damned questions" stored in the myth, and the difficulties of today, correlated with the ancient myth, unfolded.

Abai is a great poet, composer, philosopher, one of the founders of Kazakh literature. He was well familiar with the ancient Kazakh folk customs, laws, Sharia rules through books in Arabic and Turkic languages. Researchers say that Abai wrote more than two hundred poems, including more than 170 lyrical poems, about 30 translated poems and other poems. It contains 45 words of edification, articles, 49 prose works. He made an invaluable contribution to the literary life of the Kazakh people. After all, his works in our time have become an invaluable cultural treasure and a huge storehouse of knowledge in mythology. Abai's resourcefulness and wisdom are boundless. He learned the culture of his people, mastered the East, studied the basics of European mythology. In the literature of the East, especially Muslim, in stories and wise sagas, the basis was laid on the pictures of an endless fantastic life, in which immense powers mingled beyond the limits of the world of human possibilities. Abai speaks about them in the poem "Eight legs":

Алыстан сермеп,
Жүректен тербеп,
Шымырлап бойға жайылған.
Қиуадан шауып,
Қисынын тауып,
Тағыны жетіп қайырған—дейді. (Abai 65)

The mythical image in this poem is in another. A seeker chasing a fleeing throne. In the ancient way of life of the people there was a saying "Kashagan chase," "Kashagan descent," and the people who bred horses knew this well. Many horses do not have a bridle around their neck, and when they feel threatened, they run away from the herd and lose their temper. There were ways to catch such a Kashagan. But since there is no bridle, it was almost impossible to do this. Because of this, this expression literally means: "To run after something that is almost impossible to catch." There is also the concept of "blue wolf." Wearing the "blue wolf" is the connection of the origin of mankind with animals and birds, historically integrated, historical and genetic ties of the Turkic peoples. Over time, this image became a sacred animal, the spirit of imitation of individual people.

The veneration of totemic animals spread until the period of the creation of the Turkic Khaganate, and in later epochs, mythical concepts underwent changes due

to the establishment of large khaganates, which allowed the creation of other prose genres of legends. In general, most of the prose samples of these legends not only reflect the archaic knowledge in the Oguz Khaganate, but also reflect the unity of space. There are legends among the people that the famous batyrs Kerey, Zhanibek, Tata Yeset were protected by gray wolves (Kaskabasov 9). The scientist C. Kaskabasov said: "In the history of Kazakh mythology there was the same approximation as in Greece and Rome. This is a reminder of Zeus and Jupiter during the Turkic Khaganate, when Tengri towered over other gods. Since the mythology of the Turkic Khaganate has not fully survived to this day, it is difficult to say and describe exactly what it was. Nevertheless, unlike the ancient Turkic writing and the research of scientists, during the Turkic Khaganate, myths apparently became somewhat cyclical, but due to the rapid disintegration of states, they merged into one system. In the Holy Scriptures, a blue beaver is depicted, who was a thinker, an initiator of the path. According to the country's beliefs, heroism with great power originates from above, from Tengri himself. The wolf is the giver of special attention to Tengri" (Kaskabasov 12).

S. Kaskabasov, who at one time relied on the historical basis of legends widespread among the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples, warned that the Turkic—Kazakh myths and legends are one of the Turkic origins: "Ancient myths, legends of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people, including the legends of the lower nomadic Turkic tribes of the old times—the gray wolf, "Тобе көз", one-eyed giant" (Kaskabasov 15). Thus, the totemic role of the wolf occupies a special place in the knowledge of the Turkic peoples. The Kazakh people equate brave, courageous men with gray wolves, and works of art depict a wolf as a symbol of courage and heroism. This animal image is also present in Abai's poem "Жүрегім менің қырқа жамау":

Жүрегім менің қырық жамау
Қиянатшыл дүниеден.
Қайтып аман қалсын сау,
Қайтқаннан соң әрнеден. (Abai 85)

In the poetic lines, the word "forty" also has some symbolism. The Kazakh people not only remembered almost every expression, but also preserved the advantages of each number, differentiating its characteristic features. In the representation of the Kazakh people, there is often a mention of the number "forty" in connection with religious totemic concepts. From this concept can emerge such uses as commemoration forty days after death, giving forty, forty days, forty nights, found in

oral literature (Ibraev 24). S. Valikhanov writes: “According to the Kazakh concept, the spirit visits its home by forty days, after which it leaves it forever” (Valikhanov 1). The religious concept of forty exists in other countries as well. For example, the Istanbul Turks have donations that come to someone with the number forty. At forty, if you give the money, then there will be no fear. In Abai’s poem, the phrase “қырқа жамау” expresses an inner feeling, fun, however, according to the mythical understanding of the number “forty,” it has a sacred recognition associated with the mythology of the ancient era. In addition, in Abai’s poem “Жазгытұры,” expressing the warmth of summer, the poet said: “When mother bends the earth, she, like your father, creates the sky above her head...”—the author likens the earth to a merciful mother, the sky to a caring father. The evening of the earth in the image of the mother is characteristic not only in Kazakh mythology, but also in the minds of other peoples. Faith, understood as the father of heaven, occupies a place in the consciousness of man in early, ancient times. And also in the lines: “The sun is the groom, the earth is the bride” it is clear that the natural picture of the life of the Kazakhs is reflected (Abai 97).

According to ancient mythical beliefs in many countries, the sun is associated with a legend that tells about passion, love for the Earth:

Күн—күйеуін жер көксеп ала қыстай,
Біреуіне біреуі қосылыспай,
Көңілі күн лебіне тойғаннан соң
Жер толықсып, түрленер тоты құстай.

Abai created a mythological image of the bride and groom -the earth (Kunanbayev 7). Speaking about the language of Abai, it is important to mention his poetic power, the artistic power of the language. N Gabdullin said: “Abai’s poems... it’s like an expression—I don’t want you to know that I can’t” (Gabdullin 17). In the language of a poem, in a general artistic word, the artist creates a mythological image by choosing one feature of a particular object or phenomenon, an action and comparing it with other concepts or actions. Which he, in turn, embodies in words. For example, in the poetic lines: “ ‘Күйлі, күйлі байгеге Қажыты көңім көшауып’ a completely new image of ‘көңілдің байгеге шабуы’,” and in the poetic lines “Күйлі, күйлің байгеге күйлі күйлі, күйлі күйлі күйлі” is another figurative phenomenon. During the development of the national prose of the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century, a monologue, a memory, a deviation, a dream began to reflect a myth that unexpectedly intertwined with the line of the work in artistic techniques born with

the aim of a deeper disclosure of the spiritual world of a person in literature. In innovative works mixed with mythology in the line of the composition, a person is a victim of an unrecognized hostile force, an artistic textual mythical system has been formed on the part of our authors. The characters in these mythical works do not live in historical time, but in a mythological time where past, present and future times intertwine. The fact that the prose genre of Kazakh literature at certain stages of its development is again immersed in a myth is better sought not in the nature of the genre, but in the artistic world of the writer.

We can attribute everything to a myth, and only a fiction to literature. From this point of view, we cannot detect an ontological difference between myth and literature without discovering the specifics of both genres. Each epoch has its own modernism. The most common form of mythization of the literature of the twentieth century is the use of traditional mythological plots and images. The traditional mythological plot is reflected in a work of fiction, either by interpreting it by the author in a certain situation, or by subjecting it to change (transformation). The mythic and anti-mythic nature that we encounter in our literature from the twentieth century to the present day is largely convincing. In a word, the interpretation of traditional mythological plots and images is the disqualification of mythological parallels, the actualization of individual archetypes and mythologies and the introduction of a traditional mythological plot into an unconventional context; the transformation of traditional mythological plots and images is "adaptation to new conditions," "mockery" and the embodiment of anti-myths in life. In this regard, if talking about the writers who stood at the origins of the embodiment of anti-myths in life, M. Auezov's "The Way of Abai" comes to mind first (Auezov 79). He was the first writer in Kazakh literature to bring his authorial myth to life. In the epic "The Way of Abai," the author brought to life his literary hero Kunanbai and Shakir, using the reverse effect of the traditional literary mythology introduced by Franz Kafka. Now many researchers of the history of literature believe that in such works, reality is life. This work is a literary heritage of the Kazakh neo-mythical origin.

When considering the literary evolution on the way of changing the traditional mythical storyline on the part of writers in the prose genre, the presence of two large literary search directions can be stated. In this regard, Ya. E. Golosovker expresses the idea: "The author, who stylized the narrative as a myth, does not undertake to embody a mythical metaphor, equivalence, but actively uses them, turning it only into a component of the text, that is needed, rather than embodying it into the essence of the narrative" (Golosovker 15). The Turks, who failed to preserve their national myth like the ancient Greeks, today began to turn their writings into sacred

mythology, because in art and literature the mythical sphere mixed sacredness and poetry, and art "was closer to the truth than to the reality of fictional life." Therefore, now in the writer's work, the myth and the play are ontological (gr. ontos—being, logos—teaching). In this regard, J. Heizinga notes that: "Myth comes to life in one harbor with poetry, telling a story that goes back to antiquity. A story that comes to life" (Heizinga 42). It is the conditionality that has determined such trends in modern Kazakh neo-mythologism as the ideal narrative, the absolute equivalence of reality. The myth in modern Kazakh prose carries an aesthetic function as an artistic symbol of real life, embodying a new verbal and stylistic form, finding meaning in reflections and speeches, in the narrative about the personality. In modern art the artist, as a product of a cultural myth, cannot help revealing its essence, but instead prefers to model a picture of the world in an artistic work, relying on an authentic life model, considering life as "phantasmagoric" and expressing it in various ways. In this regard, E. M Meletinsky expresses a motivated opinion: "The conscious reaction of writers of the twentieth century to mythology was carried out, as a rule, by means of artistic interweaving of materials" (Meletinsky 11).

Conclusion

For many writers, Kazakh myths have become creatively recognized as a kind of symbolic language that reflects the nature of the absolute equivalence of reality. These legends became a real breakthrough in their time, the "storehouse" of knowledge that remained untouched for many years. And now, years later, connoisseurs of ancient culture can enjoy the works of Abai, who gave a "second life" to the legend, breathing new images into them. In his works, legends play one of the main roles. Through the legends, the author shows his reader what a vast and multifaceted world exists very close by, all that remains is the willingness to explore it. Abai was able to masterfully emphasize those very mythical images that have no value separately from each other, but at the same time, in tandem, they play the role of those literary images on which the storyline is based. The reader can track the same images in different works of Abai, but the similarities in the story itself, which is "told" by each creation of the great master will not be found. Modern researchers of Abai's work came to the conclusion that it is thanks to him that Kazakh legends and myths "live" to this day and the reader has the opportunity to plunge into the author's world, to learn the fundamental part of Kazakh culture. Almost all the works contain symbolism, without which it is impossible to describe the culture of that time, and at least in some places it may seem that it is not clear with whom and how the main character cooperates. In the course of the story, Abai reveals each image separately

and seems to "breathe life" into his characters. Abai's works still represent a valuable material for study.

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Characteristics of the Origination and Development of Korean Literature of Critical Realism

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Abstract This essay studies the characteristics of Korean literature of critical realism produced in the late1910-1930s in comparison of those of European critical realism. It studies the literary trend of critical realism, the major literary trend of Korea, in the late 1910-1930s and ascertains that it is new flow with its new ideas and aesthetic principle quite distinctive from the outdated in the past. The origination and development of critical realistic literature in Korea turned out to be somewhat different from its counterparts in Europe in the light of socio-historical environment and creators' makeup. Although they both acutely criticized the reactionary and unpopular reality of the exploiting society, the Korean literature of critical realism is characteristic in that it reflected the reality of colonial and semi-feudal society, set the humiliated and poor working masses as the hero, sympathized with their lives as well as bitterly criticized the contemporary reality, harshly oppressing and exploiting them.

Keywords Critical Realism; Formation; Development

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Introduction

The literature of Korean critical realism identified with in comparison with others

on the account of origination and development. Literary legacies of the world reflect a variety of national life and movements of different countries at different times of historical periods and show creative wits and wisdom, genius and valuable experiences and lessons that had historically been accomplished. Critical realism, a literary trend formed during the development of modern history, was at a higher stage in the level of artistic generalization of reality than the preceding ones, and it criticized social contradictions of the time more sharply. As far as literary history is concerned, critical realism takes an important place along with humanism, classicism, enlightenment, romanticism, etc. "Critical realism became the main trend of European literature from 30s to 40s after romanticism" (Xiaohui Huang 2).

Modern capitalist society should have been a "realm of reason" as advocated by humanists or Enlighteners. "Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and celebration of reason, the power by which humans understand the universe and improve their own condition. The goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom and happiness" (Duignan, *Enlightenment*). However, from the outset, the task of liberating the masses from new social restraints and oppression by the new social system was raised. But it is true that the transition from the Middle Ages to modern capitalism was an epochal turn in the history of human struggle for independence.

The rapid development of industry and science and technology directly means that man's independence in relation to nature has risen compared to the previous period, and the origination and development of the labor movement show that the consciousness of independence and creative ability of the masses in relation to nature have greatly increased. This in turn led to a new requirement of freedom from oppression and exploitation of capital that was at higher level than that of medieval period-the requirement of freedom from religious and identity restraint.

While humanism and enlightenment were criticisms of either the divine or the royal power which oppress and violate human beings, critical realism criticized capitalist reality as well as divine and royal power by showing how it violates human dignity and value. "Enlightenment thinkers were typically humanists who supported equality and human dignity. They stood opposed (in varying degrees) to supernatural occurrences, superstition, intolerance, and bigotry" (Sullivan, *What*). Humanism and Enlightenment insisted that only ideal human emancipated from the idea of worship of God and the monarch could possibly achieve happiness and retain its dignity, whereas critical realism asserted that those ideal men could not essentially enjoy happiness and freedom under capitalist society, thus criticizing its reality.

As Xiaohui Huang pointed out "The critical realism literature in nineteenth

century, is a splendid page in the bourgeois literary history and also an important heritage in the treasure trove of the world literature. … They particularly expose and criticize the capitalist system which is widely involved in various fields. This causes the people's suspicion and dissatisfaction to the existing order, so it has great social significance" (4-5). This indicates that critical realism raised and described a higher level of human demand for independence than humanism and enlightenment described. Critical realism is common irrespective of the region and the country, in that it described the reality as it was but in socio-historical background and conditions. The tasks it tried to deal with vary from country to country, bearing certain characteristics.

First of all, it varies in the aspect of origination and development. In those countries such as Britain and France where capitalism developed, critical realism appeared and developed at the time when the bourgeois contradictions and corruption were fully revealed and the struggle of the working class and other popular masses was actively taking place:

> Literary realism is the trend, began with 19th century French literature and extended to late 19th and early 20th authors, towards depictions of contemporary life, society as it was or is. (Wikipedia, *Literary realism*)
>
> Industrial Revolution brought riches and power to Great Britain. At the same time, it also brought great evils with it. (Seaman 51)
>
> The basic point of critical is to expose and criticize the evil social reality in humor or satire language. ... Along with the capitalist system, the social politics, economy and morality greatly changed as well. The value regulation and the free competition dominated the world and money can controlled everything. Facing the complicated social contradictions and the cruel reality, people became very serious about their life, and they analyzed social problems objectively in a critical way. (Che 128)

However, in those countries like Russia, it developed in the historical condition of the feudal serfdom as the capitalist elements were infiltrated to a considerable extent but not yet won victory. "…through the interpretation of characters such as Manilov, Gogol sharply criticized the characters of landlords, the exploiting class who oppressed their serfs those days" (Craevski et al 32). Actually, in different countries of the world, many works have been produced to sharply criticize the reactionary nature and corruption of the feudal autocracy, the exploitative nature and inhumanity of the feudal nobility and officials, and the social contradictions and

injustice.

It is said that literature in Victorian Age was characterized by a definite purpose to sweep away error and to reveal the underlying truth of human life (Moody 295). The question lies in how acutely and truthfully critical realism criticized the contradictions and absurdities of the social relations, regardless of what it dealt with, whether it is capitalist social relations or the feudal ones. The socio-historical circumstances and conditions at the time when critical realism appeared in Korea are different from those of Western Europe, where the development of capitalism started early, or Russia, which it started later, and from other countries of the world.

The literature of Korean critical realism has distinctive features different from that of European critical realism in its origination and development. It is mainly due to the different social and historical circumstances of the time and also to the literary traditions established in the past. This affected the literature as well as development of the society. The Korean critical realism, appeared in the 1910s focused on dissecting the contradictions of the colonial semi-feudal society and the absurdity of capitalist relations on the basis of the socio-historical circumstances of the time. They delved into the miserable life of the exploited and maltreated workers, peasants and intellectuals, and the class nature and inhuman atrocities of exploiting classes and plutocratic people.

Korean Literature of Critical Realism: Its Characteristics

The studies of the literature of critical realism conducted in the DPRK in the second half of the 20th century are reflected in many books. Un Jong Sop explored the origination and development of critical realist novels in the 1910-1930s in Korea and their characteristics, as well as the typical writers and works in Korea[1]. Ri Kyu Chan conducted research into literary forms with the tendency of strong anti-Japanese, patriotic feelings in the modern period of Korea[2]. Ri Jang Song, focusing on works of critical realist poetry, examined the growth and development of progressive poetry in the 1910-1930s[3]. Rim Tuk Gil made researches into the origination and development of critical realist play[4].

1 Un Jong Sop. Study of the History of Modern and Contemporary Novels before the Country's Liberation. Pyongyang: Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1986.

2 Ri Kyu Chan, Study on the Anti-Japanese, Patriotic Literature of Modern Time in Korea. Pyongyang: Academy of Social Sciences Publishing House, 2006.

3 Ri Jang Song, Study on the Development of Progressive Poetry of Modern Time. Pyongyang: Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1994.

4 Rim Tuk Gil, Study on the Development of the Progressive Drama before the Liberation of Our Country. Pyongyang: Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1996.

These studies have to do with the successes and experiences gained with the development of critical realism in all-out way in Korea. And the literature critical realism was here approached chiefly by literary forms and genres like poetry, novel and drama. This essay entitled " Characteristics of the Origination and Development of Korean Literature of Critical Realism" proves the existence of critical realism as a literary trend in Korea as well as the ideological and aesthetic achievements and historical stages of development of critical realism in Korea, which intends to excavate more of its successes both in ideas and arts so that the literature of critical realism in Korea adds to the development of world progressive literature, constituting part of valuable treasure of world literature abreast with other critical realistic works.

Art and literature is a production of history and social system in a certain period of times so this essay takes a history-based study in which the chief objects of study are a) the origination of the literature of critical realism and its stage of development, b) major themes and ideas, and representative writers with their masterpiece, c) the characteristics of the artistic interpretation. Critical realism came into being from the requirements of the specific reality of European countries in different socio-historical circumstances in the first half of the 19th century. At that time people had different views on capitalist society that had entered the first stage of its development.

Meanwhile, the bourgeois revolution erupted in France in July 1830. This revolution completely undermined the attachment to and expectation of capitalist society in such countries as France and Britain. With this as an occasion, the romanticism, which daydreamt that there could be beautiful human beings and noble ideals in the bourgeois society, lost its vitality. People got completely disappointed at the capitalist society. It became clear that capitalist society is not a "kingdom of reason" or a "fair society," no matter who took power and what type of regime it was. People needed to have a correct understanding of the reality of the capitalist society in which they have encountered, and on this basis explore new ideals.

The same was true in the countries in the backward feudal society. Mere resentment and crying slogans were of no help in transforming backward realities. The reality required the explorer, not the comforter or the prophet, and the sharp analysis of reality, not vague and abstract dreams. Critical realism came into being in reflection of this demand. "Critical realism requires the writer to critically reflect on the social foundations of life that limit, oppress, disrupt, and bring about moral crisis" (Sobirova Zarnigor 191).

In Korea, critical realism developed in the socio-historical environment of

the colonial semi-feudal society as the country had been reduced to a foreign imperialist colony by the imperialist aggression since the beginning of the modern age. By the 1910s, the realist literature of Korea had developed into the one with a clear character of criticizing the society in the face of the changing historical circumstances under the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism. Before and after 1905, Korea became absolute colony of Japanese imperialism, which prevented the normal development of the capitalist relations that had been undergoing within the context of feudal society. The Japanese imperialists persistently resorted to political suppression, economic plunder and cultural obliteration, keeping Korea under its colonial rule. Meanwhile, the landlords and capitalists, who became the stooges of the Japanese imperialists, desperately exploited the workers, peasants and other working people.

Under these socio-historical circumstances, literature in this period could not merely advocate enlightenment nor insist enlightenment of civilization. The progressive writers turned their criticism to dissecting the contradiction of the colonial semi-feudal society and the absurdity of capitalist relations. They delved into the miserable life of the exploited and maltreated workers, peasants and intellectuals, and the class nature and inhuman atrocities of exploiting classes and plutocratic people. The style of sentence and method of interpretation of the work also overcame the old medieval ones and established unity of speech and writing. This shows that by this time literature was firmly oriented to applying the method of critical realism with strong character of criticizing the society on the basis of the new socio-historical reality.

Based on the changed socio-historical conditions and the literary environment, the literature in the 1910s developed into the one with a clear character of enlightening society, with a strong anti-Japanese patriotic spirit, along with a strong character of criticizing the reality. It is literature with a strong character of criticizing the reality that played a leading role in the formation of literary tendency of critical realism. Literary works with a strong character of criticizing the society aimed at exposing and attacking the contradictions and social ills of the colonial and semi-feudal society in various ways.

Examples include the short stories like “Han’s Life” (1914), “Pressure” (Pressure) (1917), and “The Sad Contradiction” (1918). The short story “Sad Contradiction” clearly revealed and criticized the cruel reality and contradiction of the Japanese imperialist colonial society through a truthful depiction of the mental distress of a petty-bourgeois young man who suffered uneasiness and psychological suffering, failing to figure out what to do and how to live in the harsh reality under

the Japanese imperialist occupation. But the novel did not illuminate a way out to escape from this social contradiction. The description of Chun Won in "Han's life" and Yong Su in the "A letter breaking off relationship" were both devoted to exposing and criticizing the cruel reality of a colonial society, an exploiting society in which the destiny and value of man are governed by money. Through the destiny and character of the heroes, the works showed disaffection with the colonial semi-feudal society and the spirit of condemnation and protest against all the exploiting classes.

Literary works with a strong critical nature of reality created in the 1910s had characteristics that were different from those of the preceding period with regard to principle of reflecting reality. Realistic literature in the medieval period mostly criticized the contradictions and social evils of feudal society from the viewpoint and standpoint of rewarding the good and punishing the evil, whereas the realistic literature in Enlightenment age paid primary attention to criticizing the old feudal customs and evils that were against the modern idea of civilization.

However, modern literature in the 1910s set it as its main task interpretation to expose and criticize the contradictions under the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism. Therefore, the works created in this period were strong in both settings of the theme and interpretation of characters. This shows that the literature of Korean critical realism was created in the process of the literary creation of revealing and criticizing the reality in 1910s, and that the 1910s was when the literary tendency of critical realism was originated in Korea.

Critical realism, which occurred in the 1910s, developed drastically in the 1920s, forming a literary trend based on the new historical reality that was changing. In this period Marxism-Leninism was widely disseminated in Korea and the workers and peasants' movement was widely developed, and proletarian literature developed vigorously in the latter half of the 1920s, and socialist realism was actively created with a new trend of thought. At the same time, critical realism formed the mainstream of progressive literature, reflecting the contradictory social reality of Japanese imperialist colonial rule. This means that socialist realism and critical realism were created and developed in Korea in the 1920s, forming the main trend. Whereas socialist realism generalized the reality artistically based on revolutionary standpoint of the working class and its main characters were forerunners of the proletariat embodied the socialist ideal, critical realism focused on exposing and criticizing social contradictions and corruption.

The literature of critical realism can be mainly subdivided into 2 categories. The first category is the creative activities, the whole process of which are generalized

with critical realism whereas the second one is those of "Singyonghyangpha" (group of authors with new tendency). In the 1920s it was Hyon Jin Gon and Ra To Hyang who played an important role in the development of the critical realism. Hyon Jin Gon (1900-1943) played a pioneer role in the development of literary tendency of critical realism in Korea and historical formations in the 1920s. His masterpieces include the short stories "The Poor Region" (1921), "The Lucky Days "(1924), "The Private Mental Hospital Director" (1925), and "Hometown" (1926). In these works, he vividly criticized the contradictions and exploitations of the Japanese imperialist colonial ruling society by portraying the lowest-class characters of society such as a young intellectual and a rickshaw man and showing their miserable destiny and mental sufferings suffered by the lack of money and power.

Ra To Hyang (1902-1927) is one of the typical writers who played an important role in the development of the literary tendency of critical realism in Korea in the 1920s. His masterpiece, "A servant's child" (1923), sharply criticized the realities of a contradictory and unfair colonial society through the ill-fated appearance of a young boy, Jin Thae and the miserable living conditions experienced by the Jin Thae family. The short stories "Before knowing himself" (1924), "Dumb Sam Ryong" (1925), and "Ji Hyong Gun" (1926) all vividly revealed and criticized the unreasonable social reality of the times through the portrayal of the exploited working people suffering under the colonial rule. The creative activities of the "Singyonghyangpha" writers in the 1920s were of great significance in the development of the literature of critical realism in Korea. The "Singyonghyangpha" literary works—those created by the writers who started their creative activities with a new tendency different from those of the previous period—did not merely criticize the reality of the exploiting society, but analyzed the social contradictions and unreasonable reality and show the characters opposing the reality of the exploiting society.

The early proletarian literature created in the early 1920s was in the stage of shifting from critical realism to socialist realism in the light of the development of realism. The early works produced by the writers of the "Singyonghyangpha" with new tendencies, holding the banner of proletarian literature, had certain characteristics in the reflection of social reality, though they were still included in the critical realist literature in terms of their content. From the outset of their creative work, they set human relations and conflicts in acute confrontation and depicted the feelings of antagonism and resistance of the poor against the unfair social reality. However, the heroes' rebellion in the literature of the "Singyonghyangpha" failed to escape from the framework of individual and spontaneous resistance, and he

vaguely portrayed the characters struggling for a new ideal. And some progress was made in the typification of human personality as compared to the past, but not yet went beyond the scope of critical realism.

Typical of the writers of the "Singyonghyangpha" who contributed to the development of critical realism in the 1920s are Choe So Hae, Ri Ik Sang and Ri Sang Hwa. Choe So Hae (1901-1932), a typical writer of the literature of the "Singyonghyangpha," produced many works truthfully depicting through the bitter experience of life the miserable life and tragic destiny of the poor who were suffering from maltreatment, contempt, misfortune and hardships under the colonial subjugation of the Japanese imperialists. His masterpieces are the short stories "A record of escape" (1925), "The Death of Pak Tol" (1925), "Hunger and Slaughter" (1925), and "Red Flame" (1927). The main characters Mr. Pak, Pak Tol's mother, Kyong Su and Old Mun are poor people who strive to live by diligent and sincere labor in the lowest stratum of colonial society only to suffer more misfortune and hardships, and who finally resent, curse and rebel against society in the course of maltreatment, contempt and disaster. This trend is common in the literature of "Singyonghyangpha."

In addition, the literature of "Singyonghyangpha" includes the short stories "Rampage" (1925), "The Expellees" (1926) by Ri Ik Sang (1895-1936), "Into the ground" (1925) by Jo Myong Hui (1892-1942), and "The Poor" (1925) and "An agent and a bible woman" (1926) by Ri Ki Yong (1895-1984). Writers such as Jo Myong Hui and Ri Ki Yong later produced mainly works of socialist realism from the late 1920s, but before then, they had created a considerable amount of works of critical realism through the stage of "Singyonghyangpha" literary creation. Among the writers who contributed to the development of critical realism in the 1920s are such poets as Ri Sang Hwa and Kim Hyong Won. In their poems they acutely exposed and sharply criticized the contradictory reality of colonial society, expressing the lyrical hero's resistance to unreasonable social reality and the aspiration and desire for a new society. Ri Sang Hwa (1910-1943) warmly sang of the lyric hero's ardent love for the country and his ardent desire and aspiration to regain the lost country through the ardent thoughts and emotions of the lyrical hero who was deprived of the country in the lyric poem "Does Spring come in the Fields deprived of" (1926). Among the active writers in the 1920s were those who wrote many works with strong trend of socialist realism, such as Pak Phal Yang, Kim Chang Sul and Ryu Wan Hui, but also those who wrote "Singyonghyangpha" works, and some writers such as Jo Myong Hui, Kim Yong Phal and Kim Su San contributed to the development of critical realism in this period by writing many

plays with clear critical features.

Many novels were written in Korea in the 1930s that generalized the new socio-historical conditions and the reality of colonial society in a realistic way. The characteristics of the development of critical realism in this period are that the theme area of the work expanded, the methods of interpretation were explored in various ways, and a number of historical novels and satirical novels with strong characters of criticizing the society were produced. Historical novels include “Rim Kkok Jong” (1928-1937) by Hong Myong Hui (1888-1968), “White Flower” (1932) by Pak Hwa Song (1904-?), and “The tower with no shadow” (1938) by Hyon Jin Gon; and typical satirical novels is “Thaephyongchonha” (A peaceful world) (1938) by Chae Man Sik (1902-1950). Sim Hun (1901-1936) contributed to the development of critical realism in this period by writing the novels “The Eternal Smile” (1930) and “The Evergreen” (1935) with a strong socio-critical character. The Korean critical realism, which had been created and developed in the 1920s as mentioned above, developed steadily in the 1930s, with various forms and patterns, while representing broader content of life. The literature of Korean critical realism, developed in the 1910s and formed a distinct literary trend in the 1920s, and showed new looks and features in the 1930s through the historical environment of the Japanese imperialist colonial and semi-feudal society, was no longer developed because of the Japanese imperialists’ moves to obliterate national culture and suppression of progressive creative activities.

Reflection and Artistic Description of the Reality in Critical Realism Literature in Korea

Real life is the source of literature and the basis of artistic portrayal, and socio character along with ideological and artistic value of literary works depend on and defined according to what social reality they describe and how they describe human life. The literature of each country and nation has its own characteristics, which is of course the result of depicting the social reality of a country and its human life in conformity with national sentiments and aesthetic feelings. Critical realism also differs in its social reality and objects of description according to the country and nation, and this is a factor that makes the critical realism of one country and nation have distinctive characteristics from those of other countries and nations. It is one of the main features of the literature of Korean critical realism that it exposed and criticized the contradictions and absurdities, reflecting the colonial semi-feudal social reality in the period of Japanese imperialist rule.

In general, the characteristics of critical realism is to portray in a historically

truthful and vivid way the real life of a capitalist or collapsed feudal society where people are suffering from unlimited power of gold and the ferocious medieval oppression, but in detail what social reality they reflect and criticize depends on the peculiarities of historical development in each country and the character of the social system. The English literature of critical realism bitterly criticized the contemporary bourgeois reality in which gold emerged as king, finding the cause of social misfortune and all sorts of social evils in the bourgeois social environment. We can take Charles Dickens, a typical writer of English critical realism, as an example:

> Dickens drew on his own childhood experiences of hardship and deprivation in his fiction, and many of his works are set in his native London. His novels are broad in scope and deal with all social classes, but they are particularly notable for their treatment of contemporary social problems, including the plight of the urban poor, corruption and inefficiency within the legal system, and general social injustices. (Oxford World Encyclopedia, *Dickens, Charles*)

Dickens realized the slyness and barbarity of "American democracy" through his American visit in the early 1840s and transformed the mild humor into a satire of anger, bitterly criticizing American egoism and British capitalism in his political essay "American notes" (1842) and the novels "Martin Chuzzlewit" (1843), and "Dombey and Son" (1848). "Between 1842 and 1858, he visited some Capitalist countries, such as America and Italy. Before his visit Dickens thought of the United States as a world in which there were no class divisions and the relations between men were humanitarian. But when he was actually there what impressed him most there were the rule of dollars and the enormously corrupting influence of wealth and power" (Sun 252).

The literature of French critical realism mainly criticized the social evils and contradictions created by capitalist social relations. The French literature of critical realism portrayed the depravity of man and the corruption of society by gold, the main contradiction of the bourgeois system, by delving into the reality of capitalism where the illusions of the bourgeois revolution were so shattered. For example, Balzac, a typical writer of French critical realism, in his set of novels "La Comédie humaine," showed that the source of all contradictions in capitalist society lies in the conflict of material interests, that the class most thoroughly intertwined here is the bourgeois, and that the main characteristic of this class lies in selfishness and greed, and that, after all, because of its golden greed, bourgeois loses and destroys

everything moral.

Russian critical realism criticized the feudal relations, the social evils caused by serfdom. While critical realism in Western Europe mainly criticized the capitalist social evils caused by the power of gold, Russian critical realism chiefly criticized feudal despotism and the criticism of bourgeois was rather weak. It did not, however, praise the bourgeois civilization of Western Europe. While criticizing the despotic serfdom, they were also highly critical of the inhuman plunder of the bourgeois who grew up to be a golden worshipper. For example, Gogol, a typical writer of Russian critical realism, portrayed realistically the centuries-old backwardness of Russian life and irrational ignorance under the serfdom autocracy, vividly depicting not any historical event but the daily life of the ordinary people of Russia living under the serfdom autocracy. "The works by Gogol show the essential characteristics peculiar to the exploiting class of the times as well as that of Russian landlords in the time of serfdom" (B.D. Craevski et al, 1955:32).

In Korea, the 1910-1930s when critical realism originated and developed, were a period when capitalism failed to follow the path of normal development and feudal remnants were plentiful because of the Japanese imperialists' occupation and colonial enslavement policy. In order to strengthen the foundation of colonial rule over Korea, the Japanese imperialists made an investment of Japanese capital on a large scale, while protecting the landlords and preserving the feudal relations of land ownership in the countryside. Thus, in Korea the social and class composition was complex and the national and class contradictions were intertwined, and the working people were subjected to double and treble exploitation oppression by foreign imperialists, landlords and capitalists.

The literature of Korean critical realism reflected the actual life of the backward colonial and semi-feudal society in which the feudal relations of land ownership and exploiting system persist, failing to follow the path of normal capitalist development, and exposed and criticized the contradictions and absurdities of them, thus acquiring its peculiar characteristics different from those of other countries. The reflection of the colonial semi-feudal social reality in the literature of Korean critical realism and the criticism of its social contradiction and absurdity were first revealed in the depiction of the poverty, pain, misfortune and tragedy suffered by the Korean people due to the harsh exploitation and oppression of the Japanese imperialist aggressors and pro-Japanese elements.

Before the liberation, owing to the vicious censorship and harsh suppression by the Japanese imperialists, it was almost impossible in Korea to create and publish works which portrayed and directly exposed and criticized the brutal plunder and

fascist repression of the Japanese imperialist aggressors and their stooges against the Korean people. The works which sharply criticized the crimes of the Japanese imperialist aggressors and pro-Japanese elements could not be brought out or became available only when the "seditious elements" were removed after Japanese censor. In this situation, the progressive realists tried to embody the socio-critical character of the work and the spirit of exposing it to reality through a circumstantial narrative or implicit method in describing and criticizing the Japanese imperialists' moves for aggression and forfeiture.

Ryang Kon Sik's short story "The Sorrowful Contradict" (1918) is an example of the fact that since its origination the literature of Korean critical realism has focused on exposing the vicious nature of Japanese imperialist colonial rule over Korea. There is no Japanese in the novel, and even no word of Japan. Nevertheless, the work makes readers clearly feel the contradiction and irrationality of the colonial, semi-feudal social reality which was being crushed under the military rule of the Japanese imperialists. In this novel, portrayal of the scene of the police substation where a day laborer is examined by a sergeant plays a major artistic function in showing the breathtaking atmosphere and contradiction of the colonial semi-feudal society and revealing the crime-woven image of Japanese imperialist colonial rule. In this novel a drunken day laborer who was arrested in the police substation, with his waists fastened with a cord, bleeding on his forehead was well contrasted with a sergeant in police uniform with a sword at his side, sitting on a chair, hitting him on his cheeks while punish for delinquency. This contrasting sight is an artistic reminder of exploited and oppressed poor Korean people and the aggressive and class nature of the Japanese imperialists who have turned Korea into a colony and enforced the vicious military rule relying on gangster-like methods.

There the sergeant is a Korean who lives in the same neighborhood with the hero "I." But the meaning of this interpretation of the sergeant wearing the uniform and with the sword worn by the Japanese imperialists is not just the individualistic expression of the pro-Japanese stooge but also the artistic expression of the military rule of the Japanese imperialist aggressors. The work exposes the contradiction of the colonial social reality through the contrasting depiction of the day laborer and the patrol sergeant and expresses complaints and antagonism against the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists. The novel bitterly criticized the absurd realities of the Japanese colonial rule, where the vast majority of the working people are suffering from poverty and weaknesses, while a handful of the rich are becoming fatter and fatter day by day, through the interpretation of the a court lady-looking overweight woman, who is nearly 50 years old, with a face with too much powder

on, posture of her body wrapped with a unnamed and through the ugly incongruity of the woman's figure, clothing and colors.

The literature of Korean critical realism further intensified its criticism after the 1920s by exposing the contradictions and absurdities of the colonial and semi-feudal society by using various methods and by producing a number of works which denounced the crime of the Japanese imperialists' colonial rule that drove the Korean people into poverty and misfortune. Ra To Hyang's short story "Ji Hyong Gun" (1926), which truthfully described the promotion of class division in the Korean countryside, the ruin of peasant life and the miserable plight of the wealthy workers in connection with the infiltration of Japanese capital, Hyon Jin Gon's novel "Hometown" (1926) which revealed the contradictions and evils of the colonial semi-feudal social realities through the devastation of the Korean countryside and the destruction of peasant life caused by the Japanese imperialists' colonial rule and the infiltration and exploitation of Japanese monopoly capital, and Jo Myong Hui's novel "Newspaper and a prison" (1929) which criticized the contradictions and evil nature of the existent social situation of the colonial semi-feudal society, and revealed the criminality of Japanese colonial rule and economic plunder are all good examples.

Thus, the literature of Korean critical realism has its own characteristics distinctive from that of other countries in that it exposes and criticizes the brutality of Japanese imperialist colonial rule, the contradictions and absurdities of the colonial and semi-feudal society through the diverse description of the misfortunes and pains, miserable life and tragic destiny of the poor and humiliated Koreans of all strata. In the literature of Korean critical realism, the criticism of the contradiction and irrationality of the colonial semi-feudal social reality under Japanese imperialist rule is closely related to the expression of the anti-Japanese national consciousness. The literature of Korean critical realism had new ideological and artistic characteristics by embodying the anti-aggressive and patriotic traditions of national literature in conformity with the changing social reality. The strong ideological spirit of anti-aggression patriotism is an admirable characteristic of Korean literature which has a long history of development. The anti-aggressive and patriotic literary traditions of Korea was inherited and developed into critical realism through the literature of the Enlightenment period in modern times.

In the literature of Korean critical realism, the embodiment of the tradition of anti-aggression and patriotic literature appeared intensively in the expression of the anti-Japanese idea and national consciousness. The anti-Japanese national consciousness is based on the portrayal of the works of Korean critical realism

which exposed the evil nature of Japanese imperialist colonial rule and criticized the contradiction and irrationality of the colonial semi-feudal society. In the literature of Korean critical realism, exposure and criticism of the contradiction and vicious nature of the colonial semi-feudal social reality under Japanese imperialist rule and the expression of anti-Japanese national consciousness are inseparable. Without anti-Japanese ideological sentiment and national consciousness, literary works exposing and criticizing the crimes of the vicious Japanese imperialist colonial rule and the evils of the colonial society cannot be produced, nor can there be a depictive expression of the anti-Japanese national consciousness apart from the depiction of the viciousness of the Japanese imperialist colonial rule and the contradiction of the colonial semi-feudal society.

The question of whether to expose and criticize the contradiction and absurdities of the colonial semi-feudal society or to express the anti-Japanese national consciousness mainly depends on the thematic and ideological task of the work. It is, therefore, only a relative distinction whether the works criticize the social contradictions and absurdities or express the anti-Japanese idea and national consciousness in reflecting the corrupt reality of the colonial and semi-feudal society under Japanese imperialist rule. In the literature of non-colonial countries, expressing the idea of anti-aggression patriotism or national consciousness in general was not a major task. The same is true not only in countries like France and Britain, where capitalism had developed first, but also in those countries like Russia and Germany, ushered in capitalism later. Focusing on criticizing the foreign imperialists and expressing national consciousness while exposing the contradictions and absurdities of the colonial and semi-feudal society is one of the peculiar features of the literature of Korean critical realism that has developed under the realistic conditions of the colonial society.

In the literature of Korean critical realism, the anti-Japanese idea and national consciousness were expressed mainly in the resentment, hatred and revolt against the Japanese imperialist aggressors who inflicted misfortune and pains upon the Korean nation. Jo Myong Hui's short story "One Midsummer Night" (1927) describing the family background of the beggars and innocents who gathered on the police station in search for a place to sleep one summer night expressed hatred and antagonism against the Japs, informing the readers of the crimes of the Japanese imperialist aggressors who drove the poor Koreans into miserable destiny. In the literature of Korean critical realism, the portrayal of the love and yearning for the country and nation, the aspiration and desire for national liberation and independence, and the efforts to save the destiny of the Korean people groaning

under the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism constitute an important aspect of the expression of the anti-Japanese patriotic idea and national consciousness. Ri Sang Hwa's poem "Does Spring come in the Fields deprived of" (1926) is a peculiar work that clearly expresses anti-Japanese sentiment and national consciousness through ardent yearning for the country deprived of foreign aggressors, boundless love for the land of the country and resentment at those deprived of their native land. This poem described the nature figuratively to show emotions of the Korean people in a meaningful and emotional way who were deprived of their country, thus clearly reflected the patriotic feelings and national consciousness. It expresses the anti-Japanese idea and national consciousness in a peculiar way by singing with deep emotion of the resentment and antipathy of the colonial occupiers of the lyric hero - "I" full of yearning for the friendly people, obsessed with the beauty of the country. In addition, Sim Hun's "The Evergreen" where the author criticized the social contradictions and evils through the description of the rural enlightenment movement waged by young intellectuals under the circumstance of colonial Korea and expressed the anti-Japanese national consciousness and "Stupid Uncle" by Chae Man Sik who artistically expresses the anti-Japanese national consciousness while prejudicing the pro-Japanese treachery of the colonial stooges by satirical portrayal are good examples.

As shown above, the expression of the anti-Japanese idea and national consciousness while disclosing and criticizing the contradictions and irrationality of the colonial semi-feudal society under Japanese imperialist rule is one of the important features of the literature of Korean critical realism that developed under the socio-historical conditions of the imperialist colonies. The socio-class character and ideological and artistic value of literary works are defined according to who the hero is and how his character and life are described. Looking at the course of the development of realism, the portrayal of the characters and the picture of life are various in different historical stages and different countries.

In the literature of European critical realism, the main task of interpretation was to expose and criticize the greed, selfishness, inability and depravity of the exploiting classes, including the bourgeoisie, the aristocrat and the landlords and the harmfulness of almighty money principle. Therefore, the main characters were usually exploiting class. Typical of such literary works are the novels Eugénie Grandet, and "Old Goriot," in French writer Balzac's set of novels "La Comédie humaine." These novels show the harmful consequences of gold on human character in capitalist society dominated by golden almighty. The heroes of these works; Grandet, and Goriot, are widely known to the world as the misers who have

completely lost the mental and moral appearance of man because of their greed for money. The novel "Dombey and Son" by the English writer Dickens is a critical work of the social evils of the English capitalist society at the time when money dominated everything, showing Dombey's cold-blooded mercenary character and the collapse of the family caused by it. In addition, Balzac's novels "Disillusion" and "Absolute Exploration," French Stendhal's novels "Red and Black," and English Thackeray's novel "Vanity Fair" are also among them.

At the same time, there are some works criticizing the backward and corrupt realities of feudal society, the feudal aristocracy and bureaucrats. These kinds of works came mainly from Russia and other Eastern European countries. The Russian verse "Yevgeny Onegin" exposes and criticizes the corruptness of feudal society and the social incompetence of the nobility through the story of the spiritual and moral ruin of the feudal nobility. This is the first work in Russia to portray the "good-for-nothing person." The " good-for-nothing person " is a young man of noble origin, who, in spite of being intelligent and knowledgeable with a certain critical attitude towards reality, is mentally and morally ruined, unable to do anything beneficial for he was taught and raised in the aristocratic environment. Such works in which this character is represented as the hero formed a series in Russian literature. Among these are Lermontov's novels "The Hero of Modern Age" and Turgenev's novels "The Shrine of the Nobility," "Luzin," "Father and Son," Goncharov's novels "Oblomov."

A Russian author Gogol's novel "The Dead Souls" and the comedy "The Inspect General" exposed and criticized the corruptness of the Russian aristocracy, landlords and bureaucrats during the 30-40s of the 19th century. "The progressive people who have ever read or heard of Gogol's novel can notice that the writer revealed the social order ruling Czarist Russia at that time. They think his comedy 'Prosecutor' strongly criticizes the Czar Absolutist system itself, thus regarding the comedy as being positive" (B.D. Craevski et al, 1955:25). Like this, in European critical realism, mainly works that set the exploiting classes, including the bourgeoisie, aristocracy, landlords and bureaucrats, as the main characters, are in the majority.

The literature of Korean critical realism is similar to those of other countries in general principle of characterization and depiction of life. But it is different depending on which class and stratum the main character is from and in what viewpoint and standpoints they are depicted. It is one of the important features of the literature of Korean critical realism that the poor and humiliated working people have emerged as the hero and expressed warm love and sympathy while truthfully

describing their character and life in which they suffer all sorts of misfortunes and pains under severe exploitation and oppression and are opposed to social evils. Korean literature has produced many works reflecting the poor life and misfortune of the exploited and oppressed working people in ancient and medieval times, along with their struggle against corrupted and incompetent rulers and the wicked foreign aggressors. The excellent achievements and experience of the Korean classical literature, strong in social character and critical spirit of reality, were inherited and developed as required by the reality changed in the critical realist literature. The 1910-1930s, in which critical realism developed in Korea, was a period of national ordeals when the Korean people suffered the sorrow of the ruined people owing to the brutal colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists.

During the Japanese imperialist colonial rule, the all Korean nation experienced the sorrow and bitterness of the ruined nation, but the misery and sufferings of the workers, peasants and other working people of the lower class who lived in severe poverty and incompetence through the double and triple oppression and exploitation of the foreign aggressors, landlords and capitalists were even greater. In this socio-historical circumstance, the progressive realistic writers of those days paid deep attention to the life and destiny of the workers, peasants, working intellectuals and other lower-class people, and in their works they sharply revealed and criticized the contradictions and absurdities of the vicious social reality that forced the poor and the humiliated people into disastrous misfortune and pain. As a result, the Korean literary works of critical realism that showed the poor and humiliated people and the working people of the lower class opposing to social evils occupied the central position of human relations, and the criticism of social contradictions was applied in combination with sympathy for them.

The characteristics of the literature of the Korean critical realism, which set the poor and humiliated people as the hero and criticized the contradictions and absurdities of the vicious social reality while describing their life and destiny with deep sympathy, have already been vividly manifested in early works. In the 1910s, the works that helped the origination of critical realism, such as “Han’s life” (1914), a “A letter breaking off relationship” (1916), “ The Sorrowful Contradict (1918), and, “Tanso,” and “The Poor Region” (1921), and “A servant’s child” (1923), which played an important role in the formation of the critical realistic literary trend of the 1920s, show these characteristics well. Kim Chun Won in “Han’s life,” Yong Su in “A letter breaking off relationship,” Yong Nam and his mother in “Tanso,” “I” in “The Poor Region,” Jin Thae in “A servant’s child” and others are either lowest class people such as servants, beggars or junior clerks and poor intellectuals

with no money to survive. They face the tragic fate of killing themselves after suffering indescribable hardships and difficulties due to lack of money. The writers condemned the social evils of violating, threatening and driving their lives to ruin, picturing with deep sympathy the tragic life and miserable destiny of the leading characters.

The characteristics of the literature of Korean critical realism of exposing and criticizing the social evils, setting the poor and humiliated people as the hero and describing their tragic life and miserable destiny became more vivid after the mid-1920s. The works of critical realism in the 1920s emphasized even more the portrayal of the lower-class people suffering from pains and disasters in the midst of poverty and absence of rights. In the 1920s it was proletarian writers such as Choe So Hae, Jo Myong Hui, Ri Ki Yong and Ri Ik Sang that played the leading role in seriously describing the life and destiny of the poor and humiliated working people. Such are Choe So Hae's short stories: "The Death of Pak Tol" (1925), "Hunger and Slaughter" (1925), "After the flood" (1925), and "Red Flame" (1927), Jo Myong Hui's short stories "Into the ground" (1925), "The Country folk" (1926), and the Ri Ik Sang's novel "Rampage" (1925) and "The Expellees" (1926). The heroes of these works are characterized by the fact that they are portrayed not as pessimistic, despairing and retiring in the face of misfortune and calamity in the poor and innocent position, but as characters who, in most cases, resent the wicked world and are opposed to social evil. At this time, amidst the atmosphere of rapid growth of proletarian literature, writers like Hyon Jin Gon and Ra To Hyang also produced such excellent works as "A Lucky Day" (1924), "The Private Psychiatric Place" (1925), "A Water Wheel" (1925), and "Ji Hyong Gun" (1926) that show the miserable destiny of the working people suffering misfortune and disaster from poverty.

The same was true in the field of poetry, where works depicting the life and destiny of the poor and the humiliated took a large proportion. Kim Hyong Won's poem "People Failed to See the Sunshine" (1922), Pak Phal Yang's "The Factory" (1923), "Ten Years in Poverty, and Sorrow" (1925), Ri Sang Hwa's "The Greatest Hunger" (1925), Kim Chang Sul's "Now, The First Winter" (1925), "Towards the Pavement" (1925), Ryu Wan Hui's "The Victim" (1926), etc. show that Korean literature of critical realism put its main focus on describing the social life of the miserable people, their feelings and resentment to the social evils. This feature in interpretation of characters and depiction of life, which had been embodied since the 1910s, lasted through the late 1920s and into the 1930s.

The literature of critical realism, which had continued to develop with the

proletarian literature in the late 1920s, developed further on the basis of the changing socio-historical realities in the 1930s. Kye Yong Muk's short stories "Old Choe" and "A Duck's Egg," Chae Man Sik's "A bandit," the play "An Intellectual and a Mung bean pancake," Ri Hyo Sok's "Town and Phantom," Om Hung Sop's "A Mullet," Han In Thaek's "A Pay Day," " An Account of His Past Half," Kang Kyong Ae's "Dismissal"; and Hyon Kyong Jun's "Omari," etc. show that the literary works of those days also focused on portraying the poor and the miserable as in the former literature. Servants, rickshaw men, day laborers and casual laborers constitute a large proportion in the portrayal series of poor and maltreated characters depicted in the literature of Korean critical realism.

In case of British critical realism, the setting Oliver as hero in Charles Dickens' "The Adventure of Oliver Twist" is quite similar. As Min Lian pointed out "Oliver Twist, as one of the most famous works of Charles Dickens', is a novel reflecting the darkness, terror, violence and deception in London society in that time. As a typical representative of the poor group in the novel, the author used a large number of words and sentences describing Oliver's life experiences who has suffered so many misfortunes and unfair treatments since he was born, but did not lose his kind nature and perseverance" (Min Lian 1050). Jin Thae's family in "A Servant's Child," the hero of "Ji Hyong Gun," an old man Kim in "A Lucky Day, Yun Ho in "After Flood" and Kyong Su in "Hunger and Slaughter" all belong to this category.

The reason for that is because they suffered more misfortunes and difficulties than anyone else in the lowest stratum of the colonial semi-feudal society. Ra To Hyang's "A Servant's Child" vividly shows the plight and sorrowful feelings of the poor people through a truthful realistic portrayal of the miserable situation in which the hero, young Jin Thae, was scolded and beaten twice a day, and the poor life of his family in cold winter when his dad didn't earn a penny. In this novel, Jin Thae, the hero, is a 12-year-old son of a man servant of a principal Mr. Pak and he goes to the fourth grade of the primary school. It is the duty of his father to draw rickshaws, his mother to cook his master's food, and Jin Thae himself to wipe the yard. In a snowing morning in winter, Jin Thae poured snow on his master Mr. Pak's new shoes while wiping it away, which resulted in being scolded and hit to get a bruise by his father.

On the other hand, that evening, while coming back home after buying some rice and wood with the money he got by holding her mother's only property, a silver rod-like hairpin in pawn, he saw his school teacher. In order to avoid meeting him, he fled into the alley, and spilt the rice on the road, only to be beaten by her father and mother once again. While hitting his own son, Jin Thae's father is

eager to blame, scold and beat his master sitting in his living room and Jin Thae is much overwhelmed with grief. The work depicts delicately and truthfully the psychological experiences of the leading characters and showed the resentment and grudge of the poor toward those who make them tremble in despair, coldness and hunger.

The novel, however, failed to reveal what makes the diligent and hard-working people in the lowest stratum of society live under all sorts of maltreatment and contempt. "Jin Thae made no excuses. Beaten twice, he was anxious to blame and curse something. But he didn't know who to blame or what to curse" *(*Han Mi Yong, et al 168*).* This is a manifestation of the immaturity of the level of consciousness of the hero Jin Thae and, at the same time, a limitation of the world outlook of critical realist Ra To Hyang. Thus, the Korean critical realism is distinguishable from the literature of critical realism in other countries in that it exposes and criticizes social contradictions and absurdities while truthfully describing the miserable life of the people suffering severe misfortune and pains in the colonial and semi-feudal society. As seen above, the literature of Korean critical realism mainly described poor and maltreated people and their lives. It is one of its important features that the works which set the poor as the leading characters and described their miserable life and destiny hold a majority.

Conclusion

The literature of Korean critical realism is one of the legacies showing the unique and excellent characteristics of national literature. By the modern time, the Korean national literature with a long history of realistic tradition entered a new stage of development by producing a number of excellent works embodying the characteristics of critical realism. Critical realism developed with the formation of modern literature in Korea, and it took a prominent place in contemporary literature before liberation and continued its lifeline.

The literature of Korean critical realism has its peculiar characteristics different from the literature of European critical realism because of the difference in the socio-historical environment on which it is based and the national characteristics of the literary tradition. The literature of Korean critical realism sharply revealed and criticized the contradictions and corruptness of the colonial and semi-feudal society in which money dominates everything by depicting the poor people who are despised and humiliated under Japanese imperialist rule at the center of the artistic system along with their miserable lives and resistance to the social evils.

It also made a contribution to achieving the full-scale development of modern

literature and establishing the contemporary literary genre in Korea by removing the old elements of medieval literature that remained in Sinsosol (novel of a new type) and Changga (song of a new type), etc. and vividly and truthfully depicting living man and his real life as seen in reality. Under the socio-historical conditions under the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists, the literature developed in the 1910s and formed a distinct literary trend in the 1920s, embodying new looks and features in the 1930s. By the 1940s, the vicious moves of the Japanese imperialists to obliterate national culture and suppression of the progressive literary activities reached an extreme, which prevented Korean literature of critical realism from developing any further. The literature of Korean critical realism turned out to be significant in the history of modern literature before the liberation of Korea for its precious creative achievements and excellent ideological and artistic features achieved in the course of its development going through twists and turns under the colonial rule of the Japanese imperialists.

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Encoding and Decoding the Reviews of the Film *The White Tiger*

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Abstract Ramin Bahrani's film, *The White Tiger,* is Balram's journey based on the New York Times bestseller novel by the same name. The film is publicly supported by an incredible number of reviewers. But some reviewers denounce it as a politically exploitative and unjust depiction of India and Indians. The present paper aims to explore the polysemic nature of the film through review analysis. Drawing insight from Stuart Hall's concept of encoding-decoding, the article analyses reviews of *The White Tiger* from the day the movie came out until the most recent ones on IMDb. As a result, two major perspectives emerged from the analysis: (1) an Orientalist perspective and (2) a nationalist standpoint. It also helps to understand different frameworks of knowledge through which the viewers decode the film.
Keywords *The White Tiger*; encoding and decoding; dominant-hegemonic position; negotiated code; oppositional code
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Introduction

Stuart Hall's work offers an insight into the relationship between producer and consumer of media text. Hall contends that consumption is not a passive act since it requires the creation of meaning. In his paper, "Encoding and Decoding

in Television Discourse," he points out three different positions of the audience in the interpretation of media text. First position of the reader is "dominant-hegemonic position," whereby audiences share the same subject position as the producer. In other words, the audience tends to concur with the dominant point of view presented in the media discourse he reads or watches. In this setting, there are few misunderstandings between the sender and receiver of a communication since they have the same cultural bias, which leads to the same assumption being made in a context. Here, the viewer is "operating inside the dominant code" (Hall et al. 126). Second, "negotiated code or position," where the audience or recipient is able to comprehend the sender's message within the context of dominant cultural and societal perspectives. The majority of messages are comprehended, but with varied interpretations from dominant-hegemonic views. This position's recipients do not always work from a hegemonic standpoint, but they are familiar enough with the dominant group to decode texts in an abstract sense (126). Third, "oppositional code," where the viewers may completely comprehend both the literal and connotative inflections of a discourse, but decode the message in an entirely different manner. It is because the viewers are not operating within "preferred code," but they use "alternative framework of reference" such as their culture, their own community beliefs, and habitual factors and see the unwanted meaning in the message (127). Drawing insight from this concept of encoding-decoding, the article analyses reviews of *The White Tiger* from the day the movie came out until the most recent ones on IMDb. As Fiske (1987) stated that popular culture is not produced by texts but by the meanings that individuals generate via them. The article attempts to unfold the different perceptions created by the viewer's comments. As a result, it appears that some reviewers viewed the film from an Orientalist perspective, while others saw it from a nationalist standpoint. Interestingly, it helps to understand different frameworks of knowledge through which the film as a "meaningful discourse" interpreted by the viewers (Hall et al. 119).

During the COVID19 pandemic, *The White Tiger* (2021) was watched by a wider audience across the globe. *The White Tiger*, a Netflix original, is a journey based on the New York Times bestseller novel by the same name. After being publicly supported by an incredible number of Western film reviewers on IMDb, it sparked a discussion when some Indian reviewers denounced it as politically exploitative and unjust depiction of India and Indians. Told in flashback from the point of view of Balram, a Bangalore based entrepreneur, the film narrates the story of an ambitious Indian driver who uses his wits and trickery to rise from underprivileged to the forefront. The story is divided into three parts: first, Balram's life in the village as a

student, child labour and tea-shop worker; second, life in Dhanbad town and Delhi as driver cum servant and third, after Ashok's murder, as an entrepreneur.

The film begins in New Delhi in 2007; Balram, in his early twenties, dressed as a Maharaja, is settled in the back seat of a speeding car. He notices the statue of Gandhi leading the procession of Dandi March. Pinky, NRI wife of Ashok, both in their early thirties, drives the car in a fog of pollution. Balram Halwai, the only narrator, spends some nights writing the mail to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao. The film seems to provide a journalistic view of Indian society since most incidents are like news commentaries by a journalist. *The White Tiger* is a record of Balram's journey to discover and rediscover himself and identities in different phases of life. The film depicts two extreme sides of India, "an India of Darkness" and "an India of Light." In the India of Darkness, the film depicts the situation of a government village school, where he studied and labelled himself as "the White Tiger." It focuses on the miserable life of Balram as child labour at tea stall, the harsh condition of government hospitals in villages where his father died as doctors were busy serving in private clinics. In "an India of Light," the film depicts the prosperous life of Stork's affluent family, corrupt politicians and government officials. Metaphorically, the Darkness stands for village life and the light stands for city life. The cinematographer uses darkness and light to convey the dichotomy of Indian society. A handheld camera was primarily used to shoot the village life at Laxmangodh of Balram with vivid colours. Dolly and Steadicams shot the life of Dhanbad with softer camera movements and with a clear and bright scene to make viewers realize the terrible dirt inside "an India of Light." The film has used wide lenses and zoom movement to give a closer look into Balram's life and make the audience sympathize with the life and condition of poor Balram. Paolo Carnera's realistic cinematography using dim lighting and desaturated look brings to light the issues related to poverty and corruption the film is presenting. The cinematographer was inspired by the colours of the Indian flag and utilised them in the film to create a dense reality. The film's cinematography is outstanding, and it helps to convey Balram's narrative more convincingly.

Ramin Bahrani described India as a totally different India from the one that is currently being represented by Bollywood. His India is dominated by feudal landowners who are described as vicious creatures by the narrator. They swallow the property and lands of the peasants and create destitute, causing them to suffer. Balram is the son of a landless farmer who after losing his land to the feudal landlord, became a rickshaw puller to support his family. Despite the fact that Balram is a member of the Halwai caste and is supposed to be a confectioner by trade, he works

as a coal breaker and a tea boy in a little tea stall in his hometown. After killing his master Ashok, a rich businessman in Delhi and stealing his money Balram flees to Bangalore. He takes up his master's name "Ashok Sharma" and runs a business as an entrepreneur by bribing the police and politicians. He becomes an entrepreneur, one of the members of the bourgeoisie, in "The India of Light." He believes that the future of the world capital lies in the East indicating the emergence of China and India as economic superpowers. The film through the narrative of Balram comments on poverty, education, corruption, caste, and class.

Method

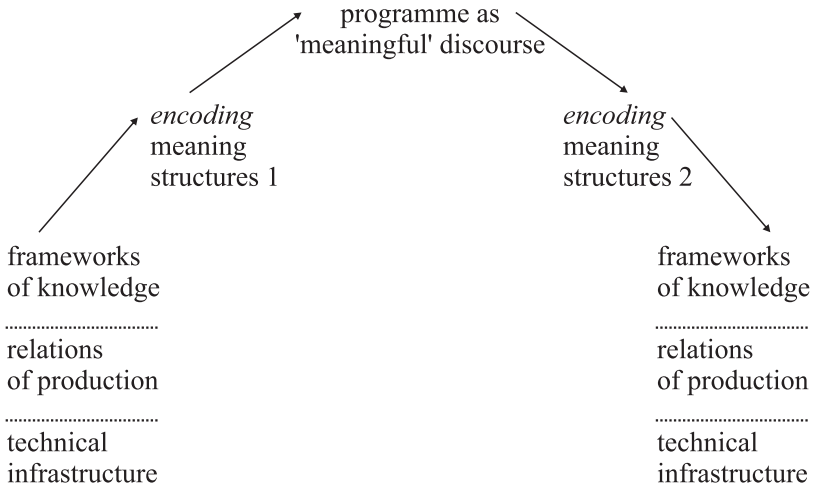

Fig. 1

The article analyses reviews of *The White Tiger* from the day the movie came out until the most recent ones on IMDb. It follows Miles & Huberman (1994) model for the thematic analysis process (Alhojailan 39-47). It is possible that the viewers can form different kinds of perceptions about the incidents, people and places depicted in the film. Different scholars argue that the meaning of a text is determined not only by the text itself, but also by the readers (Barry 35). Similarly, Reader-response theory is founded on an attempt to shed light on the reader-text connection (Ruppert 20). It is based on the notion that during a reading experience, readers, just like the text, play a role in making an interpretation. Its underlying idea is literary texts "frequently contain social dilemmas and conflicts. Such reading demands personal responses from readers" (Yang 50). Particularly, in the context of the media text, Hall is arguing that consumption is not a passive act, as it needs the

production of meaning. Without meaning, there is no consumption. Consequently, meaning cannot be formed passively. We do not passively acquire meaning; rather, we have to actively create it (Davis 62). Here, what Hall refers to as "the technical infrastructure, frameworks of knowledge and relations of production" (fig 1) all combine to encode the film *The White Tiger*. Adarsh Gourav as an actor wants to communicate an emotion; Bahrani as a director wants to say something about a social issue; Netflix wishes to fulfil a remit to supply programmes of an educational nature. These communicative acts rely on "a shared understanding of language and culture" (Davis 63). Similarly, to decode the film audience also depended on the "the technical infrastructure, frameworks of knowledge and relations of production" (120).

The majority of the viewers' opinions differ from one another, and the cause for these differences may be the viewers' own experiences or the information they have read and seen about Indian culture. Observably, some reviewers accepted the portrayal of Indian culture, but others rejected it and questioned its authenticity. In order to understand the reviewer's response in depth, reviews were thematically divided into different parts. Here, as a product of the technical infrastructure *The White Tiger* is produced by the Western film director Ramin Bahrani with the help of online streaming platform Netflix. The West's portrayal of Indian culture as uncivilised and backwards dates back to colonial times and persists to this day. The perpetuation of such a trend of stereotypical portrayal in contemporary literature and films could be seen as an example of an Orientalist perspective. The representation of India throughout the film continues within the "White Orientalist perspective" (Said 241). Thus, the dominant-hegemonic position of the viewers can be decided on their favourable reviews of the film because they accept and enjoy the film. The reviewers have an "Orientalist perspective" of India because they see India as a country with a lot of issues without any constructive solutions. On the other hand, oppositional code or position of reviewers decided upon comments which rejected the film for its pessimistic representation of India. From the oppositional position, the reviewers criticise the film with the sense of Nationalism. The reviewers try to defend the way the director portrayed the country. Here, "Nationalism" is typically used to refer to two distinct but related phenomena: first, "the attitude" that individuals within a nation have when they care about "their national identity," and second, "the actions" that individuals within a nation take when attempting to attain (or maintain) self-determination (Nenad). Negotiated code or position of the viewers also reflected in some comments.

The reviewers were not divided by whether they came from the East or

the West because only a few of the reviewers mentioned where they were from. However, the majority of the Indian reviewers could be identified due to the fact that they used particular types of arguments to protect the image of their country. In other cases, reviewers mentioned their Indian origins, yet because they live in the West, their opinions can be interpreted as re-Orientalist or Nationalist on the basis of their perspective. Here, the term "re-Orientalism" refers to the depiction of Eastern culture from a Western point of view by certain Asian diaspora writers seeking their own position in the Western world (Lau). The analysis of reviews uncovers not just the different perspectives of the audience but also how the portrayal of Indian culture can develop a problematic perception of Indian culture among global audiences.

Analysis: The Continuation of Orientalist Perspective

The majority of the audience's responses are emotional expressions such as happiness, sadness, contempt, fear, surprise, embarrassment, and thrill. Although there has been some disagreement on whether the film is an accurate representation of India. The majority of positive feedback has come from "dominant-hegemonic position" of the Western audiences who believe that the film is an authentic portrayal of India, providing an eye-opening look at rural and urban life realities for poor Indians in a country rife with corrupt politicians and government officials. The audience thought the film was enjoyable and educational, and they felt it deserved to be nominated for an Oscar. Some viewers thought of the movie as a social reflection on the realities of Indian society. After watching *The White Tiger*, several Western reviewers from their dominant-hegemonic position seemed to validate the representation of India as a place of poverty and corruption, citing the film's excellence in its capacity to entertain cinematically while also educating about "an India of Darkness" and "an India of Light."

The representation of India from a Western perspective by filmmaker Bahrani seems quite apt to dominant-hegemonic positioned viewers. As reviewer writes: "A brilliant take on the facade of a liberal democracy" (parnild), he finds the film's plot to be strikingly realistic as it shows corruption and crime at its height. Moreover, the filmmaker has created some striking scenes which show the class divide in India. As reviewer comments on it, "You get a very hard-hitting reality of India where people on the roadside slums and people inside air-conditioned cars are juxtaposed" (Crashtextr). The settings depicted in the film cannot be contested and it is also impossible to deny that in the majority of Indian cities, migrant domestic and construction workers endure such circumstances. The problem is that film

contributes to the viewer's perception of India as a country where the majority of the impoverished live on the streets of Indian cities. The situation of India can be comparatively similar to any developing nation in the world and the film avoids many positive aspects of India. The film holds its camera on India's extreme form of deprivation and poverty. "Cinematography is perfect, truth is shown clearly" (Tuhinghatak). In this sense, the cinematographer's role in the selection of specific scenes continues to play a crucial role, as it helps to understand India within the limits of the Orientalist notion.

The dominant-hegemonic positioned viewers' comments can be understood with reference to Orientalism. According to Said "the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks" (Said 40). It seems that *The White Tiger* continues "dominating framework" that allows the filmmaker to decide the Western audience as ideal audience who share the same subject position as the producer. Furthermore, the article discusses the reviewer's comments thematically.

Maligning India

The film depicts Indian culture in such a way that after watching the film, whatever comments reviewers make are interestingly constructing a certain type of narrative about India. The fascination for Indian culture, casting of Indian actors and cinematography made the film an entertaining and educational experience for most of the viewers. The dominant-hegemonic positioned reviewers felt that watching the film was an extremely enjoyable and entertaining experience. For the negotiated positioned reviewers, the film follows the trend of Oscar winning films like *Parasite* (2019) and Joker (2019), and tries to represent the anguish and suffering of the lower classes of society. Most of the reviewers liked the technical aspects of the film, most of the audience liked the charismatic lead of Adarsh Gourav, while the oppositional positioned reviewers remained shocked by the ending of the film.

The film represents class/caste divide, corruptive system and bizarre thinking of Indian entrepreneurs. The dominant-hegemonic positioned reviewers go through a wide range of emotional involvement, many of them expressed their sympathy for poor Indians and delighted by watching poor Balram breaking the coop. The depiction of class divides and treatment of the lower class by the affluent in the film provoked sympathy from the audience, as a reviewer noted; "few scenes were disturbing for me because I don't like to see the poor getting treated badly" (Carlalbert). For them the story is filmed at ground-level, putting the viewers in the dirty, smelly, impoverished streets of different places across India, generating a realistic atmosphere. The film shows servitude in the Hindu culture and less

opportunity for lower caste people to improve their life. Some audience members compared the journey of Balram with other fictious characters and called him as "Hindu robin hood" (Sharon sf). Especially for some Western reviewers the film worked magically, reviewer noted;

> This was a remarkable experience and a stunning eye opener to see this part of the world that I was completely blind to before. The way this movie portrays the Indian culture with such honesty and openness was really incredible and worthy of all the attention this movie gets." (Questl)

Furthermore, some reviewers expressed their desire to watch such types of films dealing with other cultures of the world on platforms like Netflix. Some audiences perceived the film as an authentic representation of the way the caste system locks poor people into misery. Thus, they felt that the film sheds light on a few typical aspects of Indian culture and provides insights on it. Most of the Western audience found the film convincing on the Indian culture, reviewer noted; "I am so relieved and impressed by such an intelligent authentic portrayal of what it means to be rich or adversely to be desperately poor, both creating traditional psychological enslavement (being of service)" (Lindfilm).

In contrast, the reviews that generated the maligning India theme from the oppositional position, expressed outrage at the Western director and Indian actors. The oppositional positioned reviewers felt that through *The White Tiger,* the filmmaker is trying to maligning the image of India. The filmmaker claimed in his interviews that the film tries to show the reality of India because the film represents both rural and urban India facing poverty and corruption. Some reviewers felt that the film fails to provide a sprawling view of both rural and urban India, rather the film is only interested in the negative aspects of India. Most of the Indian reviewers felt that the relationship between the servant and master shown in the film is not the truth of India, they accepted that there may be few instances; they admitted that the film generalises it in order to show the extreme hatred of upper-class people towards lower class. The relationship shown in the film in which masters constantly use abusive language, some reviewers refute that such kind of caste and class abuse may be there but not in all cases. The reviewers felt that for the sake of showing vast gape between both classes the filmmaker has used such a narrative. Some reviewers denied that the filmmaker is accurately representing India but they claimed that the film is only fostering the Western imagination about poor India. Reviewer wrote: "They showed truth which is not truth which shows their bad thinking towards

india" (Hemuchauhan).

The oppositional positioned reviewers also expressed their outrage for actors in the film, Rajkumar Rao and Priyanka Chopra because of their popularity in Indian cinema. The negotiated positioned audience felt that Indian actors could have skipped the film because of its poor screenplay and most of the time the film tries to put India in a situation where India is only a destitute place. Reviewer also criticised Rajkumar Rao's English accent saying that the Indian people living abroad don't have such an accent. On the other hand, they admired the way the leading role was played by Adarsh but they also admitted that apart from his acting nothing is sensible in the film, not even Balram's story. The role played by Priyanka Chopra as an American returnee and her take on arranged marriage and caste system enraged the audience, and the reviewer felt offended as an Indian. Some reviewers thought that she played a role in the film to please the Western audience and "capturing international viewers by belittling India!" (Annebandyo). Apart from being an actor in the film, she also played the role as executive producer in the film. Casting of Indian actors in the film remained a major concern for the reviewers because they felt that Indian actors actively participated with the Western director to defame India. A reviewer wrote from the opposition code:

> To encourage a movie that shows poverty is only beaten by crime and politics is insulting to almost 800 million Indians who are considered poor and live a honest hardworking life to bring up their children. People who don't victimize themselves for being poor or find shortcuts to become rich overnight. These people spend generations under poverty just to provide their kids with education. Stop supporting movies like these that only show you a story about one awful mindset. This does not represent India actors like Priyanka Chopra, supporting movies like these is deeply saddening. (IpyaarCinema)

The aim of the film maker was also questioned by several reviewers because it is based-on a Booker prize winning novel. The novel was also criticised by several people for its distortion of realities in India. Realising the popularity of the novel, some reviewers felt that the film is insulting India for its profit seeking motive. Several reviewers admitted that the acting of the leading actor and the cinematography in the film is top-notch, it helps the film to create a realistic atmosphere, as a result the Western audience may perceive the film as reality of India. Reviewer tried to justify through his opinion and wrote:

> Nothing shown is a true fact about India. Created just to defame India and it's image. As an Indian it boils me to see how wrongly and poorly they have depicted India and more over as a person from Bangalore, not a even a single shot in the movie is from Bangalore, it's all shot in Delhi. (Ankitadiga)

The oppositional positioned viewers thought that the film represents Indian culture in such way that it seems that reporter is trying to show the problems of the deprived Indian urban and rural people to the Western world. Moreover, the film is made in such a way that it creates the impression that the filmmaker is exposing the dark realities of India which were hidden by Bollywood's feel-good movies. The film always maintains the distinction in the behaviour of American returnee people and Indian people. It constantly references West for its technological progress and its superiority in every aspect of life while creates contrast with uneducated poor people and mannerless rich people. The film focuses more and more on the problems of India's oppressed society dragged in the slum and poverty by the corruptive system of affluent people. As an oppositional reviewer felt that the film "just made to show that the so-called Western countries are "pure" and India still lives in slavery and problems" (Zwpkvanyg).

Glorification of Crime

The dominant-hegemonic positioned reviewers viewed Balram as a different human being with goals and aspirations compared to most of the people trapped in the coop. For some of the dominant positioned viewers it's a dog-eat-dog story (Evanston) which allows them to compare with their privileged position and enjoy the romantic "representations of the Orient as exotic locale" (Said 118). But, Balram seems to essentialize crime as the only way for lower-class people. Balram's words at the end of the film:

> The real nightmare is the other kind—where you didn't do it, that you didn't kill your master, that you lost your nerve, and that you're still a servant to another man. But then you wake up, the sweating stops, your heartbeat slows. The nightmare is over. You did it. You killed your master.

Balram's character is not a psychopath, but the way he delivers a speech at the end of the film, emphasizing murder as a tool for breaking "the coop"; reduces him into both criminal and psychopath. He celebrates crime as the catalyst for his success as an entrepreneur. Balram is portrayed as a revolutionary who leads illiterate, impove-

rished, rural, and downtrodden people searching for economic opportunity. Balram believes himself to be in the rooster coop with the entire lower-class population, unable to break out and ascend above the lower class. People are unjustly bound to their masters by their 'trustworthiness' and serve them blindly. Balram believes he is brilliant enough to climb the social ladder by murdering his masters and attempts to justify his crime as an act of breaking the coop. Apart from this, the film shows the massacre of Balram's family in his nightmare and two accidents take place in the film without any legal investigation.

The oppositional positioned viewers felt that the film lacked essence and promoted a morally unacceptable way of success. They felt the film looked like it was promoting servants to kill the masters and conveying that it is easy to get away with such a crime too (Foxysuma). They felt that the filmmaker described the worst scenario possible to try to convince that "poor kill rich is right thing to do" (Felipesaloma). Moreover, others expressed their fear that there are millions of people still living these conditions who can get wrongly influenced and start picking up weapons for their anxiety disorders (Ajleohero). Some felt that the ending of the film where Balram tries to justify crime is nothing more than an Indian tv shows Crime Patrol and Swadhan India. Several criticised Netflix for its preference for "ultra-violent" content in the film. It provides platforms to those who want to show India in a less than positive light. They felt that Netflix is creating "gratuitous violence for the sake of shock value" in films based on India for a global audience (Bigdgun). Several wondered what the director attempted to convey using foul language. Some thought that the film is misleading the youth with dark content just because it sells more.

Promoting Wrong Message

Commenting on the moral of the story, both the negotiated positioned audience and oppositional positioned Indian viewers felt the film fails to convey sensible meaning at the end. The hegemonic positioned reviewers opined that the film has deeper meaning, it explains that the Indian system is corrupt, that politicians are bribed on a regular basis, that the rich treat the poor like trash, and that the poor live in perilous conditions with no access to health care or adequate living conditions. It is this repressive system that produces individuals like as Balram, who, fed up with being treated unfairly and realising that his future contained nothing meaningful for him, did the right thing by murdering his master. Moreover, the reviewer argues that no one learns to murder their bosses in order to become wealthy in the film, and everyone understands that murder is not the correct path to take. What is required

is a systemic change that prevents people from even considering such an option by creating conditions that allow everyone to live a decent life regardless of their circumstances. “Balram is a product of the system, the big message is: we must change the system” (Jcarlos).

In contrast, the oppositional positioned Indian reviewers felt that the film is harmful because of its misleading plot, which portrays the protagonist’s violent deed as the right thing to do in the eyes of the community. Some reviewers claimed that the film portrays both the stagnant past of Indian culture and the atrocious treatment of servants by their masters in the modern-day which is infact an “Ignorant depiction of India” (Detourto). Some reviewers felt that the perseverance of young entrepreneurs is not reflected in this claim but the film depicts a shabby and unscrupulous path to prosperity, which is not representative of India’s approach to achieving success. Some reviewers thought that the film glorifies criminality while simultaneously belittling the achievements of hardworking people. Others thought about serious consequences domestic workers may face because the director is “throwing them in the radar of doubt by every customer they get” making it incredibly difficult for them to earn their keep (Sonagohelodhari).

The oppositional positioned reviewers thought that the film’s screenplay was created by persons who do not reside in India and therefore have little knowledge of the country. Throughout the film, India is shown as an entirely destitute location that only exists in the director’s imagination, not in reality. Even the dialogues don’t have a very authentic tone to them. Some reviewers felt that Western filmmakers may even have resentment for India, as indicated by the film’s only focus on its inadequacies. The story may be acceptable to someone who is unfamiliar with India’s culture, but Indians who have fought their own struggles and worked hard to attain their goals would always be offended by it. Reviewer claimed that hundreds of thousands of people have been lifted out of poverty since India gained its freedom, and the country is still doing so. They questioned the filmmaker: Is it true that all of these people killed their masters in order to get wealthy? (Abhi). Some reviewers compared the film with *Slumdog Millionaire* and claimed that another attempt has been made to caricature, belittle, and disrespect Indian culture following the success of *Slumdog Millionaire*.

In order to get financial freedom, he goes through the process of murdering his boss, which is utterly unacceptable in the real world, perhaps such scenarios result in the commission of criminal offences. Most of the reviewers felt that the director has not given any consideration to the consequences of his film on the audience’s state of mind. The moral of a narrative is everything, and this film lacks it and

makes a joke out of the situations. The narrative concluded without regrets about the murder, looting, criminality, or greed. As a result, the film sends an immoral picture of humanity, one that is devoid of hope but also a false example of what it means to be successful in the world. The filmmaker has promoted the incorrect message and has employed deceptive methods to gain an audience. The film also demonstrates that only corrupt and unethical individuals can advance through the ranks in capitalistic cultures such as India. The moral of the story appears to be meant as a jest for the amusement of the Western audience.

Plot Hole

The oppositional positioned audience argued that the plot of *The White Tiger* is illogical, the reviewer questioned: What happened with the master's family? Why didn't they come after the driver knowing he killed the master and ran off with the money...and they still had the note that has the driver's admittance of murder too? (Rav-mistry). When Balram gets away with murder by paying a police officer at a station, for some reviewer it is difficult to believe that no one else in the police may be looking for a suspect who has committed murder, especially someone who has political ties in the first place. Another thing most of the reviewers noticed is that even though Ashok's family is wealthy, they like to travel via sleeper class coach, not even AC coach of train to and from New Delhi. They thought that the film maker fails to show class divide because he is more interested in showing how unclean Indian trains are and how poorly maintained the railway stations. Some pointed out that the film is "loaded with western stereotypes of India and gross exaggerations" (Maheshseshadri), and others felt that the script of the film is half baked. Some felt that the film seeks to convey a tremendous amount of information and the film makers "focus more on dark scenes about India" (Kohlisuraj). As a result, it takes a long time to get through the entire film; it is sluggish and has lots of unpleasant overuse moments. Some reviewers contended that the film is made for the Western audience because "each frame of the movie is colourless, artificially shaded yellow and foggy" (Didwania) and denied it as a true representation of India.

The film follows the story of a car driver whose master comes from a very wealthy family, and it tries to show urban and rural India's harsh conditions as well as servant-boss relationships. It also depicts the conditions the driver experiences while working in the environment of wealthy people, which leads him to kill his master. Several reviewers felt that the film presents a pathetic logic that there are only two ways for poor people to be set free from their cage: through crime and politics. While some reviewers felt that the film makes fun of those Indians who put

in the effort and sacrifice to achieve success in their lives. The film does not include any instances of persons from low-income families who have achieved success in their life by mastery of their talents, innovations that benefit humanity, or following their passions. Rather than, the film attempts to justify the use of unlawful means to achieve success.

A reviewer felt that the filmmaker is still under the influence of rural India in the 1970s when everyone was eager to go to urban areas. He claimed that significant improvement has occurred during the preceding two decades, and a considerable portion of the population now maintains a relatively decent living level (Nagarajusatya). Another reviewer explained the master-servant relation, it is true that domestic servants in India are readily accessible; yet, they are free to choose whatever service they like to work for on their own terms and conditions. The treatment of all domestic workers seen in the film is brutal and terrible, and it is all staged for the sake of theatrics and shock value. She felt that it is "insensitive and offensive coming from a team which is in fact Indian" (Jagetiasneha).

Self-Interest

The oppositional positioned reviewers also believed that Bahrani tried to recreate the magic of *Slumdog Millionaire*, following its strategy of focusing on poor India, but the film is far from being average in terms of entertainment value. Moreover, the film only focuses on displaying Hindus' hatred for Muslims as well as upper-class hatred towards lower castes and subordinates. Priyanka Chopra claims to be informed about India because she was born and raised in the country, yet she has assisted the filmmaker in demonstrating Western version of modern India which is far from reality. It is another film produced by elites who believe they are capable of comprehending the challenges of the common person, but the reality is that they are not that capable. Reviewer felt that *Slumdog Millionaire* presented slum India in the hopes of winning an Academy Award, a separate yet identical scene of impoverished India was presented in *The White Tiger* in order to impress an elite American audience. Some reviewers felt that being both executive producer and star in the film, Priyanka Chopra tries to seek attention in the Western World.

Conclusion

It is found that the audience decodes *The White Tiger* as a "meaningful discourse" (130) to varying degrees. It appears that the interpretation of the film depends not only on the film itself, but also on the audience's prior knowledge of Indian culture. The audience interpretation of the Indian culture seems to be concerned with

question of "shared meaning,"

> To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and `making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways. (Hall 2)

For the viewer from the dominant-hegemonic position, framework of knowledge may depend on the books and films about the Indian culture. The Western director and hegemonic positioned audience share a similar framework of knowledge which enables them to communicate the message about Indian culture in a particular way. Here, framework of knowledge could be associated with Orientalist representation or more recent, *Slumdog Millionaire*'s effect. It appears that the hegemonic positioned audience continues a reinforcement of the "cultural stereotypes" by which the Orient is viewed (Said 27). Their views about the Indian culture depicted in the film provides distorted information about India. The success of Bahrani's film may inspire other filmmakers to develop a film in the similar kind of setting with skewed representation of the Indian culture. Interestingly, it is also observed that some audience used alternate framework of the knowledge to decode the film. The negotiate-positioned audience accepted certain aspects of the depiction as accurate, while rejected the gratuitous brutality scenes. Most of the oppositional positioned audience seems aware about the Indian culture. They rejected the representation of India and questioned about the authenticity of the film. The analysis ensures the "polysemic" nature of the audio-visual text (Barker & Galasinski 7). Thus, Hall's concept of Encoding/Decoding concept facilitates to understand the different meaning generated actively by the audience.

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ISSN 1949-8519