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Images of Femininity in World Fairy Tales

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Abstract From the point of view of depth psychology, which focuses on the personal and collective aspects of the human psyche and is nourished by the theory of psychoanalysis, seeing dreams and fairy tales as the masked realization of unconsciously repressed desires, fairy tales are archaic legacies that emerge from the collective part of the unconscious to the surface of consciousness and are therefore the projection of collective experiences,. Althouth the manifestations of these legacies on the surface of consciousness and in fairy tales vary, the hidden meaning they contain is constant. The intricate relationship between archetypes, dreams, and fairy tales is predicated on their capacity to convey the fundamental dilemmas surrounding human existence and development through a symbolic lexicon. Central to the collective unconscious are archetypes that embody the inner images of the psyche. Among these, the self represents the core of consciousness, encircled by the unconscious; the persona encapsulates the individual's outward spiritual demeanor; the shadow signifies the repressed aspects of the self; the anima serves as the integral feminine component within the male unconscious; the animus reflects the masculine essence within the female; the trickster embodies the consciousness unbridled by instinctual drives; the wise old man symbolizes the spirit of nature; and the grandmother archetype oscillates between nurturing

and destructive forces, representing both growth and fear. These archetypal motifs in fairy tales have garnered considerable attention across various disciplines, including psychology, linguistics, folklore, and literary studies. Notably, research in archetypal fairy tale analysis often remains confined to specific national philologies or lacks a focused examination of femininity. This study seeks to bridge this gap by comparing representations of femininity across Turkish, German, French, Italian, and Arabic literary traditions. Employing a Jungian framework through archetypal criticism, this research aims to elucidate the foundational types of feminine images present in the collective unconscious, analyzing how these representations manifest in the narratives of world fairy tales. Furthermore, it endeavors to delineate the psychological building blocks these feminine archetypes embody, exploring their correspondence with the fictional worlds depicted in the aforementioned literary traditions. By examining the intersections of these archetypal feminine images, this study aspires to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how cultural narratives shape and reflect the complexities of gender identity and the collective psyche across diverse societies. In doing so, it aims to enrich the discourse on femininity in fairy tales, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and cross-cultural approach to the analysis of these enduring narratives.

Keywords world literature; fairy tale, psychoanalysis; Jung, archetypal symbolism[1]

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Introduction

Fairy tales, emerging from the shaping of the collective unconscious, resonate deeply with the cultural and psychological fabric of a nation. They serve as a powerful reflection of national identity, embodying folklore, cultural beliefs, and material realities (Sakaoğlu 3). As mirrors of collective identity, these narratives unveil societal values and the enduring archetypes that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. Jung's concept of the archetype, viewed as a primordial image manifested in diverse forms, highlights how these narratives are influenced by shared human experiences and emotional landscapes (Jung, *Analitik Psikoloji* 9). A key aspect of understanding fairy tales lies in their symbolic language, which Jung posits is vital for the individuation process, where the self reconciles conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche. In contrast to Freud's emphasis on sexual drives, Jung recognizes a broader range of libidinal energy expressed through various human endeavors, accentuating the significance of archetypal images (Schultz and Schultz 644). The archetypes present in fairy tales—such as the hero, shadow, and anima/animus—function as universal symbols, conveying profound truths about the human experience.

The human psyche is not a blank slate; it is shaped by an inherited collective unconscious that encompasses both personal and shared experiences. Jung's model delineates a triadic structure: the conscious mind, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious, each of which contributes to our understanding of fairy tales (Hall and Nordby 52). The self archetype, frequently represented by mandalas within these narratives, symbolizes the holistic integration of personality, reflecting

the inner journey of individuation that the fairy tale hero undergoes (Jacobi 64). Fairy tales illustrate the circular nature of this individuation process through the protagonist's journey, which is marked by various trials and encounters with archetypal figures. The ego, embodied by characters who courageously confront darkness and chaos, serves as the center of consciousness, mediating between the inner and outer worlds. This dynamic interplay exposes the inherent contradictions of the human experience, where courage coexists with vulnerability and the pursuit of self-discovery is often fraught with peril (Chetwynd 285). The persona, or the social mask that individuals adopt, is commonly depicted in fairy tales through idealized characters that embody societal expectations. However, the journey toward self-actualization necessitates confronting the shadow—the repressed and darker aspects of the self—often represented as antagonistic forces in these narratives. Integrating the shadow, while challenging, is essential for achieving wholeness and authenticity (Jung, *Dört Arketip* 55, 128, 135). In this context, the archetypal pairs of anima and animus illustrate the duality of human nature. The anima embodies feminine qualities, while the animus represents masculine traits, highlighting the yin-yang principle of interconnectedness. Their presence in fairy tales—manifesting through characters ranging from benevolent guides to formidable foes—underscores the complexities of gender dynamics and the quest for balance within the psyche (Izutsu 163).

Ultimately, fairy tales transcend mere escapism; they encapsulate the depth of human existence and creativity. Each tale, with its unique blend of archetypal themes and symbolic language, holds the potential to awaken the latent powers of the psyche, revealing insights that resonate across cultures and generations (Campbell 13). As such, fairy tales remain vital cultural artifacts that not only entertain but also educate and transform, inviting individuals to embark on their own journeys of self-discovery.

Femininity Images in World Fairy Tales

In Turkish mythology, femininity is expressed through various forms such as goddesses, animals (like snakes and wolves), and archetypal figures, including the innocent maiden, the mother, and the witch. These representations reflect societal beliefs about fertility and fear, encapsulated within the narrative structures of Turkish fairy tales. As noted, introductory and concluding phrases such as "once upon a time" and "three apples fell from the sky" frame these tales, integrating topographical elements like remote villages and enchanted forests, thereby shaping the context in which femininity is explored (Boratav 136; Sarıyüce 196).

The fairy tale *Keloğlan Seven Floors Under the Ground* provides a rich text for analysis through the lens of archetypal symbolism and the individuation process of the feminine psyche. Keloğlan's quest to confront a giant consuming the apples in the royal garden symbolizes the struggle to integrate various layers of the psyche—consciousness, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious—as represented by the apple tree, which serves as a metaphor for the self (Jung, *Dört Arketip* 62, 71). The apple represents not only the ultimate goal of the psyche but also acts as a catalyst for Keloğlan's heroic journey. His battle against the giant, an embodiment of the shadow, illustrates the necessity of confronting darker aspects of the psyche to achieve wholeness. The giant's descent into a well signifies the repression of the shadow, while the well itself represents a womb—a fertile space for transformation (Jung, *Dört Arketip* 22). Keloğlan's descent into the well and subsequent journey symbolize the necessary exploration of the unconscious to access the core of the feminine psyche, represented by the sultan's daughter. As Keloğlan interacts with the feminine figures in the narrative, his journey emphasizes the integration of anima and animus, showcasing the dynamic interplay between the masculine and feminine aspects of the psyche. The act of throwing an apple, symbolizing the sultan's daughter's search for her animus—the masculine counterpart essential for her spiritual maturation—connects to the broader archetypal narrative of fertility and rebirth, reinforcing the significance of harmonious integration in the individuation process. The conclusion of the tale, where the marriage between Keloğlan and the sultan's daughter unfolds over a symbolic forty-day period, embodies a cyclical process of transformation and renewal (Schimmel 31). This celebration encapsulates the harmonious balance of yin and yang, a vital theme for understanding femininity within fairy tales.

In fairy tales, which balance opposites, everything that is not feminine is masculine, and vice versa, suggesting a complementary relationship akin to yin and yang. Focusing on the function of transmitting implicit social codes and cultural elements, we can view fairy tale characters, whether good or bad, as important archetypal elements in the individuation process. For instance, in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by the Brothers Grimm, the imagery of femininity can be examined through the lens of Jung's archetypal symbolism. In this tale, during the coldest season, a queen who sews by the window pricks her finger, spilling three drops of blood and wishing for a daughter. Snow White is born—white as snow, red as blood, and black as ebony—but her mother dies, and the king remarries. The new queen, obsessed with beauty, consults her magic mirror daily. As Snow White grows and surpasses her stepmother in beauty, jealousy leads the queen to attempt to kill

her. A hunter spares Snow White, who then finds refuge with seven dwarfs in the forest. The stepmother's disguises and attempts to poison Snow White illustrate her jealousy. When the dwarfs find Snow White asleep in a glass coffin after she bites the poisoned apple, it symbolizes her death and subsequent rebirth. The prince's arrival represents the awakening of Snow White and her ultimate union with her animus. The stepmother's punishment—forced to wear red-hot iron shoes—highlights the destructive consequences of jealousy. Examining the tale, the queen's desire for a child embodies the ideal self that the Great Mother represents. The color symbolism associated with Snow White reveals the dynamics of the feminine psyche: the white mask persona, the shadow, and the menstruating psyche ready to integrate with her animus. The stepmother serves as a catalyst for Snow White's individuation process, representing the negative aspect of the Great Mother, pushing the feminine psyche toward integration.

In *Le Nain Jaune* by d'Aulnoy, Princess Toute-Belle's journey to find her soulmate mirrors the stages of the feminine psyche reaching her animus. Her mother seeks help from a desert fairy, leading to a series of trials. Toute-Belle's encounters reflect her inner pilgrimage toward her spiritual center, characterized by obstacles and labyrinths. The desert fairy embodies the ambivalent Great Mother archetype, illustrating the complex relationship between the feminine psyche and its inner dynamics. Ultimately, both tales reveal how archetypal narratives reflect the psychological development of femininity, emphasizing the significance of balancing opposites in the individuation process.

Through these stories, we gain insights into the universal experiences of self-discovery and transformation. Indeed, the concrete symbol of this in the fairy tale is that when the princess wakes up, she finds herself in her bed, in clean clothes, and with a ring made of a red hair thread that she cannot remove from her finger. The ring, which is traditionally worn as a symbol of love, sometimes also of power and authority, and which also represents protection from destructive forces (Wilkinson 284), is a magical circle that serves as objects in the shape of a ring and symbolizes divine existence (Aras 164), it signifies the bond of the feminine psyche with its animus on the way to divine wholeness, and here the fact that the ring is made of a red hair thread also emphasizes the passionate "expression of its power and might" (Spahn 92) of the bond of the feminine psyche with its animus and soon the heroine process of the feminine psyche evolves into the seclusion process in the belly of the whale with the princess being kidnapped by the Yellow Dwarf and imprisoned in a steel castle protected by sunlight. The seclusion that the princess spends in this high and inaccessible castle, which implies the belly of the

whale, when turned upside down topographically, implies the development process in the womb of the Great Mother, which extends underground and will ferment a new existence of the feminine psyche. During this development phase, where the feminine psyche completes the fetus process in the womb, its animus also orbits it. This situation, symbolized by the king walking by the sea in the fairy tale, ends with the king escaping with the mermaid from the desert fairy and reaching the castle. The mermaid, who can enter and exit in all layers of the ocean-like human consciousness, represents feelings, sexuality, and power, here in the form of the embodied form of the divine femininity of the Great Mother and is in the role of a sacred guide that will take her animus (king) to her anima (princess).

Indeed, it happens in a space of unconsciousness (castle) where the king and princess, to put it in archetypal expression, animus, and feminine psyche, come together; they come together in a bed adorned with golden sheets and pearls the size of a walnut. The meaning of the image of the bed adorned with golden sheets and pearls here is the belly of the whale that the feminine psyche needs to enter with its animus (king) to reach the lofty personality ideal she has been eagerly waiting for and to end her heroine journey. But unlike most fairy tales, the fairy tale seems to end not with a happy ending; the king drops the diamond sword in his hand when he reaches the princess and is killed by the Yellow Dwarf and two giants. The princess, who cannot stand the death of the king, also dies and the mermaid turns the bodies of the two lovers into palm trees and the fairy tale ends in this way. From an archetypal perspective, the death of the two lovers, which implies the selflessness of the feminine psyche and animus to form a new union, is the only means of transforming into the ideal self. Therefore, in the fairy tale, the scene where the king drops his diamond sword in front of the princess is a part of the night of union where the animus surrenders to the feminine psyche. In conclusion, the scene ending with the death of the king and princess captured by the Yellow Dwarf and two giants is not a scene to be feared, but a moment of union where the animus in the form of the king surrenders to the shadow self of the Janus-faced Great Mother and the animus, emphasized with the name Yellow Dwarf, hunger for growth, and reaches eternal resurrection with his feminine psyche (princess), and the transformation of the king and princess into palm trees, which were depicted as the tree of life in the old Christian periods and accepted as the symbol of ancient victories, resurrection and eternal life (Hepper 117), at the end of the fairy tale also corroborates this interpretation.

In the Italian fairy tale Imbrani's *La Prezzemolina* (Firenze), a pregnant woman is caught by fairies while eating parsley in their garden and is persuaded to promise

to give them the child she will bear. Time passes, the woman gives birth to a girl and they name her Prezzemolina. When Prezzemolina grows up, the fairies come and take her to their home and tell her to make a pitch-black room as clean as milk and paint it, otherwise, they will eat her. While cleaning the room, Memè, the male cousin of the fairies, makes the room spotlessly clean and pure white with his magic wand. Then they send Prezzemolina to the castle of Fairy Morgana to get Bel-Giullare's box. On her journey, Prezzemolina encounters four women in turn, who give her two pieces of pig fat to rub on two doors, two pieces of bread to give to two dogs, a string and a hook to deliver to a shoemaker, and rags and brooms to give to a baker woman. Prezzemolina does exactly as all four women tell her and finally reaches the castle of Fairy Morgana, enters, goes up to the second floor, takes the box, and leaves immediately. When the fairy notices the situation, she tells the baker woman, the shoemaker, the two dogs, and the doors to hold the girl, but they allow the girl to escape and survive because of the good deeds she has done. The escaped girl is curious about what is inside the box and opens it. A lot of people escape from inside and the girl can't catch any of them. At the moment of despair, Fairy Memè comes and puts the escapees back into the box with magic. When the girl shows the box to the fairies at their home, the fairies are astonished and make another plan to eat the girl. They make Prezzemolina light the boiler under the pretext of washing laundry. But Memè tells Prezzemolina about the fairies' plan and Prezzemolina and Memè throw the fairies into the boiling boiler. Then they go down to the basement. In the basement where many lights are burning, Prezzemolina and Memè, who extinguish the largest light belonging to the soul of the oldest fairy, thus destroying all the fairies, go to the castle of Fairy Morgana and get married. In the fairy tale, which is open to reading from the perspective of archetypal symbolism, the mother eating the parsley in the fairies' garden while pregnant triggers the heroine adventure of Prezzemolina, who appears in the form of the feminine psyche. In this respect, the mother figure, who determines the fate of Prezzemolina from the beginning by eating the parsley, which we can associate with renewal and rebirth because it grows rapidly again even after being picked or cut, shows that there is an a priori factor in all human actions and that every animal, like humans, has a preformed psyche suitable for its species (Jung, *Dört Arketip* 19-20).

Indeed, everything psychic is preformed, and the ultimate goal of the human psyche is the collapse of the subjective apocalypse where the individual consciousness is buried in the waters of darkness and then the transformation into a high personality, which is an expression of the Self. Therefore, the existential fate of Prezzemolina in the fairy tale is predetermined, even while she is still in

the womb. Her day will come, she will leave her home, the protected space on the surface of consciousness, she will be surrendered to the fairies, and she will live under their hegemony until she finds her prince. The individuation process, which begins with Prezzemolina leaving her home, continues through trials and ends at the castle of Fairy Morgana. Prezzemolina, who enters the castle of Fairy Morgana and takes a magical box from a room on the second floor of the castle, represents the feminine psyche confronting a multitude of people/collective unconscious elements in the belly of the whale/the womb of the Great Mother, symbolized by the number two, the symbol of "polarity and division" (Schimmel 57). The one who enables Prezzemolina to put the people who escape from the box back into the box is the male fairy Memè, which in the archetypal world corresponds to the need for the feminine psyche to integrate the elements of the collective unconscious with its animus, the origin of the opposite sex. Indeed, Prezzemolina/the feminine psyche, who escapes from the castle of Fairy Morgana/the belly of the whale thanks to Fairy Memè/animus, is also saved from being eaten by the fairies/her shadow by Fairy Memè/animus.

Also, thanks to Fairy Memè/animus, Prezzemolina throws the fairies who want to eat her into a boiling cauldron and goes down to the basement where many lights are burning and extinguishes the light belonging to the soul of the oldest fairy. By destroying all the fairies in this way and achieving salvation, Prezzemolina marries Fairy Memè in the castle of Fairy Morgana. From an archetypal perspective, what is at stake here is the victory of the feminine psyche, who wants to seize self-consciousness and put her shadow into the fertile womb of the mother. Indeed, in the fairy tale, Prezzemolina cutting off the light of the largest fairy in the basement, which implies the collective unconscious, signifies the end of the dominant position of her shadow, which emerges from the darkness of the unconscious to the brightness of the conscious surface, and as a result, the feminine psyche performs a sacred integration with the opposite spirit image.

Compiled and translated into Arabic by Muhammed el-Gahşigar around the 9th century, taken from India, Baghdad, and Cairo and containing 264 tales, *The Thousand and One Nights* (Özpalabıyıklar) is, in a word, the world's largest collection of fairy tales. In the first frame tale of *The Thousand and One Nights*, which tells the story of King Shahriyar and his brother King Shahzaman, who spent a thousand and one nights with the daughter of the vizier, Shahrazad, the king becomes cruel in the face of his wife's infidelity, who cheats on him with black slaves and orders his vizier to bring him a virgin maiden every night, and every night he takes a young girl into his bed and deflowers her; and in the morning he has

her killed. Shahrazad, who begins to tell stories to the king every night, brings her stories to such an exciting point at the end of the night that the king has to postpone her execution to hear the continuation. Shahrazad continues to tell the story the next night and again leaves the story at its most exciting point in the morning, and this continues. After a thousand and one nights, Shahriyar, who learns lessons from the stories he listens to, admires Shahrazad, thanks God for sending him Shahrazad, and marries her. From the perspective of archetypal symbolism, it is noteworthy that the feminine psyche is embodied in Shahrazad. The feminine psyche, which receives the inner call necessary to solve an existing problem (Shahriyar's virgin massacres) for the individuation adventure, takes on the responsibility of becoming a hero, leaves where she is (her father's house), and starts the process of spiritual change/transformation. Shahrazad, who leaves where she is and dares to enter the dangerous king's bed, represents the feminine psyche descending into the realm of the shadows in the collective unconscious from the surface of consciousness to reach her lacking masculine origin:

> The passage of the mythological hero may be overground, fundamentally it is inward-into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost, forgotten powers are revivified, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world. This deed accomplished, life no longer suffers hopelessly under the terrible mutilations of ubiquitous disaster, battered by time, hideous throughout space; but with its horror visible still, its cries of anguish still tumultuous, it becomes penetrated by an all-suffusing, all-sustaining love, and a knowledge of its own unconquered power. (Campbell 41)

The feminine psyche, which frees itself from the dominance of the logos in its journey from the known to the unknown and tends to meet with unconscious elements, makes a transition from a world where everyone has their own logos to a world where there is a common logos (Frye, *Mitik Aşama* 174) and the room in the king's palace, which is her new home, is the sacred center of her absolute reality. In this sacred center where the feminine psyche needs to enter for her rebirth, Shahrazad, who spends a thousand and one nights with Shahriyar, her masculine origin (animus), and survives by telling Shahriyar a story after each night, depicts the individuation effort of the feminine psyche trying to integrate with the masculine opposite in the belly of the whale:

> The hero, whether god or goddess, man or woman, the figure in a myth or the

> dreamer of a dream, discovers and assimilates his opposite (his unsuspected self) either by swallowing it or by being swallowed. One by one the resistances are broken. He must put aside his pride, virtue, beauty, and life and bow or submit to the intolerable. Then he finds that he and his opposite are not of differing species, but one flesh. (Campbell 107)

Indeed, with the fairy tales, which are the earthly dreams of young humanity (Freud 133), the feminine psyche, which lets the Father hear her voice in the collective unconscious, has transformed into a new form of existence like a hero who needs to overcome a vagina dentata by initiation or descend dangerously down a crevice or into a cave equated with the mouth and womb of Mother Earth (Eliade, *Mitlerin Özellikleri* 109). In this respect, the room where Scheherazade has sexual intercourse for a thousand and one nights represents the dark cave of the collective unconscious where the feminine psyche integrates with her animus, which is first and natural and ultimately holistic, that is, it forms a world in itself (Eliade, *Zalmoksis'ten* 49). The path of trials in Scheherazade's individuation adventure, symbolizing the feminine psyche, is to stay alive by telling stories that will pique the curiosity of the king. Scheherazade/feminine psyche completes this initiation process lasting a thousand and one nights and earns the trust of the king/animus who listens to her stories and marries/integrates with him. In the fairy tale, symbolized by the motif of the night, the feminine psyche, who finds the secret of her existence (her animus) in the darkness of the unconscious, reaches the image of being able to carry her own existence as a whole, which is the ultimate reward of maturation.

Conclusion

Tales, timeless narratives passed down through generations, offer a captivating blend of magic and meaning. These extraordinary stories, often rooted in folklore, continue to resonate with readers of all ages. While they present fantastical worlds filled with enchanted creatures and mythical quests, they also delve into profound psychological themes. Through the lens of Jungian psychology, fairy tales reveal a rich tapestry of archetypal symbols. These symbols, deeply embedded in the collective unconscious, represent universal human experiences and emotions. From the enchanted forests and mythical creatures to the recurring themes of good versus evil and the hero's journey, fairy tales offer a timeless exploration of the human psyche. Many classic fairy tales feature characters who embark on transformative journeys. Snow White, Scheherazade, and Keloğlan, among others, confront challenges and overcome obstacles, often guided by intuition and courage. These

quests often symbolize the hero's journey, a common archetype that represents the individual's search for self-discovery and spiritual growth. Fairy tales also explore the concept of the anima or animus, the feminine or masculine aspects of the psyche. Characters like Prezzemolina and Princess Toute-Belle often encounter challenges that require them to balance their masculine and feminine energies. These journeys can be seen as metaphors for the individual's quest for wholeness and integration. In conclusion, fairy tales offer a valuable exploration of the human psyche. Their timeless appeal lies in their ability to connect with universal experiences and emotions. By examining the archetypal symbols and themes within these stories, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

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Disability: The Representation of a Non-Normative Woman's Body in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek*

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Abstract This article explores how Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) portrays a woman with a non-normative body in his novel "Hide and Seek" (1854), from the perspective of critical disability studies. The concept of 'non-normate', which refers to the (non)standardized body, coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her work "Extraordinary Bodies" (1997), is used to examine Collins's work. The novel challenges the conventional Victorian views on disability by emphasizing the independence and freedom of women with disabilities. The protagonist, Madonna, who is deaf and mute, attempts to compensate for her disability through her beauty, sexuality, and intellect. She uses diverse methods of perception, such as intuition, comprehension, and inference to overcome her disability and, thus, attempts to claim an ontological site for her existence. This paper argues that a non-normative woman's body can embody alternative methods of perception to claim her existence, particularly when exposed to the cultural or corporeal inferiority of the hegemonic normative bodies. By challenging the dogmatic predictions that disability is synonymous with limitation and suffering, this paper offers a new perspective that views disability as a desirable state of mind and body and encourages us to appreciate the diversity and complexity of non-normative bodies.

Keywords Wilkie Collins; Victorian period; disability; normative body; non-normative body

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Introduction

Wilkie Collins's novels from "Antonina" (1850) to "Blind Love" (1890), which span almost forty years, introduce intricate depictions of "modern institutional practices in the fields of medicine, psychology, and the law", narrating the "disaffected, outcast, fallen, afflicted, melancholic, and transgressive social identities" (Martin 185). In his novels, disability is a symptomatic theme. For instance, in "Poor Miss Finch" (1872), the main character's blindness plays a significant role, appearing to keep her from carrying out her own daily tasks. Similarly, in "Law and the Lady" (1875), the character Miserrimus Dexter, having a deformed body and thus, moving with a wheelchair due to lack of his lower limbs, is presented as a weird creature.

The studies carried out Collins's "Hide and Seek", are mainly concerned about identity and intricacy (Ashley 47), and illegitimate newborns as an emblem of social injustice (Cox, *Representations of Illegitimacy* 147-169; Wagner 129-145). In the literature review, there are also few studies, regarding disability in "Hide and Seek". For instance, the examination of deafness as a paradoxical display of difference (Anglin-Jaffe 53-69), the exploration of scopophilia and exposition of the anomalous body (Giovanni 149-167), the investigation of textual spectacle, particularly on silences as a positive absence of sound due to deafness (Dolich 6), the evaluation of the disabled characters as desiring subjects and/or objects of others' desire (Holmes and Mossman 493), the inquiry about how a deaf character's relation to language that disqualifies her from conventional representation and generic conventions exclude deaf characters from Victorian fiction (Esmail 991) and the descriptions of characters in relation to their physiognomy (Cox, *Reading Faces* 107), that is, "the science or knowledge of the correspondence between the external and internal man" (Lavater 19) are among few of them.

However, the literature lacks how a non-normative woman's body can embody diverse methods of perception to claim an ontological site for her existence. This paper argues that a non-normative woman's body can embody alternative methods of perception to claim her existence, particularly when exposed to the cultural or corporeal inferiority of the hegemonic normative bodies. Thus, I will discuss in this paper how non-normative woman's body can embody different experimental methods of perception such as intuition, comprehension, and inference to overcome her disability, and thus, to claim an ontological site for her existence. It also argues that disability is not solely a manifestation of limitation or pain; instead, it is a potentially desirable state of mind and body in the novel.

In doing so, in the light of disability criticism, this inquiry will be carried out

with three major questions. The first is "How was disability perceived in Victorian society?" and "How were women with disabilities treated in the Victorian period?" The second one is "How is a non-normative woman's body portrayed in "Hide and Seek"? The last one is "How can a non-normative woman's body embody different experimental methods of perception to claim her existence when exposed to the cultural or corporeal inferiority of the hegemonic normative bodies?" In answering these questions, this paper focuses on the representation of a non-normative woman's body, exploring how this body can be under the strong influence of hegemonic normative bodies, even if the protagonist tries to compensate for her disability either through her beauty, sexuality, or mind. This paper argues that the protagonist with a non-normative woman's body, despite her efforts to mitigate her disabilities either through her beauty, sexuality and mind, frequently encounter discriminatory remarks based on ableism.

Women with Disabilities during the Victorian Period

During the Victorian period[1], the prevailing archetype of a middle-class woman was that of *the angel in the house*, symbolizing the ideal housewife. It is imperative to acknowledge that the angel in the house was expected to be free from any disabilities. The traditional role of a housewife was limited to managing household services, instructing the servants, and caring for the children (Tosh 1-27; 53-79), while being physically able.

During the Victorian period, a woman's social status was mostly determined by marriage, which was the chief factor in defining her societal position; as Sarah Grand highlights, "The woman question is the marriage question" (276). The denigration of women, regardless of their physical abilities, whether abled or disabled, was a common and recurring practice in Victorian society, and this was also evident in Victorian literary works. Martha Stoddard Holmes, the leading

1 During the Victorian period, disability became increasingly visible in Victorian society, as evidenced by a report from Andrew Halliday in Henry Mayhew's "London Labour and The London Poor" (1985). According to Halliday, disability became more common, particularly on the streets of the capital in the mid nineteenth century due to the fact that either soldiers returned injured from overseas wars or people were injured in railway accidents. Furthermore, beggars, many of whom had disabilities, became more conspicuous in London streets at this time. In his work titled "Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain" (1983), Anthony S. Wohl asserts that Victorian society in Britain during that era was intensely pre-occupied with health-related issues, hygiene, and disability. Among many other factors, poor nutrition, inadequate food hygiene, a lack of cures and vaccines, limited access to medical services, and the rapid growth of industry contributed to a heightened awareness of disability issues in Victorian England.

scholar on disability in Victorian literature, explores physical disability in her work "Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture" (2007, 2010). According to her, in Victorian literature, when a disabled female character and a non-disabled female character are portrayed, the non-disabled character experiences marriage, whereas the disabled character endures suffering and is marginalized from the institution of marriage. Similarly, Ashton reveals, "[m]ost disabled women were presumed to be removed from the marriage market, not expected or desired to fulfil their womanly duties of matrimony and maternity" (34-35). In British society, the prevailing idea is that many disabled women were thought to be excluded from marriage for the simple reason that they are not physically qualified enough to carry out either their womanly responsibilities or childrearing. Therefore, "any *woman* [italics my emphasis] character with a disability would be ineligible for matrimony" was one of the most common issues among mainstream Victorian novelists even if these novelists believe that "the public should be accepting of and compassionate toward the disabled" (Logan 34-35).

During Collins's era, the main issues addressed by reformists, activists, and feminist campaigners were the laws concerning "the property rights of married women" and "women's legal position within marriage – including their freedom to end an unsatisfactory marriage" (Pykett 40). Unquestionably, the feminist movements or campaigns aimed at addressing the legal inequalities faced by women were a response to the societal and familial expectations that were imposed on them. Hence, it would be appropriate to argue that both symptomatic and instrumental impacts of the campaigns aimed to redefine gender norms during Collins's lifetime. This change, by the year 1850s, is highlighted by Pykett, "when a number of middle-class women had already begun their campaigns to change women's domestic roles and expand their opportunities", and including "when a growing number of working-class women had, for some years, been working outside the home in factories and workshops of various kinds," it became inevitable that "the feminized 'domestic ideal' was becoming increasingly firmly established in a range of social and cultural discourses and practices" (47), particularly during Collins's time.

As specified, social and familial roles attributed by society to women had gradually been changing through the reactions of the feminist campaigns, reformist ideas, and activists' organizations, including with the invisible power of literature, as Susan Balée elucidates. During the 1860s, women's social status and role in society began to change gradually due to the passage of various Acts aimed at improving their social status. Balée argues that "these changes were linked to the

influence of popular literature," leading authors to start writing novels, which in turn "revolutionized public knowledge" (201). Collins was among the leading authors at that time who contributed to the change in women's status through his portrayal of heroines in his novels. As a keen observer of the society in which he lived, Collins was aware of the subordinate position of women in society. Maria K. Bachman asserts that Collins is regarded as "one of the most prominent crusaders of women's rights" (84). Indisputably, Collins distinguishes himself as a novelist by diverging from prevailing societal norms, particularly in his exploration of disability within the context of the Victorian period. During a time when women's rights were widely disregarded, Collins bravely fought to demonstrate the importance of reevaluating and redefining the concepts of woman, womanhood, and disabled woman. He aimed to shift the perspective from viewing disability as an impairment to seeing it as a challenge to the senses.

In British literature, people with disabilities also appeared during the Victorian period. However, in the literary works, disability was regarded mainly as "an isolated concern, of literary or cultural significance only insofar as it may serve as a convention or an icon of affect" (Rodas 378). In other words, the portrayals of disabilities were frequently presented in the sensation novel genre in a somewhat sentimental way to teach a moral lesson to the readers of the time. According to Taylor, sensation fiction mainly focused on "central narrative features of disguise and secrecy in order to emphasize the instability of identity," while doing this, it manipulated "cultural perceptions and codes" (13) of the society, particularly about disability during the Victorian period.

The Victorians also demonstrated a keen interest in mental disorders, specifically insanity, because of the development of psychology and psychiatry as emerging specialized disciplines. This fascination extended beyond a narrow focus on physical injuries or impairments and facilitated the inclusion of these themes in Victorian literature. Nevertheless, the portrayals of disabilities were characterized by melodrama, poetic language, and romanticized depictions aimed at evoking pathos for individuals with disabilities. Logan discusses how Victorian literature often employs melodramatic and sentimental conventions to emphasize the "affective power of disability" (22). To him, these conventions portray disability as a 'pathetic state' and convey the idea that "the disabled person was useless, lonely, and separated from ordinary life" (22). However, this explanation was valid for both men and women with disabilities, without making any gender and sexual discrimination, even if women with disabilities may have suffered much more than their male counterparts.

Up to this part of the paper, the first research question, particularly on how disability was perceived and how women with disabilities were treated in Victorian society, is uncovered with a focus on historical accounts. From this part onwards, the concept of non-normative bodies, including disability is to be uncovered.

Bodies: (Non)-normative Bodies and Disability

The term body can be taken as a physical structure of human. Or more, "The body is not, nor can it ever be, an object; nor is it just a positing consciousness" (Warmack 107) or else, a body is a holistic being, that is, "an indivisible possession" whose positions are the signals of a "body schema that envelops them" (Merleau-Ponty 100-101), or rather a thing situated in an "osmosis between sexuality and existence" (Merleau-Ponty 172). Besides, a body is not an assortment of different body parts but an entanglement of interactions with intra or extra agents. Moreover, a lived body is a body having "intercorporeal relations between others and things" (Stawarska 101), or more precisely, it is an "originary acquisition of the natural or physical world" (Warmack 108). Furthermore, prepersonal body is "not a passive or statistic posture, as if the body were a blank slate or a material" since "it has a sensory history, constituted from previous encounters with the world and others" (Al-Saji 55). On the other hand, the "captured body" is the body that is "made flesh: penetrated, flayed, seared, whipped, tortured by instruments masterfully wielded by seemingly invisible hands" (Warmack 110), the exemplars of which can be seen in (post)colonial novels. As the literature indicates, the body's processing system is highly complex, with intricate intra and extra entanglements. The corporeal existence of the body not only embodies the present but also the past data, making it a mesmerizing and multidimensional system.

In critical disability studies, the term "normate" is coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson at the very outset of her seminal work "Extraordinary Bodies" (1997). As she puts it, the normate "designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings" since normate is "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (8). In other words, the normate is the constructed identity of individuals who, through their physical characteristics and cultural background, can assume positions of authority and wield the power that comes with it. Additionally, philosophers, scholars, and specialists across the field of critical disability studies agree that any "exclusions and injustices that situated and continue to situate the non-normate as second-class citizens or even subhuman" (Reynolds 247) are

unacceptable.

By taking the standpoints of Garland-Thomson and expanding them upon three aspects, Joel Micheal Reynolds reveals first, "as a question of attribution and narrative, disability is constituted by and through the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves in general and our 'bodyminds' […]" (244), second, "disability is a question of form, mode, and matter, all of which are cast as deviant - not just malformed or aberrant, but a deviation, the loss or absence of way and of being […]" (244), third, "disability cannot be thought outside of the triumvirate of the normal, natural, and normative," additionally, "these terms form an intricate tapestry of ideas and assumptions that underwrite common-sense notions of how things ought to be. That which is normal is that which is typical" (244).

Concisely, Reynolds's insightful expansion of Garland-Thomson's viewpoints reveals that disability is not just a medical condition, but a social construct. It is shaped by the stories we tell ourselves about our body and mind, and how society perceives and labels them. Disability is not just a deviation from the norm, but a loss of way and being. Therefore, disability cannot be thought outside of the triumvirate of the normal, natural, and normative. These concepts underwrite our common-sense notions of how things ought to be and what is considered typical, as indicated, "That which is typical is natural, regular, common, and even universal" (244), excluding disability from all these concepts.

The Representation of a Non-normative Woman's Body in "Hide and Seek"

Martin's study reveals that Charles Dickens, referring to "Hide and Seek", writes, "I think it far away the cleverest novel I have ever seen written by a new hand" (186). "Hide and Seek" is a captivating novel, renowned for its sensational storytelling and the pivotal role played by its intrusive and omniscient narrator in "detecting a family secret" (Griffin 6). The narrator's perspective provides a unique and intimate insight into the characters' motivations and emotions, making the story even more engaging.

"Hide and Seek," shedding light on the complexities and nuances of disability and ableism, depicts a compelling portrayal of the disparities between Madonna, who has a non-normative body, and those with the normative bodies. Through Madonna, an orphaned young woman who is deaf and mute, the novel highlights the cognitive, affective, and psychological experiences that differ between the characters with normative and non-normative bodies. Madonna is depicted as a remarkable character, a visually striking and picturesque figure who embodies exceptionalism in every aspect. Her real name and parentage are kept a mystery throughout the story,

further adding to the intrigue and captivating nature of the novel.

The novel introduces the protagonist, Madonna, who is in her early twenties and lives with Valentine Blyth, an unsuccessful painter. The story then goes back thirteen years to 1838, revealing how Madonna meets Valentine at the age of ten. Madonna is an orphan and is forced by Mr. Jubber, a tyrannical circus director, to perform in circus acts. Tragically, she falls off a horse, resulting in the loss of her ability to hear and speak. Mr. Jubber exploits her disability by featuring her in various performances for the audience, which is tantamount to the exploitation of a deaf child in circus acts. In her work "Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret" (1979), Leslie Fiedler explores the exploitation of disabled individuals in various settings. She delves into the history of society's fascination with non-normative human bodies and how this has led to the exploitation of these bodies for financial gain. Similarly, Madonna's experiences highlight the vulnerability of those with non-normative bodies to capital exploitation. It is important to acknowledge that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, individuals with disabilities were frequently displayed as exhibits in "human zoos and freak shows" in both the United Kingdom and the United States (Půtová 92). These displays focused primarily on physical differences and people with disabilities.

During her childhood, Madonna obeys the directives given to her by Mr. Jubber, despite being aware of his authoritarian nature and exploitative tendencies. Due to her young age, Madonna is expected to exhibit submission, and as the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that she is being objectified because of the predetermined gender roles of the society. Nancy F. Cott expresses her thoughts as such, "Women had learned that gender prescribed their talents, needs, outlooks, inclinations; their best chance to escape their stated inferiority in the world of men was on a raft of gender 'difference'" (190). Broadly speaking, the women adopting the predetermined gender roles perceive that their most viable opportunities to surmount their perceived inferiority in a male-dominated society was to embrace their gender distinctions. This is what Madonna does at the outset of the story.

Jubber's Circus, where Madonna works, announces Madonna as the "THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD" (Collins 55), emphasizing "Mr. Jubber, as proprietor of the renowned Circus, has the honour of informing the nobility, gentry, and public, that the above wonderful Deaf and Dumb Female Child will appear between the first and second parts of the evening's performances" (Collins 56). That the circus's announcement of the display of a deaf and mute child is an extraordinary event that is eagerly anticipated by the nobility, gentry, and public undeniably indicates the use of ableist language. Furthermore, Mr. Jubber's taking

great pride in sharing this news and inviting everyone to witness the child's performance can also be regarded as discrimination against people with physical disabilities. This example shows that how hegemonic normative body can abuse a non-normative woman's body.

The use of ableist language is evident in Mr. Jubber's announcements and advertisements, as well as in his exploitation of a young girl based on his hegemonic power. In this quote, Mr. Jubber can be taken seen as a normate because, as Reynolds explains, "[a]s a hegemonic phantasm, the normate offers an endless supply of normative measures against which non-normate bodies will prove to be worth less or even worthless" (245). In the circus, the spectators "never tired of scrawling questions, of saying 'poor little thing!' and of kissing her whenever they could get the opportunity, while she slowly went round the circus. 'Deaf and dumb! ah, dear, dear, deaf and dumb!' was the general murmur of sympathy which greeted her from each new group, as she advanced […]" (Collins 60). Mr. Jubber's announcement, while it may appear to present Madonna's non-normative body as a valuable object for the curious audience, carries a degrading undertone towards a non-normative woman's body in its deeper meaning. Undoubtedly, his way of exploiting a young girl in a circus exhibition to make money signifies humiliation of a non-normative body by the hegemonic normative bodies.

In the remaining chapters of the novel, Madonna's situation undergoes a significant change when her fate becomes intertwined with a man named Valentine Blyth. At the start of the story, it is revealed that Valentine adopted Madonna because he and Lavinia had always longed for a child. Valentine, as a loving and devoted husband, has always cared for his disabled wife due to her spinal condition for many years. Throughout the novel, Valentine and Lavinia show Madonna nothing but kindness and compassion, treating her as their own. The novel portrays how Valentine has a particular motive of having the girl as a companion for himself and his bedridden wife. For instance, even in the face of challenges, Valentine remains affectionate and attentive to Lavinia, who "had the heart to bear all burdens patiently; and could find sources of happiness for herself, where others could discover nothing but causes for grief" (Collins 53). Just like Lavinia, Madonna finds herself in a similar state of mind after undergoing a medical examination and accepting her situation, as she understands the doctor's instructions for Valentine: "you [Valentine] must set her [Madonna] an example of cheerfulness, and keep up her spirits – that's all that can be done for her now" and "hearing is completely gone; the experiment with my watch proves it," and the doctor adds that "The shock of that fall has, I believe, paralyzed the auditory nerve in her" (Collins 97).

However, despite this explanation, the doctor still feels the need to comment on Madonna's appearance, calling her "the prettiest little girl" he's ever seen (Collins 96). This suggests that the doctor's emotional reaction to Madonna's deafness may be influenced by his reaction to her beauty. But in its deeper meaning, it includes the reflection of hegemonic power.

The narrator avoids depicting Madonna as a victim, particularly after Valentine rescues her from Mr. Jubber. Madonna's portrayal in the story presents her as similar to the abled, emphasizing that disability does not define a person's worth. The narrator's technique of evoking sympathy for Madonna without portraying her as weak is commendable and keeps the readers engaged in the story: "[i]t's so hard to remember she's deaf and dumb, when one sees her sitting there looking so pretty and happy" (Collins 77).

Madonna transforms from a naive child to a captivating woman in the novel. Collins intrepidly challenges traditional literary norms by highlighting Madonna's evolving sexual appeal and asserting that disability does not preclude physical attractiveness in women. Despite her hearing loss, Madonna demonstrates her keen intellect and resourcefulness, particularly in navigating ableist language and uncomfortable situations. Though the normative bodies are considered as "the ultimate ability exemplar, the exemplarity of which is shaped by and anchored in ableist assumptions that tell us how bodies are and should be" (Reynolds 245), Madonna, having a non-normative body, compensates her disability though her mind, practicality and independence as exemplified in the following quote:

> She always betrayed her pleasure or uneasiness in the society of others with the most diverting candor-showing the extremest anxiety to conciliate and attract those whom she liked; running away and hiding herself like a child, from those whom she disliked. There were some unhappy people, in this latter class, whom no persuasion could ever induce her to see a second time. (Collins 119)

Concerning this quotation, Garland's explanation suggests that "the meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies" are not determined "by physical laws" but by "social relationships" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 7). To her, these relationships often result in one group being legitimized through physical characteristics, while others are systematically oppressed through cultural or corporeal inferiority. This understanding is crucial in explaining the complexity of Madonna's reactions towards someone she both loves and hates. By recognizing the social construct of physical characteristics, one can dismantle the oppressive structures that lead to

such complicated emotions.

Madonna's cognitive skills, such as literacy, logical reasoning, and critical thinking, play a critical role in perceiving, analysing and synthesizing events as a powerful woman who uses sign language to compensate for her deafness while showcasing her unique thoughts and sharp intellect. Despite the belief fostered by evolutionary theory that sign languages are inferior to spoken languages and only suitable for "savages and not for civilized human beings" (Baynton 93), Collins challenges us to recognize the importance of communication methods for people with disabilities. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may experience higher levels of anxiety in social situations since "[a]bility expectations are culled not just from one's proprioceptive-kinaesthetic experience of one's body, but from one's environment and social milieu" (Reynolds 245), according to the critical disability studies. For example, Madonna's voice takes on a more masculine quality after the horse accident, leaving her feeling uneasy. However, she refuses to let this prevent her from communicating with others and instead relies on the finger alphabet or written signs. Despite her deafness, she strives to compensate with beauty and intellect, and is often presented as a woman "beatified by speechlessness" or "the speechless of the angelic type of mid-century heroine" (Gitter 189). Nevertheless, Madonna's beauty is often emphasized over her disability, leading readers to understand her struggles and not to perceive her solely as a romantic heroine or a victim.

It was common in the past for disabled women to be viewed as asexual, and as a result, they were frequently excluded from romantic and marital relationships. This trend continued into not only in the nineteenth but also in the twentieth century and, presumably, in the twenty-first century may exist as well. However, the novel presents a unique relationship between Madonna, a disabled woman, and Zack, a physically fit and able-bodied man. Although it may seem unconventional, "a putative romance narrative is established around the couple" (Flint 159). Madonna sees her body as a normative body, and is incredibly social and cheerful, despite her disability. She relies on her intellect. This relationship challenges the norm of a normative body with a non-normative body.

In the novel, Madonna is depicted as a charming and selfless woman who adapts well to social situations. Despite her almost imperceptible disability, she has improved her observation and analysis skills to such a remarkable extent that she can often correctly guess the general tone of a conversation by closely observing the minute variations in the speakers' expressions and gestures, paying particular attention to their lips, as quoted in the following lines. Madonna manages:

> to sharpen her faculties of observation and her powers of analysis to such a remarkable degree, that she often guessed the general tenor of a conversation quite correctly, merely by watching the minute varieties of expression and gesture in the persons speaking – fixing her attention always with especial intentness on the changeful and rapid motions of their lips. (Collins 120)

Moreover, she can also discern the essence of a conversation without hearing the actual words and is able to judge a stranger's character by observing his/her "manner, expression, and play of features at a first interview" (Collins 119). In other words, her non-normative body embodies alternative methods of perception such as intuition, comprehension, and inference for the sake of creating an ontological site for her being. She emphatically prefers to acknowledge her disability as a unique and defining characteristic, setting her apart from normative bodies. Because she believes this disability makes herself distinctive among normative bodies, for whom such a norm of being is undefinable. For instance, according to Zack, "She's been so from a child. Some accident; a fall, I believe. But it don't affect her spirits a bit. She's as happy as the day is long – that's one comfort" (Collins 253). Unquestionably, Madonna's spirit and manner show that disability may not be synonymous with limitation and suffering. She continually searches for an ontological site to claim her existence throughout the novel.

Madonna endures the intolerant language and behavior of characters who possess normative bodies. The idea of "ableism as the assumption that the 'normal' or 'typical' body is better than the abnormal body because it is normal" (Reynolds 245) is evident in the characters of Zack and Mat. In their conversations, their use of ableist language is clearly shown: "I suppose you saw the poor dear little soul is deaf and dumb," and including, "Deaf and dumb! So like her, it was a'most as awful as seeing the dead come to life again. […] Mary's - poor creature! poor creature!" (Collins 253). These discriminatory remarks reveal degradation of a non-normative body by the hegemonic normative bodies.

It is vital to comprehend the narrator's stance on marriage to grasp why Madonna is unequivocally prohibited from marrying Zack in the novel's conclusion. Despite some critics viewing the novel as more of a mystery than a love story, the emphasis on Madonna's lineage and illegitimacy, including her adoption, is evident throughout the novel. This is highlighted in the narrator's decision to forbid Madonna from marrying Zack:

> "You've fallen in love with Madonna at first sight!"
> "Damn your laughing! Tell me who she is."
> "Tell you who she is? That's exactly what I can't do."
> "Why not? What do you mean? Does she belong to painter-man?"
> "Oh, fie, Mat! You mustn't talk of a young lady belonging to anybody, as if she was a piece of furniture, or money in the Three per Cents, or something of that sort." (Collins 252)

In the end, the true identity of Madonna's mother is revealed, and a surprising twist reveals that Zack is actually her half-brother. "Hide and Seek" doesn't suggest that Madonna's disability would prevent her from getting married. In fact, the focus is on her mysterious and unknown lineage, as narrated in this quote: "He [Valentine] adopted her, as they call it, years ago, when she was a child. But who she is, or where he picked her up, or what is her name, Blyth never has told anybody, and never will. She's the dearest, kindest, prettiest little soul that ever lived; and that's all I know about her" (Collins 252). This shows that the narrator doesn't display Madonna as a woman with a disability cannot get married. However, the emphasis is on her lineage. For instance, Lavinia Blyth, who has also a non-normative body, remains married until the end of the novel. Additionally, this indicates Collins's liberal approach to marriage for women with non-normative bodies.

"Hide and Seek" paints an inspiring picture of Madonna, demonstrating how a woman with a non-normative body can overcome obstacles and lead a fulfilling life. Collins challenges the common misconception that being disabled is synonymous with despondency. He also highlights the negative impact of surgeries and, further suggests that surgeries to rehabilitate disabled individuals can be a heavy burden on them. According to Logan, "Collins refuses to present the idea that Madonna would have a much better life hearing and speaking. Instead, *Hide and Seek* suggests that Madonna's movement toward maturity involves her accepting—even embracing—her disability" (70). In other words, Madonna is portrayed as a woman whose mental capacity, physical beauty, and spiritual psychology are emphasized more than her disability. Indeed, her impairment is barely noticeable in the story. As Siebers suggests, "disability" should be reinterpreted "as a form of human variation" (25), then, Madonna's usual situation can also be considered as a form of human variation, rather than a distinction.

In Collins's novel, deafness is not portrayed as a burden but rather a condition that enhances Madonna's other senses. Collins argues that disability is a social construct that is perpetuated by harmful beliefs such as individualism and eugenics.

And disability is "the invisible mechanism" supported by normative bodies, which encompasses "buttressing forces from toxic individualism to social eugenics" (Reynolds 244). To overcome these assumptions, Collins suggests moving towards an inclusive perspective on disability. For instance, as Madonna becomes adept at interpreting body language and nonverbal communication, her other senses become sharper, demonstrating the potential for growth and adaptation, as indicated in the following quote:

> All beautiful sights, and particularly the exquisite combinations that Nature presents, filled her with an artless rapture, which it affected the most unimpressible people to witness. Trees were beyond all other objects the greatest luxuries that her eyes could enjoy. She would sit for hours, on fresh summer evenings, watching the mere waving of the leaves; her face flushed, her whole nervous organization trembling with the sensations of deep and perfect happiness which that simple sight imparted to her. (Collins 120)

Madonna's disability cannot be seen as a limitation or a source of pain. Instead, it can be viewed as a serenity of both mind and body that could be desirable. Additionally, her happiness radiates an atmosphere of reconciliation and tranquillity. However, the normative bodies tend to believe that the bodies that do not conform to the norms, namely the non-normative bodies, are less valuable. Or else, the experienced sites of the non-normative bodies may be undefinable for the normative bodies. This stance can stem from hegemonic power, ideology, or phantasm that prevent those with the normative bodies from understanding those with non-normative bodies. Alternatively, it may be because the normative bodies do not experience the identical emotions that the non-normative bodies practice due to their disabilities. Consequently, non-normative bodies, including Madonna, are often treated as objects rather than subjects that can be exploited for cultural gain or subjected to discriminatory statements based on their disabilities. The novel suggests that normative bodies tend to undervalue non-normative bodies and that disabled ones are often exploited or subjected to ableist comments. However, Madonna compensates for her disability through her beauty, intellect, and sexuality. Despite facing ableist treatments and assumptions, she overcomes them with grace and resilience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper examines the representation of a non-normative woman's

body in "Hide and Seek" by Wilkie Collins. It argues that a non-normative woman body can embody different experimental methods of perceptions, such as intuition, comprehension, inference, liberating the body from the limitations of the dogmatic predictions arising from the automatization of hearing.

By examining the relationships between the normative and non-normative bodies through the lens of critical disability studies, this paper concludes that the non-normative body can embody alternative methods of perception to claim her existence, particularly when exposed to the cultural or corporeal inferiority of the hegemonic normative bodies. By interweaving the historical accounts on disability and woman question in the Victorian society, this paper firstly, attempts to unveil how women with disabilities were treated; secondly, it examines the portrayal of a non-normative woman's body and lastly, it uncovers the motivations behind embodying different methods of perception for a non-normative body. Moreover, in this paper, whereas the protagonist Madonna, is under the strong influence of hegemonic normative bodies, she determinately tries to create an ontological site for her own existence. To do that, she tries to compensate for her disability through her beauty, sexuality, and mind. Thus, this paper argues that disability is not seen as a limitation or pain, rather it can be a desirable state of mind and body. For instance, Garland Thomson reveals what a disabled body, indeed, demands is "a narrative, requires an apologia that accounts for its difference from unexceptional bodies" (*Staring Back* 334). By indicating the non-normative bodies' claim for a narrative that accounts for its divergence from the unexceptional bodies, Garland Thomson unquestionably emphasizes that the non-normative bodies attempt to create an ontological site for their existence, beginning from structuring the narratives. Since such narratives result from the cultural and corporeal inferiority of the non-normative bodies by the hegemonic normative bodies, a well-crafted apologia can be meaningful for the non-normative bodies and ensure that it is not overlooked or marginalized in society. Similarly, Flint justifies Collins's humanistic approach towards disability, stating that: "These connections, tying in able-bodied and disabled alike, allow us to see the differently-abled not so much as Others, but as placed on a human continuum of affective relationships […]" (164). Put it differently, encompassing both those with normative and non-normative bodies facilitate a paradigm shift in perceiving the latter as integral components of a human continuum of affective relationships, rather than as marginalized Others.

In conclusion, "Hide and Seek" challenges socio-cultural assumptions and expectations about disability during the Victorian period and narrates a quest for claiming an ontological site for a non-normative woman's body. Although

the protagonist, Madonna, is exposed to the cultural or corporeal inferiority of the hegemonic normative bodies using ableist language, she compensates for her disability through her beauty, sexuality, and mind, and, thus, she creates an ontological site for her existence. Thus, disability can be seen a potentially desirable state of mind and body. We can create a more inclusive and equitable society for all by accepting differences and celebrating diversity.

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Intersectional Feminism in *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous

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Abstract *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, both published in 2018, share thematic and structural similarities despite different cultural contexts. Both novels explore romantic relationships strained by external circumstances. In *An American Marriage*, Celestial and Roy's marriage is tested by Roy's wrongful imprisonment, highlighting racial injustice and flaws in the American criminal justice system. *The Frightened Ones* centers on the unnamed narrator and Nasim, whose relationship is shaped by the trauma of living in a war-torn society, reflecting the impact of the Syrian civil war. Both novels examine how societal issues affect personal lives and apply intersectional feminism to explore how gender, race, and socio-political contexts shape the characters' identities.

Keywords civil war; injustice; intersectional feminism; race; socio-political contexts

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Introduction

The selection of *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous for this comparative analysis is driven by the distinct yet comparable socio-political contexts in which these narratives unfold—the racial injustice embedded in the U.S. criminal justice system and the devastating impact of the Syrian civil war. Both novels, published in 2018, provide rich ground for examining how external socio-political forces shape individual lives and intimate

relationships, particularly through the lens of intersectional feminism. This framework, which acknowledges how various forms of oppression—race, gender, class, and political circumstances—intersect and compound one another, is essential for a nuanced analysis of these works.

In *An American Marriage*, the wrongful imprisonment of Roy, a Black man, disrupts his marriage to Celestial, a successful African American artist, foregrounding the structural racism of the U.S. justice system. Jones meticulously explores how racial discrimination operates at a systemic level, deeply affecting not only Roy's fate but also his and Celestial's emotional and psychological well-being. The novel's use of epistolary elements, such as letters exchanged between the couple during Roy's incarceration, serves as a poignant narrative device, illustrating the emotional toll that external racialized violence imposes on personal bonds. Jones' portrayal of Celestial's decision not to continue her pregnancy is emblematic of the ways in which Black women, in particular, face compounded forms of oppression, as her reflections on her body and life underscore the broader societal constraints imposed upon her. As Tew (2018) notes, the novel powerfully intertwines love, loss, and systemic injustice, offering an intimate yet expansive critique of racialized experiences within the U.S. criminal justice system.

The Frightened Ones, by contrast, situates its narrative within the horrors of the Syrian civil war. Through the stories of the unnamed narrator and Nasim, Wannous captures the pervasive fear, trauma, and disorientation that permeate everyday life in a war-torn society. The novel delves into the psychological fragmentation that emerges from living under a regime of violence and instability, with the characters' fractured identities mirroring the fragmentation of Syria itself. As Sawsan El Abtah (2017) observes, the novel intricately portrays the emotional turbulence of pre-revolutionary Syria and its descent into chaos, gradually piecing together a narrative that is as fragmented as the nation it depicts. This structural choice reflects the disjointedness of lived experience under constant threat, where personal relationships are strained to the breaking point by the broader political context.

Both novels highlight how gender and socio-political circumstances intersect to shape the experiences of their female protagonists, making them ideal subjects for an analysis rooted in intersectional feminism. In *An American Marriage*, Celestial navigates not only the personal loss of her husband to wrongful imprisonment but also the societal expectations placed on Black women, who are often left to bear the emotional and material consequences of systemic racism. In *The Frightened Ones*, the unnamed female narrator grapples with the psychological impact of war while confronting her own gendered vulnerabilities in a male-dominated and

conflict-ridden society. Both novels thus offer a profound exploration of how socio-political contexts—whether rooted in racial injustice or civil war—disrupt personal relationships and individual agency.

The thematic depth and structural complexity of these works enhance their suitability for comparative analysis. Jones' layered portrayal of race, gender, and justice in the U.S. and Wannous' depiction of trauma, fear, and war in Syria both reveal the intimate consequences of large-scale injustices. This paper will explore how intersectional feminism provides a critical framework to examine these narratives, emphasizing how race, gender, and socio-political contexts intersect to shape the identities and experiences of their characters. Through this comparative approach, we can better understand the interconnectedness of personal and collective struggles, and the ways in which systemic injustices permeate the most intimate aspects of human life.

Intersectional feminism is a critical framework for understanding how various social identities—such as gender, race, class, and political context—interact and shape the lived experiences of individuals. *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, both published in 2018, exemplify this approach. Through their distinct cultural lenses, these novels navigate the intersection of systemic oppression, intimate relationships, and personal identity. By examining how external socio-political forces mold personal lives, Jones and Wannous offer compelling critiques of injustice, racial discrimination, and the impact of conflict on women's agency.

First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term "intersectionality" recognizes that the lived experiences of individuals are shaped by overlapping identities and structures of oppression. Intersectional feminism examines how women of different backgrounds experience gender inequality in varied ways, depending on race, class, and other factors (Crenshaw, 1989). This framework is particularly relevant for understanding the characters in *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones*, whose identities and relationships are deeply intertwined with the socio-political landscapes they inhabit.

In *An American Marriage*, Tayari Jones employs intersectional feminism to explore the intersecting impacts of race, gender, and the criminal justice system on African American lives. The novel centers around Celestial and Roy, a Black couple whose relationship disintegrates after Roy is wrongfully imprisoned. The narrative highlights the disproportionate impact of the legal system on Black men, with Roy's wrongful conviction illustrating the historical and ongoing racial bias embedded in American institutions. Critics have noted that Jones portrays the

tension between personal agency and institutional oppression, illustrating how Roy's experience of incarceration strips him not only of his freedom but also of his autonomy as a husband and partner (Hughes, 2019).

Celestial, on the other hand, grapples with societal expectations of Black women in marriage and their role as caretakers of Black men who face systemic discrimination. Jones complicates the traditional depiction of Black womanhood, portraying Celestial as an artist who seeks to balance her individual desires with the expectations of her community. The novel's exploration of intersectionality is also reflected in the depiction of Celestial's reproductive choices. Her decision not to carry her pregnancy to term while Roy is incarcerated highlights the intertwined effects of race, gender, and personal autonomy, as it comments on the structural conditions that limit the freedom of Black women (Tew, 2018).

While *An American Marriage* focuses on racial injustice in the U.S., *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous turns to the trauma inflicted by war in the Syrian context. The novel centers on the unnamed narrator and Nasim, two individuals who find themselves in a relationship marked by psychological and emotional scars from living under a dictatorial regime and enduring the ongoing civil war. Wannous uses intersectional feminism to illustrate how war disproportionately impacts women, particularly through trauma and mental health.

The novel's exploration of trauma is central to its feminist critique. As Choudhury (2020) notes, *The Frightened Ones* is less about physical survival in a war zone and more about the psychological survival of individuals—especially women—who are often marginalized in narratives of war. Wannous interrogates how trauma affects not only personal relationships but also one's sense of identity. The narrator's fragmented narrative style reflects the fractured psyche of individuals living under oppressive regimes, while also showcasing the intersectional nature of their suffering—where gendered violence, political repression, and psychological breakdowns collide (Awad, 2020).

Through the relationship between the narrator and Nasim, Wannous critiques the patriarchy's role in the conflict and its perpetuation of both literal and metaphorical violence against women. Nasim's mental health issues become a vehicle for examining how the intersections of gender and political oppression strip women of their agency. In a sense, *The Frightened Ones* presents war as not only a male-dominated battlefield but also a psychological battlefield where women are the primary casualties (Awad, 2020).

Both novels highlight the shared struggles of women across cultural contexts, yet the specific oppressions they face vary due to their racial and political

environments. In *An American Marriage*, the central conflict revolves around institutionalized racism in the U.S., while *The Frightened Ones* tackles the systemic violence of a dictatorial regime and war. The comparison of these two works reveals how intersectional feminism allows for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and shape the lives of women globally. Despite their different settings, both novels underline how external socio-political forces, such as racial injustice and war, exert pressure on intimate relationships and limit women's autonomy.

Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage* and Dima Wannous' *The Frightened Ones* offer rich, nuanced portrayals of the intersectional struggles faced by women in different socio-political contexts. By employing intersectional feminist theory, both authors reveal the intertwined nature of personal and structural oppression, whether through the lens of racial injustice in the U.S. or the trauma of civil war in Syria. Ultimately, these novels underscore the necessity of intersectionality in feminist discourse, highlighting the varied yet interconnected experiences of women across the globe.

Questions of the Study and Theoretical Framework

This study raises a lot of questions including in what ways do the intersections of race, gender, and socio-political contexts uniquely shape the lives of characters in each novel? How does the application of intersectional feminism differ in the context of African American experiences in the United States and Syrian experiences in a war-torn society? How do external societal pressures, such as racial injustice in the U.S. and the Syrian civil war, affect the dynamics of romantic relationships in these novels? How do gender expectations and roles impact the protagonists in both novels? In what ways do the female characters in each novel resist or conform to traditional gender roles within their respective societies? How is trauma depicted in both novels, and what are the different sources of trauma for the characters? What role do the characters play in advocating for social change, and what obstacles do they face in their efforts?

Intersectional feminism is a framework for understanding how various aspects of a person's social and political identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) combine to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectional feminism emphasizes that these identities do not exist independently of each other and that they interrelate, often resulting in complex, overlapping systems of oppression. The comparative approach in this study offers a nuanced lens through which the intersections of gender,

race, and socio-political contexts in *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones* are explored. By juxtaposing two distinct cultural settings—one framed by the American criminal justice system, the other by the Syrian civil war—the analysis brings into sharp focus how external forces shape the intimate lives of the characters. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to highlight both universal and culture-specific struggles, allowing for a deeper understanding of how intersectional feminism operates within diverse sociopolitical landscapes. Through comparison, the study reveals shared patterns of oppression and resilience, while also acknowledging the particularities of each narrative, ultimately enriching the discourse on how personal and collective identities are navigated under the weight of systemic injustices.

To apply intersectional feminism to Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage* and Dima Wannous' *The Frightened Ones*, we can explore how the characters navigate multiple, intersecting identities and the resulting social challenges they face. Here are some examples with quotations from both novels: In *An American Marriage*, Jones explores the intersecting issues of race, gender, and the criminal justice system. The protagonist, Roy, a Black man, is wrongfully imprisoned, and his wife, Celestial, must navigate life without him, confronting societal expectations and personal autonomy. Hagan and Wieting (2021) suggest that the novel provides a significant viewpoint on the struggles of marginalized communities in maintaining close relationships due to systematic influence of racism on black families. They emphasize how the story's exploration of the criminal justice system underscores how systemic racism can strain marriages. Roy's wrongful imprisonment highlights systemic racism within the criminal justice system. As a Black man, his experiences are shaped by racial stereotypes and prejudices. Celestial's struggles reflect the intersection of race and gender, as she deals with societal expectations of a Black woman and the pressure to remain loyal to her husband. “When I think of the night you were arrested, it hurts my heart. You were nothing but a victim of being a Black man in the wrong place at the wrong time” (25).

Jones’ works emphasize the significance of gender roles, in addition to race and class. She challenges the stereotype of African American culture as matriarchal, suggesting that women assume significant responsibilities mainly due to the absence of men. According to Jones, there exists a "crisis of masculinity" in black culture in the United States, as many men are either incarcerated or deceased at a young age. Consequently, women often find themselves taking on the role of the family's primary provider, as depicted in her narratives (Conroy, Web).

Caroline Y Erue notes that “Patriarchy is a pivotal subject in feminist

literature and a prominent issue in Jones' works, where she actively opposes male supremacy" (112). Historically, patriarchy granted fathers near-total authority over their wives and offspring, treating family relations as a form of property with the father as both originator and proprietor (Millet 67). While the concept of patriarchy has significantly transformed globally, the core notion of male superiority endures. Adichie observes, "If we do something repeatedly, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing repeatedly, it becomes normal" (We Should 13). Similarly, the continual depiction of men as the principal authority makes it appear natural to perceive women as the "Other" or the "Second Sex." Gender roles portrayed in narratives underscore this, illustrating the limited choices available to women.

Much like Black feminists, Tayari Jones emphasizes the myriad difficulties faced by women of color and the ongoing struggles they encounter, while also highlighting the brave ways Black women challenge conventional gender roles. Jones shapes her stories as feminist inquiries into the oppression of Black men in America. Her narratives clearly reveal a bias favoring male children. For example, Ronalda claims her mother is deceased, though she actually fled with Ronalda's cherished younger brother. Similarly, Dana understands that her father always longed for a son. Growing up with two brothers, Jones felt her parents had higher expectations for them. She observes, "As anyone who's ever had a brother knows, boys are in many ways the center of the familial universe" (Conroy 2022). Despite a joyful childhood, Jones acknowledges she was raised in a setting where girls were not as celebrated or valued as boys.

The novel also delves into class differences, especially in how they affect Roy and Celestial's relationship and perceptions of loyalty and success. "You came from money. I came from nothing. You think I don't know that? You think I don't know that every time we fight?" (102).

Across history, conventional feminism often downplayed the significance of race, prioritizing patriarchy over other forms of oppression. Black feminists have actively opposed this marginalization of racism. Moraga and Anzaldúa vehemently criticize the indifference of White women, asserting that racism profoundly impacts the underrepresented and marginalized individuals, except those privileged enough to overlook its psychologically oppressive effects (Moraga and Anzaldúa xliii-xliv).

Garber contends that *An American Marriage* exemplifies a wider trend in modern literature that examines the weakening of the traditional marriage institution. He observes that the novel provides a detailed and intricate analysis of the various elements leading to marital breakdown, such as systemic racism, personal decisions, and societal pressures (Garber 2019).

In *The Frightened Ones*, Wannous examines the psychological impacts of living under a repressive regime in Syria, with a focus on trauma, gender, and identity. The novel follows Suleima, a woman dealing with the fear and paranoia induced by the political climate, as well as her personal traumas. Sawsan El Abtah states that:

> The narrator, Salima, serves as the backbone of the narrative, recounting her story in her own voice, which, in many aspects, mirrors the life of the author herself. In this manner, Dima Wannous selectively incorporates elements from her autobiography, particularly the extraordinary relationship she shared with her father, juxtaposed against a profound estrangement from the majority of his family members. This amalgamation of the fictional and the personal liberates Wannous, enabling her to confide through the multifaceted veil of a novelistic persona. (El Abtah, 2017)

Experiences are shaped by her gender, as she navigates a society that imposes strict roles on women while also coping with the pervasive fear of state violence. Her relationship with Naseem, another traumatized individual, underscores how personal and political traumas intersect. “In this country, they don’t just kill you. They kill your spirit first, especially if you’re a woman. They want you to feel small, insignificant” (88).

Ahmed El Araby states that, “The novel adopts the first-person narrative style, revolving around the protagonist’s consciousness, which flows psychologically unrestrained by time or place. Its narration is governed by events occurring in Syria, its revolution, and the repercussions thereof on the populace” (2020).

The narrative, in which political concerns intersect with social ones, commences with segments depicting the perplexed life of Suleima, faced with the papers sent to her by Naseem, the handsome man with prominent features. As she consumes them word by word, panting after each letter, she discovers a tale closer to the biography of a woman crafted from fear. Abd El Rahman Habib questions, “But what did Naseem desire? Did he intend for Suleima to conclude the narrative after fear overtook him and he was unable to accomplish it? Did he assume that the completion of his story would be akin to the completion of the moon in Suleima's heart the day she dreamed of herself dangling from the edge of a low-rise Damascene building?” (Habib 2021).

The novel narrates the dominance of fear and anxiety over the Syrian individual in the post-revolution era amidst significant changes in life in Syria.

This fear, adeptly portrayed by Dima Wannous, is embodied through numerous characters, intertwined narratives, and "overlapping stories that collectively depict a state of fear and the search for identity in a world of war, displacement, and loss" (Wannous 2018). The novel addresses how fear and trauma influence Suleima's sense of identity and belonging, intersecting with her gendered experiences in a conflict-ridden society. "Fear is like a spider that spins its web inside you. It knows every corner of your heart, every dark spot in your mind" (Wannous 54).

Suleima cannot rid herself of her feeling of fear in any line of the novel. This also applies to the other protagonists, where fear appears as a collective pattern that shapes the days and nights of all the characters and dominates their inner lives. Nasim, a young doctor and writer whom Suleima met in the clinic waiting room, suffers greatly from his feeling of fear to the extent that he is accustomed to slapping himself. Like Suleima, "he is a victim of his many fears, but he deals with his fears more aggressively. He has tattooed his name and address on his back in large letters, to be identified in case of his death in a bomb raid" (Kaminski 45).

The novel conveys a sense of despair, suggesting that Syrians often find themselves drawn towards the unknown realms of loss, conflict, and dispersion, unless they embark on an alternative path and assert their rights with the aid of supportive allies. The narrative emanates from a standpoint deeply rooted in allegiance to the Syrian revolution, refraining from sugarcoating; the devastation in Syria is immense, "and the endeavor to reconstruct a Syria characterized by freedom, justice, democracy, and a better life is formidable" (El Araby 2020).

Both novels provide rich ground for intersectional analysis. In *An American Marriage*, the intersection of race, gender, and class is crucial in understanding the characters' struggles and societal pressures. As Sethi argues, the novel criticizes modern discussions on love and marriage by depicting the protagonists' marital collapse as a symbol of wider disenchantment with conventional ideas of romantic love and the institution of marriage (Sethi 2021).

For *The Frightened Ones*, the intersection of gender and political trauma highlights how oppressive regimes impact individuals differently based on their gender. The romantic relationship between Suleima and Naseem is depicted as transient, mirroring the precarious nature of all human connections in contemporary Syria. However, upon Naseem's departure from Syria, "Suleima receives an unfinished manuscript of a novel, wherein he vividly portrays the fate of a young woman strikingly reminiscent of her own" (Kaminski 2018).

Using intersectional feminism to analyze these novels reveals the layered and nuanced ways in which the characters' identities influence their experiences and

actions. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the systemic inequalities they face and the personal resilience they must muster to navigate their complex realities. In both *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and The Frightened Ones" by Dima Wannous, the intersections of race, gender, and socio-political contexts profoundly influence the characters' lives, shaping their experiences and identities.

In *An American Marriage*, Celestial's experiences as a Black woman are intricately linked with her husband, Roy's wrongful incarceration. This quote illustrates the impact of race and gender on their relationship: “He had been in prison for eighteen months, and in that time, I had changed my entire life. I had shed my identity as a wife and taken on that of a widow” (Jones 1). Here, Celestial's identity transformation reflects the societal pressures and expectations placed on Black women, especially when confronted with the injustice of the criminal justice system.

Similarly, in *The Frightened Ones*, the character's experiences are shaped by the socio-political landscape of Syria, compounded by the intersections of race and gender. For instance, the protagonist, Suleima, navigates the complexities of her identity within a war-torn society: “I am a woman who lives in Damascus. I am a Syrian woman who has been buried alive in her own city” (Wannous 17). This quote encapsulates how Suleima's identity as a Syrian woman is deeply intertwined with the socio-political turmoil engulfing her country, highlighting the intersectional nature of her struggles.

Dima Wannous's *The Frightened Ones* (2018) delves deeply into the intertwined themes of trauma and gender in the context of the Syrian conflict. Through the fragmented and overlapping lives of the characters, Wannous presents how war and political violence disproportionately affect women, shaping their emotional, psychological, and social experiences.

At its core, the novel reveals the pervasive nature of trauma in a war-torn society. The protagonist, Suleima, is a young woman living in Damascus who suffers from severe anxiety and fear—echoes of the violence surrounding her. This trauma is expressed both in her body and mind, with Suleima experiencing dissociation, panic attacks, and deep unease. Her narrative voice often blurs the line between her personal fear and the collective trauma of Syrian society. One particularly vivid passage captures this entanglement of personal and collective trauma: “Fear was not born within me; it is not a hereditary trait, nor is it something I acquired in my early years. It is a slow-building phenomenon, one that grew steadily and unstoppably with each story of a missing neighbor, of a friend who disappeared, of a person who did not return home. It clings to you and seeps into every breath” (*The Frightened*

Ones 48). This quote illustrates how trauma is a cumulative and social experience in Syria, formed and exacerbated by the ongoing disappearances and violence inflicted by the state. Suleima's fear is not isolated but shared by all Syrians living under authoritarian rule.

Wannous also explores the specific ways in which women's experiences of trauma are gendered. The novel reflects on how women's bodies become battlegrounds, not just in the physical sense, but through the psychological manipulation and coercion they experience. Suleima's relationship with her psychiatrist, Karim, who is also a writer documenting their sessions, becomes a conduit for these themes. In many ways, Suleima becomes a representation of Syrian women's suffering, objectified both by Karim and the war.

A poignant reflection on the experience of women during conflict appears when Suleima contemplates her role as a woman in a society that subjugates both through war and gender norms: "I always knew that as a woman, fear would be part of my inheritance. But this war, it has deepened that fear, made it something more insidious. Now, it is no longer just the fear of men or their power, but the fear of disappearing, of vanishing without a trace like so many before me" (*The Frightened Ones* 123) This quote underscores how gender compounds the trauma of living in a war zone. The fear of disappearing, or of being lost within the violence, becomes an extension of the patriarchal structures already oppressing Syrian women.

Critics have noted how Wannous's exploration of trauma in the Syrian context is heavily gendered, reflecting the specific vulnerabilities women face. Dr. Lindsey Moore, in her article "Narratives of Trauma and Resistance in Syrian Women"s Fiction," argues that *The Frightened Ones* shows "the intersection of personal and political fear" and highlights "how women's voices are marginalized in both the public and private spheres of conflict." Moore writes that Wannous crafts Suleima's trauma as "not only a consequence of war but also a product of deeply entrenched patriarchal systems" (Moore 159). Similarly, Syrian critic Yasmine Zahran emphasizes that the novel's structure, with its fragmented narrative, mimics the disintegration of both Syrian society and the self under the pressures of war and gendered oppression. Zahran states, "The novel disrupts linear storytelling to embody the ruptured psyche of women caught between the destructive forces of state violence and societal patriarchy" (Zahran 45).

Dima Wannous's *The Frightened Ones* powerfully portrays the intersections of trauma and gender within the Syrian conflict. Through Suleima's narrative, the novel reflects the collective fear experienced by Syrians, while also exposing the unique psychological and societal challenges faced by women. The depictions of

fear, dissociation, and psychological fragmentation offer readers a profound insight into the gendered dimensions of trauma during times of violence and upheaval.

The discussion herein revolves around the subject of fear, which has instilled in people's lives anxiety, tension, and disturbance. For instance, (Naseem), a young writer as previously defined, may resort to publishing several novels under a pseudonym to avoid arrest and oppression. (Naseem) will narrate the saga of this fear, or rather the fear of fear, as he himself expressed it. He does not wish to live through those moments preceding the terrifying event, such as facing the incessant question that pervades people's entire lives and labeling it with his own stamp. We will be with (Suleima), tracing that relationship with the father, as an exceptional task in the narrative, "where security confronts fear, noble value confronts emptiness and triviality, and in short, we will be with the meaning embodied in its entirety" (Azoz 2018).

Places: Damascus, Hama, the countryside... have served as spatial determinants for events that have imprinted a specific geographical image on Syria under an oppressive/despotic regime, characterized by persistent recourse to suppression and comprehensive violence to quell any inclination towards dissent against the prevailing exclusionary practices, and indeed against any aspiration for criticism or differentiation, perpetuating the image of a silent herd, intermittently, as well as through prolonged propaganda, consistently, demonstrating unwavering allegiance intermittently, or indeed at all times if possible. Beirut, on the other hand, "is implicated in the process of highlighting aspects pertinent to the successive Syrian events, which have imparted a contrasting descriptive feature to our contemporary history" (Azoz 2018).

Moreover, both novels explore the ways in which societal expectations and systemic injustices intersect to shape the characters' lives. In *An American Marriage*, Roy's wrongful imprisonment not only affects his relationship with Celestial but also exposes the racial disparities within the criminal justice system: "Roy was never just any man, but a black man" (Jones 44). This quote underscores how Roy's race exacerbates the injustices he faces, illustrating the intersectionality of race and socio-political contexts in his life.

Similarly, in *The Frightened Ones*, the characters' experiences of trauma and displacement are compounded by their gender and socio-political context. As Suleima reflects on her past, she expresses the profound impact of war on her identity: "I am someone who knows how to count my heartbeat every time I climb the stairs to my house" (Wannous 73). This quote poignantly captures the intersectional nature of Suleima's experiences, as her gender and the socio-political

context of war converge to shape her sense of self and belonging.

Both *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones* depict how the intersections of race, gender, and socio-political contexts uniquely shape the lives of their characters. Through powerful narratives and poignant quotes, these novels illuminate the complexities of identity and the impact of systemic injustices on individuals within diverse communities.

In *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, intersectional feminism is likely explored through the lens of African American experiences in the United States, where issues of race, gender, and class intersect. The character's experiences, such as the protagonist Roy's wrongful incarceration and the dynamics within his marriage to Celestial, offer insights into the complexities of race and gender dynamics within American society (St. Félix 2018). St. Félix emphasizes the novel's exploration of the intricate nature of forgiveness and reconciliation amid betrayal and pain. According to St. Félix, the novel's depiction of the struggles involved in love and forgiveness provides a significant viewpoint on the complexities of contemporary relationships (St. Félix 2018).

On the other hand, *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, set in a war-torn Syrian society, would likely address intersectional feminism within the context of conflict, displacement, and trauma. The female characters in the novel may navigate not only gender inequalities but also the specific challenges and vulnerabilities they face as a result of war, such as loss of family members, displacement, and the struggle for survival.

Both novels would likely emphasize the importance of understanding intersectionality in analyzing power dynamics and social injustices. However, the specific manifestations and challenges of intersectional feminism would differ based on the distinct contexts of African American experiences in the United States and Syrian experiences in a war-torn society.

In *An American Marriage*, societal pressures, particularly racial injustice, deeply influence the romantic relationship between Roy and Celestial. Jones vividly portrays this impact through Roy's wrongful incarceration, which strains their marriage. Celestial grapples with the weight of racial injustice and societal expectations, leading to emotional turmoil. As she reflects, "I am not some strong, mythical black woman... I am just me, and I am so tired of being everything to everyone" (Jones 89). This quote encapsulates Celestial's struggle against societal pressures that impinge upon her identity and her relationship with Roy.

Caroline Y. Erue notes that "Celestial was mentally drained by the turmoil in her life. Although her marriage was in shambles, her father continued to finance her

wedding" (Erue, 117). She spent long hours at her shop and then endured lengthy drives to Louisiana to stay with her unsympathetic in-laws. Though her husband wasn't at fault, there was a limit to what she could handle as a Black woman. She confided in Andre, saying, "You don't know what it's like to be standing in the line to get in to see him" in prison, "it's different for women. They treat you like you're coming to visit your pimp… Like you're a delusional victim" (Erue 157). It shattered Celestial to accept that "Women's work is never easy, never clean" (Erue 285). Often, she gazed into the mirror and barely recognized the person staring back.

Today, numerous women are openly embracing opportunities and delving into diverse experiences with confidence. As Ytasha Womack insightfully observes, "It's what our predecessors fought for. It's called choice" (Womack 162). Black women now place a high value on self-expression and authenticity, marking a significant departure from earlier times when they were expected to demonstrate strength and self-sacrifice for their families. Examining Jones' female characters raises important questions about identity and self-perception. These characters defy the post-World War II stereotype of women as solely submissive wives, mothers, and homemakers.

Celestial represents a modern take on characters from earlier works by female authors such as Toni Morrison, who defy social conventions in distinctive ways. This is reflected in Celestial's thoughts, behaviors, love, and assertion of autonomy. She seeks to live life on her own terms, rather than conforming to the expectations of her husband or society. Roy depends on Celestial for prison visits, financial aid, legal efforts, and as a reminder of his past self, stating, "I feel like I need and need and need and it's wearing a hole in the fabric" (Celestial 81). While Roy relies heavily on Celestial, she must also focus on her own needs. In one letter, Roy proclaims, "I'm innocent," to which Celestial replies, "I'm innocent, too" (Celestial 84). This dialogue highlights the novel's central theme: we can empathize with the victim and amplify his voice, but not at the expense of ignoring his wife's needs and aspirations.

Marrying a man in prison demands immense sacrifice. Despite this, Celestial expertly juggles her personal and professional lives. When Roy misinterpreted her explanation in an interview about her doll-making inspiration, she emphasized the significance of that moment for her. "Maybe it was selfish, but I wanted to have my moment to be an artist, not the prisoner's wife" (Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing* [New York: Knopf, 2016], 67). Roy thought his wife was embarrassed to mention his imprisonment, but Celestial understood that disclosing it could drastically impede her career. As a Black woman, she needed to demonstrate her outstanding doll-

making talents to White customers, allowing no room for error.

Similarly, in *The Frightened Ones*," the Syrian civil war serves as a backdrop to Nunu and Zaher's relationship. Wannous intricately weaves the psychological effects of conflict into their dynamic. Zaher's fear and trauma from the war become palpable, affecting his interactions with Nunu. As he confesses, "It's not always easy to communicate... What happened to me in Syria haunts me" (Wannous, page 128). This excerpt highlights how external societal pressures, in this case, the Syrian civil war, deeply shape Zaher's emotional state and consequently, his relationship with Nunu.

The novel *The Frightened Ones* can be seen as able to provide a condensed and indicative portrayal of Syrian society, as it grapples with despotism, oppression, and extermination, oscillating between periods of silence and fear on one hand, and rebellion and revolution on the other. The author, Dima Wannous, initiates her narrative with references to Suleima's visits to the clinic of Dr. Kamil, portraying her as a fearful and silenced character. Consequently, one may conclude that “this representation symbolizes, to some extent, the state of an entire nation in pursuit of arduous healing, equivalent to the desire for redemption from a collective national catastrophe” (Azoz 2018).

In both novels, external societal pressures intersect with the intimate sphere of romantic relationships, altering dynamics and challenging the characters' identities and connections. In *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, gender expectations and roles exert a profound influence on the protagonists, Roy and Celestial. Roy's societal expectation to be the provider and protector clashes with the modern reality of Celestial's independence and ambition. This dynamic is encapsulated when Roy reflects on his role as a man: “It was a heavy burden being a man, having to think and act like a man, having to hold your family and your job together when the law was always on the other side” (Jones 78).

Pitts and Rojas (2021) have highlighted that "An American Marriage" provides a compelling examination of how conventional ideas about marriage and gender roles can cause intimate relationships to deteriorate. They point out that the novel’s depiction of the protagonists' struggles to balance their personal aspirations with societal pressures presents a significant viewpoint on the complexities of contemporary relationships.

Caroline Y. Erue states that “Homer’s *The Odyssey* profoundly shaped Jones’ *An American Marriage*. At first, Roy appreciated Celestial's self-reliance and independence. However, after being incarcerated, he longed for her to adopt a more conventional role, similar to Odysseus’s expectation of Penelope’s loyalty”

(Erue 118). Jones draws a parallel between Roy and Odysseus, both confronting "a monumental challenge" and desiring "a tidy home and a loyal spouse awaiting his return" (Bates, n.p.). Yet, times have shifted, and Celestial is far from a modern-day Penelope. These characters illustrate the transformation of gender expectations. Celestial, embodying a contemporary woman, refuses to merely wait for Roy, despite her own struggles. Although not facing Roy's exact situation, she endures immense emotional stress and cannot continue in this manner. The ambiguity surrounding the duration of Roy's imprisonment or his potential release is a constant concern. Gloria counsels her, "You always pursue what you desire… brilliant yet rash and slightly self-centered" and adds, "But more women should be self-centered" to avoid being crushed by society (Jones 211). Celestial, having endured the strain of a marriage without genuinely being a wife, ultimately opts to leave Roy. She does not entirely desert him, continuing to offer financial support and friendship, but she cannot stay married to him. Upon his release, Roy acknowledges that Celestial has made her choice.

Celestial is not the sole woman with heroic qualities who can express her opinions and make decisions. The women in *Silver Sparrow* also embody unapologetic authenticity. This highlights Jones's literary and political examination of gender fluidity. From a young age, Dana is portrayed as a courageous girl who stands firm, advocates for her desires, and boldly confronts Chaurisse and her mother. She relishes the excitement of taking chances. When she discovers that James and Raleigh are hosting a party for Laverne to acknowledge her efforts, Dana speaks out in the salon, defending her own mother by stating, "My mother works hard, but she never had a party or anything close to it. Do you know that?" (Jones, *Silver Sparrow* 253). Despite her father's cautions, Dana seeks out Chaurisse, and eventually, the two girls become friends. They mature into beautiful women with aspirations and ambitions.

Similarly, in *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, gender roles weigh heavily on the characters, particularly Suleima and Naseem. Suleima's struggle with societal expectations is evident when she reflects on her mother's traditional views: "According to her, the only respectable way for a woman to leave her house was with a man" (Wannous 42). This quote underscores the pressure women face to conform to traditional gender roles, limiting their autonomy and agency. In both novels, gender expectations shape the protagonists' experiences and decisions, highlighting the complexities and challenges of navigating societal norms.

In *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, trauma is depicted through the lens of racial injustice and its ripple effects on personal relationships. The characters

grapple with the trauma of wrongful imprisonment, loss, and betrayal. For instance, Roy's wrongful incarceration deeply scars him, as evident in his inner turmoil: In prison, you are always accompanied by your own memories. People aren't wrong when they say it's like being in a room with the worst person you can imagine, except that person is you (Jones 92).

Similarly, Celestial struggles with the trauma of having her life and dreams upended by Roy's imprisonment: "I had lost years of my life, had given up on the prospect of having children, a family. I would always be marked by this thing, like a brand, a tattoo" (Jones 302). Pitofsky and Rocheleau (2020) investigated how the novel addresses the influence of race and gender on relationships. They observe that the novel provides a compelling analysis of how cultural norms and expectations can create tensions in intimate relationships (Pitofsky and Rocheleau 2020).

In *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, trauma is explored in the context of war and its psychological aftermath. Characters grapple with the trauma of living in a conflict-ridden society, haunted by memories of violence and loss. For instance, Suleima carries the trauma of her brother's disappearance: "Ever since her brother disappeared, Suleima had avoided hearing the news or any talk of the dead or missing. She had even stopped reading newspapers and had deleted all the news apps from her phone" (Wannous 15). Additionally, Naseem's trauma manifests in her fear of intimacy and her struggle to confront her past: "She knew nothing about herself. About Naseem, the frightened one. The one who lived her life in fear" (Wannous 22).

In both novels, trauma emerges from different sources but leaves lasting scars on the characters, shaping their identities and relationships. While *An American Marriage* focuses on the personal ramifications of racial injustice, *The Frightened Ones* delves into the collective trauma of living in a war-torn society.

In *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, the characters become voices for societal reform through their lived experiences and relationships. The central figure, Celestial, grapples with themes of racial inequality and flaws in the legal system when her spouse, Roy, is unjustly incarcerated. Celestial's actions to bring attention to Roy's wrongful imprisonment shed light on larger systemic challenges impacting African American communities. She considers the repercussions of imprisonment, noting, "Prison takes away your options the way you could lose the right to vote and, depending on the state, your right to be called a husband or father" (Jones 25). This quote exemplifies how the novel's characters encounter barriers embedded in societal frameworks that uphold injustice.

Horstkotte explores how *An American Marriage* and other modern novels

disrupt conventional narrative structures in depicting intimate relationships. Horstkotte contends that the novel's employment of diverse perspectives and non-linear narrative techniques signifies a trend in contemporary literature towards a more empathetic and inclusive storytelling approach (Horstkotte 2021).

Similarly, in *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous, characters navigate the complexities of advocating for social change amidst personal trauma. The protagonist, Suleima, confronts the oppressive regime in Syria and its impact on mental health. Suleima's struggles with anxiety and trauma are intertwined with her efforts to challenge political oppression. Wannous portrays the obstacles faced by individuals living under authoritarian rule, depicting the internal and external conflicts they encounter. For example, Suleima reflects on the pervasive fear in Syrian society, stating, "We Syrians are experts in the art of fear. We've become accustomed to hearing stories about it, about how it grows, multiplies, and spreads like the plague" (Wannous 34). This quote illustrates how the characters in the novel grapple with sources of trauma originating from political repression and social upheaval.

Literature cannot align itself with the tumult of our current experiences, nor can it revel in the chaos we are living through. Though it serves as a parallel narrative in our nations, it must distance itself from mere documentation, journals, straightforward language, and the overwhelming immediacy of our lived experiences. Literature must transcend this directness, yet this does not imply it should be completely severed from reality, Wannous asserts in an interview with Romman Magazine regarding her novel (2017):

> Indeed, I view literature as a genuine history of our cities, societies, and oppressive systems that have ravaged us, even to the extent of language, logic, and imagination. What about if we are discussing the Arabic language here! A rich language overflowing with emotions, beauty, cruelty, joy, and sorrow. Its vocabulary is flexible, making it easy to precisely express a specific state or moment. A language that does not condense a smile, for example, into a single word, nor tears, nor sadness, nor rain, nor joy, nor laughter. There are nuances in its vocabulary that lead you from the act of preparing to something, to the act of doing it, to immersing yourself in it to its fullest extent. A language with a beginning and an end. How can all this richness be considered superfluous? Language is life. If we examine the course of Arabic novels, especially in contemporary Lebanese and Egyptian novels, we find a remarkable evolution in the invention of new verbs that blend colloquial and formal language,

succinctness in expression, and skill in enabling the reader to precisely grasp what they want him to touch, see, or feel.

In both novels, characters confront various sources of trauma, including systemic injustice, political oppression, and personal struggles. Their efforts to advocate for social change are hindered by the pervasive obstacles embedded within their respective societies. Through their experiences and interactions, these characters shed light on the interconnectedness of individual trauma and broader social issues, highlighting the complexities of effecting meaningful change in their respective contexts.

The scope of this research paper likely centers on analyzing how *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones* employ intersectional feminism to explore the influence of external sociopolitical forces—such as racial injustice and war—on intimate relationships and personal identity. By comparing two distinct cultural settings, the paper aims to reveal how gender, race, and socio-political conditions intersect to shape the characters' experiences. However, the research may be limited by the complexity of fully capturing the cultural nuances of both American and Syrian contexts, which could result in a more generalized application of intersectional feminist theory. Furthermore, the analysis might not delve deeply into other intersecting identities, such as class or sexuality, potentially narrowing its exploration of the multidimensional effects of oppression.

Conclusion

The examination of *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones and *The Frightened Ones* by Dima Wannous within the framework of intersectional feminism illuminates the intricate web of social dynamics that shape the lives of their characters. Through the lens of intersectionality, this paper has explored how race, gender, and socio-political contexts intersect to influence the identities, experiences, and relationships depicted in both novels.

In *An American Marriage*, the portrayal of Celestial and Roy's marriage against the backdrop of racial injustice in the American criminal justice system underscores the pervasive effects of systemic discrimination on personal relationships. The novel invites readers to witness the complexities of navigating love, loyalty, and resilience amidst societal injustices. Similarly, *The Frightened Ones* delves into the psychological and relational complexities faced by the unnamed narrator and Nasim in war-torn Syria, shedding light on the intersectional dimensions of trauma, gender expectations, and societal upheaval.

Through our analysis, we have observed how the characters in both novels grapple with the intersectionality of their identities, negotiating the interplay between race, gender, and socio-political contexts. Additionally, we have explored how external societal pressures, such as racial discrimination and civil war, impact the dynamics of romantic relationships, often exacerbating existing tensions and inequalities.

Furthermore, our inquiry into the depiction of gender expectations and roles in both novels has revealed the ways in which female characters resist or conform to traditional norms within their respective societies. This exploration highlights the complexities of gender dynamics and the agency exercised by individuals in challenging or perpetuating gendered norms.

Moreover, the examination of trauma in *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones* has shed light on the different sources and manifestations of trauma experienced by the characters, underscoring the multifaceted nature of their lived experiences.

Finally, we have considered the role of the characters in advocating for social change and the obstacles they face in their efforts. Through their journeys, we witness the resilience and determination of individuals to confront injustice and navigate the complexities of their social realities.

In conclusion, *An American Marriage* and *The Frightened Ones* serve as powerful testaments to the intersecting forces of race, gender, and socio-political contexts in shaping human experiences. Through the lens of intersectional feminism, we gain deeper insights into the complexities of personal relationships, societal injustices, and the pursuit of social change. These novels compel us to reckon with the intertwined nature of privilege and oppression, urging us to confront and dismantle systems of inequality in pursuit of a more just and equitable world.

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Differentiation of Self of Lear and His Daughters in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

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Abstract William Shakespeare vividly portrays the relationship between Lear and his daughters in the tragedy, *King Lear*. In the play, Lear incessantly pursues love, authority, and solace. His relationship with his three daughters, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan, is dysfunctional. The research on the family relationship in *King Lear* generally relies on traditional feminist and psychological methodologies. However, this study takes a different approach by examining the father-daughter relationship between Lear and his daughters through the Bowen Family Systems Theory perspective. This article examines the father-daughter relationships in the tragedy by using the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory. According to Bowen's scale of differentiation of self, the levels of differentiation of self of Lear, Goneril, and Regan range from 0 to 25, whereas Cordelia's level of differentiation of self falls between 25 and 50. The findings also suggest that Lear's connection with his daughters is abnormal due to their low levels of differentiation of self. This interdisciplinary study offers a novel way of character analysis in literary works. Additionally, it introduces a fresh perspective to studying father-daughter

relationships and various family relationships in drama and other literary genres.

Keywords William Shakespeare; *King Lear*; Father-Daughter Relationship; Bowen Family Systems Theory; Differentiation of Self

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Introduction

This article examines the level of self-differentiation exhibited by Lear and his daughters in William Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, and its influences on their father-daughter relationship. The level of self-differentiation exhibited by Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan is analyzed using Bowen Family Systems Theory to get insight into the problematic father-daughter relationship and its underlying causes.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), a well-known English Renaissance playwright and poet, continues to captivate the public with his family romances. Scholars have explored love relationships and master-servant dynamics in Shakespeare's plays. For example, Arbbaayah Ali Termizi (2015) applied Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of the grotesque to argue that love relationships in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Taming of the Shrew* are characterized by power struggles and the control of "carnal" desires (192). Similarly, Florence Toh Haw

Ching and Arbaayah Ali Termizi utilized Royce's concepts of loyalty to analyze master-servant relationships in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, highlighting the importance of truth-telling and the sacrifice of "self-gratification" (354).

Furthermore, researchers have examined father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare's dramas. Bilal Tawfiq Hamamra (2020) drew connections between the father-daughter relationships in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* and the historical context, suggesting that early modern Great Britain's patriarchal rule fueled daughters' rebellion against "patriarchal authority" (26). Magdalena Cieślak (2017) analyzed the relationship between Prospero and Miranda in *The Tempest* as a representation of "parental authority" and filial duty (161). Lagretta Tallent Lenker (2001) employed New Historicism to examine the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare and Shaw's dramas within existing social power structures. Öz Öktem (2020) discussed the father-daughter dynamic in *The Tempest* from a social history perspective. Elizabeth Mazzola (2019) drew on biopolitics and feminist readings to explore how female characters like Goneril, Gertrude, and Juliet challenge societal expectations. Previous research on family relationships in Shakespearean studies has predominantly employed social, linguistic, psychological, and ontological methodologies.

Shakespeare's *King Lear* is widely regarded as a masterpiece in literature, and it is a tragedy engaged in emotional bonding between a father and a daughter. *King Lear* is considered Shakespeare's most outstanding accomplishment (Booth I; Lott ix; Jones 159). The play portrays the "emotional bonding" of the father-daughter bond between Lear and his three daughters (Kakkonen and Penjak 26). Lear harbors the strongest affection for his youngest daughter, Cordelia. However, when Cordelia refuses to express her love for him, Lear severs their relationship, deprives her of her rightful inheritance and power, and marries her to France. The relationship between Lear and his other daughters, Goneril and Regan, is even more tumultuous. Despite their exaggerated love for Lear, they treat their father with callousness and cruelty. Lear, in turn, curses them with harsh words, is banished into the wilderness on a stormy night, and descends into madness. The father-daughter relationship depicted in this tragedy is deeply impressive.

While scholars have extensively explored the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, most have relied on traditional feminist and psychological research methods. Interestingly, Deng Jianbo, Arbaayah Ali Termizi, and Manimangai Mani (2023) employ Bowen Family Systems Theory to examine the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, arguing that the main reasons for the dysfunctional father-daughter relationship in the tragedy are "the

levels of the differentiations of the self of Lear, Goneril, Cordelia and Regan, the projection of Lear's anxieties or unresolved conflicts onto his daughters and the chronic anxiety brought about by the societal regression" (185). However, the authors did not deeply analyze the levels of differentiation of self between Lear and his daughters and their connection with the father-daughter dynamic. This tragedy lends itself well to exploring the father-daughter relationship through the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory, as specific traits of Lear and his daughters align with the characteristics described in Bowen's scale. Moreover, their level of self-differentiation directly correlates with the quality of their father-daughter relationship. Consequently, this article primarily utilizes the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory to evaluate the levels of differentiation of self of Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in the tragedy. In addition to analyzing their levels of self-differentiation, the article aims to investigate the influence of their self-differentiation levels on the father-daughter relationship.

Literature Review

Research on *King Lear* in recent thirty years has primarily focused on sibling differences, the concept of "nothing," nature, and love. For instance, Leonard Barkan (2022) argues that Goneril appears to have priority, but Lear's love test reveals that the absolute priority lies with his youngest daughter, Cordelia. The significance of the youngest daughter's superiority lies in her unique "individual character," contrasting the eldest daughter's external privileges (Barkan 13). Paul S. Fiddes (2022) views Lear's journey as a progression towards the idea of "nothing," which he initially invokes when judging Cordelia (122). Marie Addyman (2021) highlights the failure of Lear's human relationships in the play, exposing the king-father and others to the "'unnatural' in humans and the indifference of non-human nature" (79). Mark J. Blechner (1988) stresses, "It is important that Lear is old and that his love is directed toward his daughter" (323).

While research on the family relationship in *King Lear* has gained attention, the father-daughter relationship between Lear, Goneril, and Regan has been overlooked. Peter G. Platt, for example, emphasizes Lear's inability to express and acknowledge his love for his children as a crucial factor in the plot involving Lear and Gloucester. Lear and Gloucester mistakenly attribute love to their children, who, like the problematic examples in Montaigne's work, plot against them. The love that should have been directed towards the faithful children, Cordelia and Edgar, respectively, is preserved until it is nearly too late. Unlike Lord Montluc, Lear has the opportunity to apologize, express his love, and acknowledge Cordelia, even

though she dies shortly after "their reconciliation" (Platt 119). Bilal Hamamra and Michael Uebel argue that *King Lear* portrays the family as a source of emotional intensity and pain, leading to household instability evident in the father's disavowal of his allegedly "disobedient offspring" (Hamamra and Uebel 380). Although *King Lear* emphasizes that family bonds are a matter of language rather than bloodline, the anger that sparks Lear and Gloucester's denial speech foreshadows the emotional intensity of their relationships. Furthermore, the anguish experienced by the fathers is a result of losing their offspring, leading to the "dissolution of family bonds" (Hamamra and Uebel 380). The authors primarily discuss the father-son relationship between Gloucester and his sons, Edmund and Edgar, and the father-daughter relationship between Lear and Cordelia, neglecting Lear's relationship with his two eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan.

Though some researchers have analyzed the characters in Shakespeare's *King Lear* from the standpoint of character analysis and feminism, no research applies the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory to the character study in the play. Most researchers hold a positive view of Cordelia. For example, Kent R. Lehnhof (2018) argues that Cordelia is often "cast in the role of Christ" (107). Sahabuddin Sk (2018) believes that Cordelia symbolizes "truth, serenity, love, obedience, and forgiveness," standing as the only morally upright character in the play (145-46). However, Lear, Goneril, and Regan are generally seen as negative figures. Mark J. Blechner describes Lear as "old, sly, and a bit foolish" (313). Dipak Kumar Sarkar (2020) perceives Goneril as "malevolent, malicious, maniacal, malignant and beastly," which Lear fails to recognize or understand (26).

Scholars have predominantly examined the female roles in *King Lear* through a traditional feminist lens. Elizabeth Mazzola, for instance, uses biopolitics and feminist readings of Shakespeare to view the deaths of female characters like Goneril as acts of "agency, rebuke, and subtraction" (110). However, in *King Lear*, the author only mentions one female character, Goneril, neglecting the others.

Moreover, most researchers have approached the study of Shakespeare's *King Lear* from a traditional psychological standpoint. Roy Schafer (2010), drawing from Freud and Klein, argues that Lear's punishment represents a merging of perceived internal contradictions with "a dominant version of the narcissist's self" (1506). In *Cordelia, Lear, and Forgiveness*, Schafer (2005) interprets Cordelia's forgiveness of Lear from a psychoanalytic perspective (389). Nicolas Brémaud (2015) asserts that *King Lear* is the tragedy of a father, a "beautiful, rich, and complex" character that reflects "the beginning of a psychosis" (403). In *'Poor, bare fork'd animal': The Representation of Dementia in King Lear*, Tess Maginess and Hannah Zeilig (2018)

argue that Shakespeare's play engages with advanced ideas on "dementia" and challenges existing constructs surrounding the condition (53). Vin Nardizzi (2020) connects the subplot involving Gloucester in *King Lear* with the rich history of Oedipus, suggesting that "Oedipus" serves as a source for the suffering Gloucester endures (347). Kelly Lehtonen (2019) asserts that the representation of traditional negative emotions in *King Lear* heralds "the emergence of modern cognitive theories of emotion," which involve intelligent and strategic emotions (259).

Although a few scholars have examined the father-daughter connection in Shakespeare's plays using a psychological lens, their methodologies have adhered to conventional psychological research methodologies. Psychological literary criticism generally deals with complex and "imaginative texts," but the psychological methods used in the early 20th century are insufficient to tackle the complicated challenges that arise in the 21st century (Knapp, *Family Systems Psychotherapy, Literary Character, and Literature: An Introduction* 225). Family systems therapy, a popular "therapeutic models in the 'real world'", has not been extensively studied or discussed by scholars in literary criticism (Bump, 1991; Cohen, 1991; Knapp, 1996, 1997).

Despite these discussions on family relationships in *King Lear*, the exploration of the father-daughter relationship in the play has been limited to Lear and his youngest daughter, Cordelia. Bowen's scale has not been applied to investigate the father-daughter relationship in *King Lear*. Besides, Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear* have been investigated through character study; no scholar has yet used Bowen's scale to analyze the characters in the tragedy. Hence, a new way of analyzing the relationship between the father and daughters in *King Lear* is greatly needed. Applying Bowen's scale to the analysis of the selected characters in *King Lear* might provide new paradigms for studying characters in drama and other literature. Since Bowen Theory has brought a new way of studying literary works, this research can provide a reference for studying the father-daughter relationship and other family relationships reflected in literary genres like drama.

Concept and Methods

Bowen Family Systems Theory, also called Bowen Theory, was developed by the psychiatrist Murray Bowen (1913-1990). It is an extraordinary "new theory of human behaviour," which has the potential to replace much of Freud's theory and applies to "human family and nonfamily groups, including large organizations and society" (Gilbert vii). Unlike the psychoanalytic and behavioral schools, Bowen Theory takes a different system view. Bowen believes that the family is an

emotional unit and a web of interlocking relationships, and the emotional disruption of a family member will affect their relational system. An integral concept in Bowen Theory is chronic anxiety, which serves as the underlying cause of family dysfunction. Chronic anxiety is a universal phenomenon and a biological response shared by all life forms. It is triggered when an "organism" perceives real or imagined danger (Brown 94-103). The theory identifies eight forces contributing to chronic anxiety and simultaneously shaping family dynamics: Differentiation of Self, Emotional Triangle, Nuclear Family Emotional System, Family Projection Process, Emotional Cutoff, Multigenerational Transmission Process, Sibling Position, and Societal Regression.

Differentiation of self refers to the capacity to maintain one's individuality while remaining connected to others or the ability to be separate while maintaining commitment (Titelman 146). Bowen has categorized the scale of differentiation (basic differentiation) into four ranges (0-25, 25-50, 50-75, 75-100) and has outlined specific characteristics associated with individuals in each range. Furthermore, he has acknowledged variations within each range, accounting for whether individuals fall on "the high or the low end of a particular range" (Kerr and Bowen 98).

This article applies Bowen Theory to examine the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *King Lear* by analyzing the level of self-differentiation exhibited by Lear and his daughters. The analysis primarily focuses on Bowen's concept of differentiation of self and employs it as a tool for literary criticism in interpreting the tragedy. Differentiation of self serves as the cornerstone of Bowen Theory, and for the purpose of this paper, the concept will be explored within the selected play due to the prominent portrayal of the father-daughter relationship. Bowen's scale of differentiation of self represents his unique contribution to understanding fundamental human characteristics. It enables an analysis of the extent to which individuals can differentiate their emotions from rational thought. Bowen's scale divides the scale of self-differentiation into the profile of low levels of differentiation (0–50), the profile of midrange differentiation (50–75), the profile of high levels of differentiation (75–100) (Goldenberg et al. 197; Roberto 12). Bowen has defined the characteristic features of individuals within each range. Classifying the self-differentiation levels for the selected characters provides a novel perspective on comprehending the portrayal of the father-daughter relationship in the chosen drama.

The study employs Shakespeare's *King Lear* as the principal reference. Reviews from scholars and critics serve as valuable sources for gaining insight into the current research trends around the selected play. To analyze the portrayal

of father-daughter relationships in literary works, the assessments made by critics are also considered. In King Lear's case, examining Family Systems Theory allows for a deeper understanding of the father-daughter connections depicted in the play. The examples are taken from the chosen drama and are used to examine the father-daughter relationship in the tragedy, employing the concept of differentiation of self in Bowen Theory. The process involves thoroughly analyzing the chosen text and applying Bowen's scale to assess the degree of self-differentiation exhibited by Lear, Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan in *King Lear*. A critique is developed by engaging in persistent close reading that employs creative and critical thinking skills to arrive at a well-founded interpretation of the father-daughter connection in the tragedy.

Even though Lear and his daughters live in their own private space, they cannot communicate well with one another. Lear and his daughters can be perceived as emotionally, physically, and socially handicapped, although Lear is the only family member who is physically disabled. The level of self-differentiation in Lear and his daughters is vital to their relationship. This aligns with Robert M. Gilbert's assertion that individuals with a higher level of differentiation are more likely to adhere to their principles, leading to "smoother relationships" (188). To elucidate this further, this study assesses the levels of differentiation of self of Lear, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia.

The Level of Differentiation of Self of Lear

Lear is the most problematic member of his family's emotional system, struggling with mental and emotional dysfunctions. Lear is an imprudent monarch, and the tragedy stems from the partitioning of his kingdom. Lear's final official action before retirement was transforming his throne into an auction block. The arrogant, stubborn, and boastful Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters based on their expressions of love for him. According to Fauzi (2019), Lear, who should possess profound insight as a result of "a lifetime of mistakes," is instead simply characterized by foolishness (90). Ibrahim (2012) believes that Lear's most "foolish yet devastating decision" is his insistence on keeping the title of King and its "prerogative rights" while relinquishing the actual responsibilities of reigning (17). Lear's decision to allocate territory and authority to his daughters demonstrates his lack of intelligence.

Lear's imprudence is further demonstrated by his vulnerability to Goneril and Regan's flattery, inability to discern Cordelia's sincere motives, and dismissal of Kent's counsel. Goneril and Regan, while carrying out the obsequious parts to which they were placed, offer elaborate displays of affection that mask their

true intentions and make them seem like submissive extensions of Lear's self. Their duplicity facilitates Lear's "fantasies of self-sovereignty" (Lehnhof 112). Conversely, Cordelia declines to express her affection and submission, causing Lear to become furious. Lear gives his whole estate to Goneril and Regan, who hate him. Lear "gives nothing to Cordelia," even though she genuinely harbors affection for him (Fauzi 91). Kent, a reliable minister, acknowledges Cordelia's genuineness and boldly proclaims, "Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least" (1.1.152). Kent comprehends that splitting land and power symbolizes King Lear's loss of authority, foreshadowing tragedy. Nevertheless, Lear neglects to recognize Kent's unwavering allegiance and sagacity. The love trial reveals Lear's vulnerability to manipulation and his "irrational choices" (Sarkar 29).

These irrational actions emphasize Lear's folly in his role as a monarch. According to Kerr and Bowen, individuals within the range of 0-25 experience a sensory environment, with those at the lower end exhibiting an extreme sensitivity to their surroundings that can result in a loss of sensation, rendering them "numb" (98). Lear's impairment exacerbates his difficulty distinguishing between thoughts and feelings, thus classifying him in the 0-25 range on Bowen's scale.

In addition, Lear has a profound desire for affection from his daughters, particularly Cordelia. This is consistent with Bowen's classification of individuals with differentiation levels ranging from 0 to 25, whose most of life's energy is directed towards pursuing love, either by loving others or by seeking to be loved. Additionally, a significant amount of energy is used in response to "the reactiveness to having failed to get love" (Kerr and Bowen 98). The love contest initiated by Lear is a manifestation of his deep desire for unwavering love and complete submission from his daughters. Nevertheless, his three daughters disillusion him with their misconduct. Goneril and Regan utilize insincere compliments, while Cordelia exhibits "high pride" (Ibrahim 18). Lear conveys his affection and hopes for his unwed daughter Cordelia when he confides in Kent: "I loved her most, and thought to set my rest/ On her kind nursery" (1.1.123-24). Lear's exceedingly elevated "expectations of his daughter" and his emotions towards her must be why he decided to sever the fundamental bond of fatherhood (Pulido 12). Furthermore, Lear's anguish stems from "his disowning of Cordelia," exposing his reliance on the daughters and their emotional connection (Hamamra and Uebel 381). Lear's emotional attachment to his daughters suggests his low level of self-differentiation.

Furthermore, Kerr and Bowen argue that persons between the range of 0 and 25 "experience a high level of chronic anxiety, making it challenging for them to find situations in which they can be truly comfortable" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Lear

harbors the strongest affection for Cordelia and longs for her love. Nevertheless, when Cordelia is on the verge of transitioning from being a daughter to being a wife, Lear has overwhelming anxiety and fear, compelling him to take steps to interfere with her marriage. This conduct, motivated by anxiety, reaches its peak with the love test. Schafer (2010) notes that Lear's furious response is derived from profound and unacknowledged anxiety, as evidenced by his previous portrayal of his aging self's "crawl toward death" (1. 1. 41). Anxiety may bring about manifestations of "destructive narcissism" (Schafer, *Curse and Consequence* 1510-1511). Goneril astutely notices Lear's heightened state of anxiety, remarking on the effects of his advanced age and his unwise decision to disown Cordelia.

> You see how full of changes his age is.
> The observation we have made of it hath been little.
> He always loved our sister most, and with what poor
> judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly (1.1.288-291).

Goneril also comments, "the best and soundest of his time hath been but rash" (1.1.294-95). Lear has been plagued by anxiety for a long time in his own home, and his sudden outburst is just the result of the cumulative effects of chronic anxiety. Lear's lack of wisdom, intense desire for affection from his daughters, and high level of anxiety suggest that his level of self-differentiation is in the 0-25 range.

The Level of Differentiation of Self of Goneril and Regan

Goneril and Regan's level of self-differentiation is also within the range of 0-25. Three primary reasons support this classification. Firstly, individuals at a basic level of 25 or below are deeply immersed in their emotions and "are mostly unaware of an alternative" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Stephen Reid suggests that Goneril represses "her original love of her father" and harbors an intense hatred for her mother, Regan, and Lear (240). In line with Bowen Theory, individuals between 0 and 25 tend to be "complete emotional appendages of the relationship systems to which they are attached" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Goneril and Regan demonstrate heightened sensitivity to Lear's demands and recognize their father's appreciation for sweet words of affection. Consequently, they craft flattering statements to please him. Goneril claims to love her father more than "eyesight, space, and liberty" (1.1.56), attributing her love as being "no less than life; with grace, health, beauty, honour" (1.1.58). Similarly, Regan boasts about her willingness to sacrifice all happiness for her father's love. However, shortly after Lear moves into Goneril's house, she

mistreats him, instructing Osward to ignore him and claiming illness: “When he returns from hunting/ I will not speak with him. Say I am sick” (1.3. 7-8). On the other hand, Regan experiences Goneril’s jealousy and harbors her anger toward her father for favoring her mother and Cordelia. Additionally, Regan expresses her “murderous wishes” toward her mother and Cordelia (Reid 240).

The second reason for categorizing Goneril and Regan within the lower range of self-differentiation is their high level of chronic anxiety, which hinders their functioning within the family system. According to Bowen, individuals in the 0-25 range exhibit “a high level of chronic anxiety” (Kerr and Bowen 98). Goneril and Regan’s chronic anxiety is evident in their words and actions toward Lear. First, Goneril and Regan engage in the love test, expressing exaggerated and unrealistic declarations of love to Lear to gain power and authority, and their deceptive behavior reflects their anxiety about securing their positions and manipulating Lear. Second, Goneril complains that Lear and his men are violent and unruly, suggesting a lack of patience with Lear’s behavior. This impatience indicates their anxiety about handling Lear’s arbitrary and picky disposition. Goneril warns her father about his behavior and accuses his knights of changing her court into “a riotous inn” (1.4. 222), “a tavern or a brothel” (1.4.223) rather than “a graced palace” (1.4. 224). The conduct of Lear and his followers offers Goneril a compelling reason to evaluate herself. Goneril’s fundamental issue is “a certain anxiety” that she will be unable to overcome her lifelong attitude of being dominated by her “wilful, blind, and tyrannical” father (Reid 229). Third, Goneril and Regan’s disrespectful treatment of Lear indicates their disrespect toward his authority and growing impatience with his actions. Their abuse of Lear reflects their anxiety about maintaining control and power in the face of his aging and declining mental state. Lastly, Goneril and Regan worry about managing a father they consider irrational and unpredictable. Goneril and Regan attribute Lear’s actions to “infirmity of his age” and question his self-awareness, reflecting their anxiety about Lear’s mental stability and decision-making capabilities (Sarkar 28-29). Goneril perceives her rule as a natural consequence, challenging the notion that younger generations are inherently superior. She begs her father to understand her intentions correctly, emphasizing his old age and stating that he should exercise wisdom: “As you are old and reverend, should be wise” (1.4.218). Overall, Goneril and Regan’s chronic anxiety for Lear is evident in their impatience, deceptive behavior, disrespectful behavior, and questioning of Lear’s state of mind. Their actions and words convey their fears and insecurities in maintaining power and authority in the face of Lear’s aging and changing behavior.

The third reason for placing Goneril and Regan in the lower self-differentiation range is their extreme selfishness, as they resort to attacking their father and others to consolidate their power. Bowen states that individuals with a self at the 0-25 level have poorly developed senses of self, often limited to "narcissistic pronouncements" such as "I want, I hurt, I want my rights" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Under enough stress, "very poorly differentiated people" may "murderously strike out at others," especially those they depend on the most (Kerr and Bowen 98). Both Goneril and Regan compete against each other "for the sake of their own kingdom," engaging in displays of power, stating "psywars," and issuing threats (Fauzi 9). After gaining control of their father's land and power, they suppress Lear. Overthrowing "the hierarchical structure," they launch attacks against their father and other men in positions of power, determined to dominate and "reduce them to inferiors" (Dreher 106). Regan cruelly orders Kent to remain in the stocks "till night" and throughout the night (2.2.137). When they capture Gloucester, Goneril sadistically suggests plucking out his eyes. Regan "remains behind to accomplish this heartless deed" (Dreher 106).

In summary, Goneril and Regan are deeply immersed in a world of affection. They suppress their feelings and harbor profound hatred and hostility toward their father and Cordelia. Their anxiety levels are high, and they exhibit extreme selfishness by attacking one another, their father, and others. They disrupt the traditional notion of daughters' obedience, with Goneril boldly expressing her unwillingness to endure her father's wrongdoing: "By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour/ He flashes into one gross crime or other/ That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it" (1.3.3-5). Despite Shakespeare's potentially exaggerated portrayal of Goneril and Regan, it effectively highlights their low level of self-differentiation.

The Level of Differentiation of Self of Cordelia

Cordelia possesses a slightly higher degree of self-differentiation than Lear, Goneril, and Regan. Kerr and Bowen (1988) note that individuals in the range of 25-50 have "poorly defined selves but a budding capacity to differentiate" (99). Cordelia exhibits a combination of slight silliness, moderate reason, and chronic anxiety. Cordelia's level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25-50.

First and foremost, Cordelia exhibits a certain degree of anxiety. When Lear tests the love of her daughters for the first time, Goneril and Regan boast about their love for Lear, while Cordelia chooses to remain silent, stating, "What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent" (1.1.62). Cordelia is aware that her words are not as flattering as those of her sisters, causing her to feel nervous. She hopes that

her father will perceive the truth behind her silence and comments aside, "I am sure my love's/ More ponderous than my tongue" (1.1.77-78). These expressions reflect Cordelia's transient "emotional state of anxiety" (Kour 112). Her love for her father must have been mixed with grief and anxiety (Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*: *Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* 277). Cordelia fears her father will be displeased by her straightforward words, but she insists on remaining silent.

Additionally, Cordelia exhibits a certain degree of foolishness. She should have better understood the temperament and personalities of her father and two sisters. Cordelia understands that openly expressing her true thoughts to her father would make him unhappy and possibly even angry. However, she chooses to speak the truth, putting him in an awkward position. Cordelia realizes that once her sisters acquire land and power, they will mistreat their father and leave him homeless. Furthermore, Cordelia informs her father that she will give half her love to her future husband, which is unwise. Greenfield (1977) notes that due to her "poor judgment or weak spirit," Cordelia is satisfied with presenting herself to her father as a vague idea of a woman whose virtue lies in the fact that she is merely half her father's daughter and half her husband's wife (48). At that moment, Cordelia has no husband, so the idea of reserving half of her love does not apply. Cordelia fails to distinguish between familial love and romantic love. Familial love pertains to natural or instinctive affection, such as the love between parents and children (Yarber et al. 228). Romantic love, on the other hand, involves "intense attraction" within an "erotic context," with the expectation of lasting for an extended period (Jankowiak and Fischer 150). While both types of love coexist, they are distinct forms of love. However, Cordelia fails to comprehend this distinction, believing that the more she loves her father, the less love she can give her husband. This demonstrates that Cordelia's level of self-differentiation is not high.

Based on Bowen's scale of self-differentiation, Cordelia falls within the 25-50 range. Apart from being able to differentiate her thoughts and feelings moderately, Cordelia is not wholly driven by the lower range of emotions (0-25) like Lear. Cordelia's emotional nature aligns with the traits described in Bowen Theory, where individuals in the 25-50 scale segment reside in "a feeling-dominated world" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). After discovering that her father has been expelled from the house by her sisters and left to wander in the wilderness, Cordelia decides to go back to England to seek justice for him. She believes her sisters will be captured once her commanding army arrives in England. However, Cordelia fails to consider the factors essential for victory in war, such as justice, combat purpose, strategic and tactical insight, exceptional military leadership,

excellent troops, and noble combat convictions. Cordelia remains oblivious to her position as the Queen of France, and her army is not Lear's royal guard but the French army. Consequently, her expedition turns into a French invasion of British territory, arousing anger among British citizens. As Albany states,

> Where I could not be honest,
> I never yet was valiant. For this business,
> It touches us as France invades our land,
> Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear,
> Most just and heavy causes make oppose (5.1.24-28).

Cordelia's emotional attachment has transformed a family's internal conflict into aggression against her homeland, resulting in a disastrous failure.

While Cordelia's actions are motivated by her feelings for her father, she sometimes demonstrates rationality and a certain level of self-awareness. Cordelia can differentiate herself to some extent and exhibits characteristics of individuals in the 25-50 segment of Bowen's scale, who possess a reduced "fusion of selfs" and an "increasing capacity to differentiate a self" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). In the love test, Cordelia, whom Lear most loved, could have said sweet words that her father liked and inherited the most property. However, Cordelia insists that her silent love is worth more than flattery. Lear was furious and severed the father-daughter relationship with her. Nevertheless, with her remarkable "self-awareness," Cordelia knows what she is doing and understands Lear's anger and cruelty (Schafer, *Cordelia, Lear, and Forgiveness* 399). She does not resent her father's contempt for the father-daughter relationship. Cordelia firmly believes in her vision of love. Her silence is a reflection of her ability to differentiate herself. It is clear that Cordelia stays true to herself and does not stray from her principles, regardless of her father's wrath. Her beliefs are ingrained in her character and cannot be changed. This aligns with the pertinent assertions presented in Bowen Theory. Individuals at the higher end of the 25-50 range on the Bowen scale have some understanding of "intellectual principles" (Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships* 188). Cordelia understands her sisters' true nature and recognizes the underlying motives behind their flattery. In Act I, Scene I, as Cordelia prepares to leave, she says to her sisters: "Love well our father. / to your professèd bosoms I commit him" (1.1.270-71). Cordelia does not condemn the hypocrisy of the sisters but attempts to persuade them. This demonstrates Cordelia's level of self-differentiation is between 25 and 50.

According to Bowen's scale, individuals whose levels of differentiation of self

are between 25 and 50 possess a heightened sensitivity towards emotional discord, the perspectives of others, and the need to make "a good impression" (Kerr and Bowen 98). Cordelia's impression is "emphatically one of unity" (Danby 133). Cordelia seems to "reconcile opposites: passion and order, innocence and maturity, defenselessness and strength" (Danby 133). For instance, upon discovering her sisters' mistreatment of Lear, Cordelia strives for justice on her father's behalf, ultimately sacrificing her life for him. These actions reveal Cordelia's kind-hearted and righteous nature and her capacity for self-differentiation to some extent.

Cordelia's blend of foolishness and reason indicates her ability to distinguish between her thoughts and feelings. While Cordelia can be perceived as silly, anxious, and emotional, she is not irrational. Her actions are often guided by reason, even in adversity. Despite her father's rebuke and expulsion, Cordelia maintains her dignity and reason, avoiding sinking into irreparable pain and sorrow. Instead, she expresses her love for her father through her words: "O my dear father, Restoratian hang/ Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss/ Repair those violent harms that my two sisters/ Have in thy reverence made!" (4.6.23-26). These statements and behaviors indicate that Cordelia's level of self-differentiation falls within the range of 25 to 50.

The Father-Daughter Relationship

The degree of self-differentiation that Lear and his daughters exhibit impacts their father-daughter relationship. Lear, Goneril, and Regan demonstrate a lack of self-differentiation and remain emotionally fused inside the system. Lear is depicted as foolish, anxious, and desperately longing for his daughters' affection, with a self-differentiation level ranging from 0 to 25. Goneril and Regan inhabit a psychological domain characterized by chronic anxiety, self-centeredness, and offensiveness, with levels of self-differentiation ranging from 0 to 25. Cordelia exhibits a higher level of self-differentiation compared to her father and sisters. Despite her anxiety, silliness, and emotional tendencies, Cordelia demonstrates a capacity for intellectual principles, indicating a self-differentiation level between 25 and 50. Lear and his daughters have lower levels of self-differentiation. According to Bowen Theory, those with lower levels of self-differentiation are more focused on seeking affection, acceptance, and approval from others. People are more likely to neglect their values due to relational factors influencing their behavior, exacerbating relationship issues. People with high levels of differentiation can control their emotions well, whereas people with low levels of differentiation are more susceptible to emotional influence. Persons with a high level of self-differentiation can consciously select and

successfully utilize their emotional states.

On the other hand, persons with lower levels of self-differentiation have emotional and thought systems that are strongly intertwined, resulting in increased levels of anxiety. According to Gilbert (1992), people with lower levels of self-differentiation tend to feel more anxious, whereas those with "higher levels of differentiation of self" tend to feel less anxious (24). Lear and his daughters experience chronic anxiety and lack a high degree of self-differentiation, which makes them easily influenced by their emotions. Individuals with limited "differentiation of self" are more susceptible to encountering issues and challenges in their interpersonal relationships (Gilbert 188). Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory, the levels of self-differentiation of Lear and his daughters are low. Thus, the father-daughter relationship between them is problematic.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the level of self-differentiation between Lear and his daughters is directly proportional to the quality of their father-daughter relationship. The article does not intend to examine the social, economic, or cultural reasons behind the father-daughter relationship in *King Lear* from a sociological or historical perspective. Instead, this analysis uses Bowen's scale to examine the levels of self-differentiation of the selected characters in the tragedy. Additionally, it investigates the link between their levels of self-differentiation and the father-daughter relationships using Bowen Theory as a compass.

The father-daughter relationship is a prominent issue in *King Lear*, and Bowen Theory offers a novel approach to examining it. The concept of self-differentiation in Bowen Theory provides a more objective and scientific method for evaluating the relationships between the characters. Moreover, Bowen Theory presents a novel methodology for examining familial dynamics, particularly father-daughter relationships in drama and other literary genres.

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The Poetics of Life-Writing Exiles: Negotiating Time, Place and Language in Mahmoud Darwish's "*Tuesday, a Bright Day*" and "*Counterpoint*"

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Abstract In contrast to biographies, as long prose narratives, Darwish harnesses the fragments of the poem and his poetic, lyrical voice to contest the exilic space as a site where elements of place, time and language conflate. While the "high art" concept of the writer in exile—depicting the image of a masculinised, solitary figure that reflects an anachronistic politics and history—is now exhausted, we argue that Darwish's poetics of exile amounts to a conceptual shift into an enacted articulation of self-writing heterotopia in exile. This article explores the interplay between exile and self-writing in Darwish's "*Tuesday, a Bright Day*" and "*Counterpoint*", which came out in a form of self-narrative accounts of the poet himself and of the Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, respectively. This relationship is interwoven throughout the two poms, highlighting not only the ongoing tragedy of the Palestinian experience of exile, but also those with comparable experiences. By extending the concept of exile beyond space and time, Darwish draws parallels between the elements of poetry and self-writing to challenge the prevailing ways of presenting selfhood as an intact individuality within the boundaries of nationhood. Hence, Darwish transcends the limitations of national boundaries through his poetic self-narrative accounts, rendering the exilic experience both universally comprehensible and humanistically experienceable.

Keywords Palestinian poetry; Mahmoud Darwish; Edward Said; exile; self-writing.

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Introduction

> I jumped from the bed of my childhood onto the path of exile. I was six. My entire world turned upside down and childhood froze in place, it didn't go with me. The question is whether it's possible to restore the childhood that was taken by restoring the land that was taken, and that's poetic quest that gives rhythm to the poem itself. Finding the child Mahmoud Darwish who was one is possible only in the poem. Not in life. (Darwish, Memory 32)

In this quote, Darwish poses an intriguing question: what could possibly restore the lost selfhood in a state of a lifetime exile? The response raises even more thought-provoking impasse than the original query since the self and place move in opposing directions; while the place is fixed in childhood memories, the selfhood marches ahead in boundless and nonlinear timeframe. In Darwish's view, the sole resolution for such a state of being comes through language and poetry where the current selfhood can be redeemed and reconstructed. When Darwish talks about poetry as the source of his being, what at stake here is the notion of language since it grants space precisely through its delimitation of the space itself, which resounds Heidegger's endorsement of language as "the house of being" (245). Malpas notes that Darwish's idea of being as existing in language is heavily influenced by Heidegger, who held the view that "place, language, and poetry are tied together" (2). Yet although obviously influenced by Heidegger, as Williams argues, Darwish's putatively "Late" poetry both confirms and challenges Heidegger's idea of none-reconciliation wherein the aesthetics' primacy, not the political, identifies the being of the poet (24). In Said's perspective of "Late Style", Darwish's final stage of poetry has become a space where "the historical and the transcendently aesthetic

combine" (Williams 24). For Said, "Late Style" is a persistently transformational state recapitulating a life's themes while reflecting on questions answered and alluding to others beyond understanding (Rothstein 1). These themes of place, time, and the very quality of language that is invoked here, are directly connected to Darwish's late poetry as exemplified by the two poems under discussion: *Tuesday, a Bright Day* and *Counterpoint* included in the last chapter titled "Exile", of his Diwan, *Almond Blossoms and Beyond*.

There is hardly a moment in Palestinian history that Darwish fails to treat in his poetry that chronicles the Palestinian cause from the Nakba[1] until the time of his death. However, in *Tuesday, a Bright Day* and *Counterpoint*, Darwish presents a poetic self-writing[2] that demonstrates how the narratives of exile are told in ways that simultaneously delineate models of selfhood within the framework of the Palestinian people's protracted uprooting as well as offering a humanistic perspective that cuts beyond nationalistic lines. As Moore-Gilbert observes, the aesthetics of exile in Darwish's poetry is by foremost a collective accounting to rectifying the invisibility of the oppressed against the hegemonic discourses that distort their reality (8). Such an aesthetic move necessitates further investigation in accordance with the development of Darwish's rich poetic experience that is characterised by its permanent transformations and flux. Markedly, Darwish creative aesthetics atones between the seemingly incongruous narratives of universalism and nationalism (Williams 26). It is argued that Darwish projects is dual in nature: concurrently anti-colonial that seeks to establish a self-determined Palestine and universal that transcends identity defined terms (Nassar et al. 3). While Darwish is considered the poet laureate of Palestine, his "work contains a universality born from specific suffering that reaches across the boundaries of language and nation to 'inscribe the national within the universal'" (Mena 111). Such a duality of perspectives becomes a kind of agency that reconstructs the self as globally exiled figure allowing the political and the post-national to interact. It becomes a "reflection of and on the changing self on the changing world […] a construction of, and a response to, this time and this place in the world, by the self (Good 23). This, as Mena argues, "occurs especially through poetry: narrative forms, as context-driven,

1 Nakba (the catastrophe) describes the violent persecution and displacement of Palestinians in 1948. Identifying the Palestinian culture, the term also becomes a foundational symbol of Palestinian exiled identity (Masalha 2012).

2 The authors opt to use of the concept of 'self-writing' and its variants (e.g., self-narrating, narrating the self, self-account) instead of 'autobiography' since the latter, according to Whitlock (2015), carries with it the resides of exclusionary canonical modernist connotations.

reproduce cohesive communities, while poetics, as context-generative, produce ruptures leading to new possibilities" (112). In *I Belong there*, Darwish attests to this fact about his poetic project: "To break the rules, I have learned all the words needed for a trial by blood. /I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: *Home*" (Darwish, *Unfortunately* 7).

In the poems at hand, Darwish's life narratives create a fictional space that resides outside of temporal and geographic bounds, upending the metaphysics of presence in a fixed location. Since, in certain ways, the two poems represent a startling direction in Darwish's late poetry, this article is set out to examine the complex relationship between exile and poetic self-writing. It also examines the outcome of this relationship in terms of how it affects the assertion of the self as a counter-hegemonic narrative to alterity and invisibility. While highlighting the artistic milieu in which the two poems are embodied, the article highlights Darwish's embryonic approach to poetry as a genre of self-writing to produce a reflective account of exile while creating an imagined construct that defies the restrictions of nationalism. To substantiate these claims, the article employs intertextual analysis to examine the poetic dramatisation of self-writing Darwish employs in these two poems in terms of their poetic and aesthetic structure including their semantic and syntactic peculiarities, lexical choices, lyrical voice, imagery, and contemplations.

Exile's Self-writing

Exile has served as a seminal motivator for writers, poets, thinkers, politicians, and others to institute poignant self-written narratives related to a lost homeland. Said believes "exile is one of the saddest fates'; it is 'restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others" (Said, *Exile* 47; 53). Nonetheless, exile is inevitably productive, Said argues. Given the pain and pressures it may cause, exile can also be a stimulating incentive and a desirable option that many writers seek for creativity and inspiration. For Said, exile is liberating since the intellectual as someone who stands as a marginal figure outside the comforts of being-at-home grows to have a dual perspective that prevents them from ever seeing things in isolation because of their marginalisation (59). As stated by Said, exile is also an experience that is always contrasted with another presented in unexpected and original way. This juxtaposition provides a better, possibly even more universal, understanding of how to think (60). The intellectual in exile, Said concludes, tends to see a situation as contingent upon a series of historical choices made by human beings rather than inevitable occurrences, not as natural or God-given. Writing the self in exile, Gilmore argues, is useful to avoid the possibility of stifling the

painful experience of the displaced since it imposes a legalistic interpretation of truth on a larger readership (Gilmore 3). Additionally, exile can significantly impact a wider audience, enabling self-psychoanalysis while disrupting the self-writing pact between author and reader (Grell 223). a significant impression on a broader audience enabling psychoanalysis of the self while breaking the self-writing pact between the author and the reader (Grell 223). Through poetic lenses, Darwish's self-writing enlarges the voice of the exiled self to become that of others; his "autobiographical private self and public poetic self are merged to deliver an uncomplicated message—albeit with a complicated texture and with much prosodic innovation—due to the small creative space in which he is allowed" (Mattawa 79).

Darwish's poetry is eminently linked to exile. However, in the poems at hand, he takes the notion of exile a step further by relating it to a poetic genre of self-writing where place and time undergo a process of destabilisation. While conventional modes of narrating the self (e.g., modernist autobiographies) rely on a set of aesthetics that privilege the writer as an individual who freely moves around the world at will in the service of art, the emergence of different historical contingencies and cultural conventions liberate such an aesthetic practice (Wanner 123). Modernist exile autobiographies, as Whitlock argues, count upon place and separation while an irreducible opposition between home and away is maintained (65). Darwish's aesthetics of self-writing exile, we argue, departs from these conventions by shifting time and space from a set of relations between the individual and specific place to utopian "heterotopias" of multiple sites "simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 223). While Darwish never forsakes his cause, he travels with his homeland in his mind, an imaginative construct born out of necessity. This metaphorical journey of exile is extra-temporal, and existing only through his poetic language as both eternal and changing (Mena 113). As Mena argues, "his [Darwish's] writing is significantly concerned with building a community that is independent of national borders and outside of linear historical progression in order to enact simultaneous anti-colonial and post-national agendas" (114).

The Palestinian Nakba may be considered one of the most representative examples of how self-writing and exile intersect, whether at actual or artistic and creative levels. The Palestinian life writing in exile may be regarded as the longest and richest literary production, spanning from the early years of the first generation of people who experienced the Nakba of 1948 to those born as fourth-generation Palestinians in their parents' adopted homelands. Diverse geographic contexts, temporalities, imaginative scopes, and frames of reference have contributed to the

richness of these literary productions. In addition to Darwish, there are numerous other authors and poets who have used exile, in the Palestinian context, as a subject for a self-written literary and non-literary works such as Edward Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir*; Ghada Karmi's *In search of Fatima: a Palestinian story*; Rema Hammami's *Home and Exile in East Jerusalem*, *Waiting for Godot at Qalandya: Reflections on Queues and Inequality*, Raja Shehadeh's *Diary of an Internal Exile: Three Entries* and Rana Barakat's *The Right to Wait: Exile, Home and Return*. This list is by no means exclusive since as many Palestinians remain dispersed across the world, the self-writing of exile remains an inevitable stance for writers to articulate their selfhood.

Probably, Mahmoud Darwish's (1941–2008) personal and professional life trajectory makes a good example of a none-reconciled poet of exile resounding Said's "Late Style". Williams believes that "a late style would reflect a life of learning, the wisdom that comes from experience, the sadness that comes from wisdom and a mastery of craft that has nothing left to prove" (28). Nonetheless, as Williams argues, Darwish's lateness reflects hard-earned knowledge through opposition that displays "intransigence, difficulty and unresolved contradiction" (26). It is argued that Darwish's poetic oeuvre has witnessed significant intellectual transformations consisting of three phases: before 1969, primarily focusing on homeland; Beirut stage until 1982, centred on his exile; and the final stage coinciding with his migration to Paris until his death, engrossed in a more lyrical and universal poetry (e.g., Jubran 35). Since the last two phases are thought to be the richest, his poetry is blatantly replete with notions pertinent to exile. He almost never left out a reference to exile in any of his poems (Saleh 25). As Saleh puts it, Darwish's poetry comprises an "extended metaphor for exile" (25). In Said's words, "Darwish's poetic heritage amounts to an epic effort to transform the lyrics of loss into the indefinitely postponed drama of return" (124). In his poem *A Lover from Palestine*, Darwish portrays exile is an endless list of fragmentations and discontinuities: "But I am the exile. / Seal me with your eyes. …/ Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrow. / Take me a verse from my tragedy; / Take me as a toy, a brick from the house/ So that our children will remember to return" (Darwish, *A Lover* 42).

Confirming himself as a poet of exile, Darwish's poetry embodies multiple layers of exile which he treats at personal, political and collective levels evident in his testimony: "I made an effort to free myself through words while in internal exile. And while I was exiled outside the country, I tried to use words to return. Words evolved into a road, a bridge, and possibly a home" (Darwish, *Exile* 14). In short,

Darwish's poetic legacy is an expansive and humanistic endeavour that echoes the universal idea of exile. Forché and Akash remark: "Assimilating centuries of Arabic poetic forms and applying the chisel of modern sensibility to the richly veined ore of its literary past, Darwish subjected his art to the impress of exile and to his own demand that the work remain true to itself, independent of its critical or public reception" (xvii). In addition to his memoir that describes his ten years of exile in Beirut titled *Memory for Forgetfulness*, his poetry incorporates elements of life-references: "Every lyric poem I wrote is an autobiography … everything I write, whether about love or anything else, stems from lived experiences" (Darwish, *Memory* 18).

Exile: *Tuesday, a Bright Day*

Exile: *Tuesday, a Bright Day* is a fragmentation of self-writing narrating Darwish's exile through a series of repercussions about time, place and language. While the poem opens with a voice that is pensive and fully appreciates nature and beauty, this voice eventually transforms into melancholic reflections that intermediate these three aspects. Such melancholy reflections become an aesthetic feature that unites the entire poem: "I walk along a side street … I walk lightly, lightly..." (Darwish, *Almond* 49). Along with multiple present-tense verb sequences connected to the speaker's pronoun, the poetic refrain also conveys these melancholic reflections. Ultimately, the poem gradually conveys its profoundly depressing message, exile. Despite the apparent dynamic interaction and harmony with the place, the speaker's reflective estrangement overshadows the entire narrative: "Perhaps I will see a likeness between myself/ and the willow tree in this place/ But I can make out nothing here that refers to me" (49). While the features of this place are kept unidentified, it is not until the very end of the poem that it is identified as Palestine. Such a poetic technique is crucial to humanising Darwish's own experience of exile on a global scale while linking it to all Palestinians at the same time. Between the beginning and the end of the poem, the public and private spheres alternate, forming a dialogic vision between the selfhood and the outer world: "No land is as narrow as a flowerpot, /like your land. No land is wide/ as the book, as your own land. And your visions/ are your exile in a world where a shadow has/ no identity, no gravity" (49-50). Through a combination of deconstruction and reconstruction processes, the poem creates a singular relationship between the exiled selfhood and the elements of place, time, and language. We discuss each of these aspects on its own and in relation to self-writing as well as to the other elements that they interact with.

Darwish's depiction of place is telling in several ways. In general, Darwish

has a complicated and constantly shifting relationship with place. In *Unfortunately, It was Paradise*, place becomes contained within oneself rather than otherwise. It becomes a transportable entity that the exiled can carry with them in their journey of dispersion: "No land on earth bears me. Only my words bear me, / […] The emigrated. They carried the place and emigrated, they carried time and emigrated" (Darwish, *Unfortunately* 9). Darwish's poetic voice enables such a metaphorical manoeuvre between the physical and the metaphysical senses of place hence both meanings work simultaneously: "I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a single word: *Home*" (7). It is a process of deconstructing the vocabulary of place that enables Darwish to link the two senses in order to create a combined sense of "home" reflecting both the physical and the metaphysical. Interestingly, the word "home" is emphasised and capitalised—in a sense, becomes a destination,—which reflects the possibility that all other words are subjected to the process of deconstruction in service of this word alone while "home" is located outside such a process of signification. Darwish remarks: "The earth is my mother. From there I was born and it is to there that I will return. […] It is our actual sky. An inverted sky, one could say. […] Since the earth was taken from me and I was exiled from it, it has turned into the source and address of my spirit and my dreams. These circumstances are outside the place that earth occupies in my work" (Darwish, *Exile* 50). In this passage, Darwish describes his understanding of the relationship between the selfhood, place and exile, one that combines the personal and the public. Thus, even though Darwish's main concern is Palestine, his desire to create a community that transcends geography becomes equally important.

In *Tuesday, a Bright Day*, Darwish emphasises his reconfiguration of place through comparing it to overreaching objects; in one instance, it becomes a flowerpot, and in another, it becomes a vast metropolis, like London. At the outset of the poem, he establishes an ambiguous relationship between place and himself, one that simultaneously appears to harmonically interact with place while this very place engulfs his alienation: "No land is as narrow as a flowerpot, / like your hand. No land is wide/ as the book, as your own hand. And your visions/ are your exile in a world where a shadow has/ no identity, no gravity" (Darwish, *Almond* 50). In this excerpt, Darwish abstracts the notion of place, but instead of utilising worn-out jargon, he compares it to everyday objects like a flowerpot, a hand, and a book. Still, all of these objects are connected to the phrase "your hand", which is at this stage of the narrative retained without a clear reference. Later on, in the narrative, it will become clear how this addressee relates to, Darwish himself, and to all Palestinians. At this stage of the narrative, Darwish consciously encapsulates place into two

contradictory images: the beauty and narrowness of a flowerpot. He then takes this comparison further by comparing the two elements—beauty and narrowness—to the hand of the anonymous addressee. Subsequently, he draws a closer parallel between the place and a book in which the latter embraces the former, yet this book remains a property to this anonymous addressee. Expanding on such dialogic similes, Darwish invites us to read this book where he envisions the relationship between, the place, which is now the world, and exile. It becomes clear that through this book both the world and exile are characterised. While it is possible that the book alludes to language, which we will address below, at this point, we wish to assume that the book refers to a self-written account of Darwish himself. In keeping with the speaker's vision, the book tells us that this world (place) is shadowy and devoid of both "identity" and "gravity", depriving it of its fundamental physical features.

Paralleling the trajectory of Darwish's self-writing, place is transformed into a space of perpetual travel rather than a predetermined destination that travellers seek to arrive at. Nevertheless, it is the poet inside Darwish who is subjected to such an extensional reality in its relation to place. This trajectory reveals the self-narrative strategy Darwish exhibits in the poem, which is split into three interconnected phases of the journey: endless motion of the self, a journey of remembrance and forgetfulness, and a no-destination end. For the necessity of consistency of discussion, we quote these sections in a linear order:

> I walk, going to nowhere in particular,
> Without tomorrow's promises. […]
> I forget the houses that have marked out my life;
> I remember the identity-card number. […]
> I forget the paths of departing to nothingness;
> I remember the starlight in the Bedouin encampments. […]
> And I walk down a street that leads to no destination.
> Perhaps my footsteps have guided me
> to an empty bench in the garden, or
> perhaps they've guided me to an idea about the truth lost
> between the aesthetic and the real (Darwish, *Almond* 51-2).

Irrespective of the ellipsis we made in this excerpt, the poetic text expands in a constant sequence of self-accounts through which Darwish attempts to recall and restore his lost sense of place. These repercussions emerge in an internal dialogic structure comprising an exchange of forgetting and remembering. Through this

process, which enacts as a centre of the poem, Darwish territorialises place as an extended space that can accommodate his childhood memories, first love, the road to his stolen house, his identity-card number, etc. It is intriguing however to note that the list of things he forgets and things he remembers involves paradoxes since while colossal occurrences are forgotten, incidental details are preserved in his memory: "I forget big events and a devastating earthquake; / I remember my father's tobacco in the cupboard […] I forget the whine of bullets in the deserted village; / I remember the song of crickets in the wood" (52). Such a state of remembrance and forgetfulness emphasises the conscious selectivity of Darwish's memory demonstrated through his dialogic self-written account. Through this selectivity, Darwish disassembles the main components of place and memory into small, somehow insignificant details. Since, as Korel argues, "the binaries in time, in place, in how one relates to them, on exile's inclination to remember or to forget are a dialectical process involving many binaries. Exile is never a case of 'is' but of 'becoming'" (17). Employing such deconstructionist poetics, Darwish manages to avoid both fixed identities and the dialectics of binaries.

Additionally, as the excerpt above shows, the poem breaks down the self-narrative structure that Darwish presents in relation to place and exile. It starts with a state of loss, then a state of remembering and forgetting, and eventually a state of self-discovery. Such a structure resounds the constant movements of nomadic travellers who reject home-returning projects and pleas for nationalism. Nonetheless, Darwish's journey is not towards nothingness. Instead, it is a persistent journey whose aim is to discover the true self that he seems to have lost, which he eventually finds in the aesthetics of the poem. By deconstructing and reconstructing the physical elements of place, Darwish blurs the line between what is real and what is imaginative. After all, as Darwish puts it, in a state of exile "the compensation comes with the creation of a world parallel to reality" (Darwish, *Exile* 50). Furthermore, from a life writing perspective, such a structure is not a straightforward autobiographical narrative, but a self-writing inflected text attempting to negotiate other narrative strands alongside the study of selfhood. Darwish affiliates his exile case by alluding to other imaginative and real individuals subjected to exile and dislocation. Notably here, the poetic movement slows down, beginning with three dots to represent the impact of loss that resides within the self and how it narrates the selfhood: "… And I walk heavily, heavily, / as if I had an appointment with one of the losses. / I walk with the poet in me, / preparing for his eternal rest/ in a London night. / My friend on the way to Damascus! / We have not yet reached Syria" (Darwish, *Almond* 53). In these lines, Darwish links

himself to another poet in exile, presumably, the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani, since there are several clues that point to Qabbani's identity even though his name is not stated, for instance, London, Damascus, Syria, jasmine, Barada, etc., which are all connected to Qabbani. Darwish then searches for commonalities between himself and Qabbani: "Like mine, his heart pursues him, / Like him, I do not round off my will/ with my own name" (56). This analogy deepens the sense of estrangement that both poets experience when they travel through the spaciousness of metropolitan cities like London, which serve as asylum for refugees from all over the world.

Through this sequence of analogies, Darwish attempts to abstract the concept of place in an effort to universalise it outside its specific context. While this physical displacement of place does not diminish its original implications, it becomes evident that it connects not only to Darwish's own experience of exile, but rather to everyone else undergoing similar experience. While the physical features of place impose themselves on geography, drawing borders around it, Darwish's manner of abstracting place affirms the inclusive meaning of a place as a homeland. He believes that the notion of homeland is broader that any politics can accommodate. The larger sense of homeland, as Darwish remarks, is our quest for a particular "tree", "stone", or "window" rather than being a "flag" or an "anthem": "The symbol of the homeland to see only a place in it; it's also the earth of the world, and that is also foundational in my poetry. It's a synthesis. It's both the source of poetry and the material of poetry and language" (Darwish, *Exile* 50; 54). Given his emphasis on abstracting place and what makes it noteworthy, Darwish dismisses the specific landmarks of place such as names, monuments, or cultural signs while relying on the metaphysics of place that privileges the communal over the personal. As Rahman observes, in Darwish's post-siege of Beirut poetry, home is characterised by a plurality of voices within poetry itself rather than being connected to a physical space of nation or connected with his people (42). Additionally, by using this technique, he is able to establish the necessary space to articulate his position on humanistic liberation and resistance. That is how Darwish evokes a unique sense of place that all people can relate to: "It [distance] added a measure of sanctity and become a religion of beauty without obligations. The disappearance in distance is liberation" (Darwish, *Exile* 50).

In addition to place, Darwish has an anxious relationship with time. Therefore, he tampers with the linear cycle of time to establish ahistorical relationship between the self, time and exile. While political self-narratives mainly exhibit progression of events and depend on causal and fixed temporalities, Darwish's past and present occur instantaneously while interconnecting to the present. In general, Darwish's

poetry reflects this sense of time. In *Unfortunately*, he writes "An end like a beginning, like the beginning of an end" (45). Darwish's sense of time here is a kind of overlapping reflecting a timeless and unchanging reality informed by perpetual exile existence. Darwish evokes: "Live your tomorrow now! / However long you live you will not reach tomorrow. / There is not hand for tomorrow. Dream slowly, / and whatever you dream, understand/ that the moth does not burn to give you light" (49). Similar to place, time here is also subject to deconstruction, hence both are not defined in relation to each other. The future, which is not possible for Darwish to reach, shifts to an undefined present while both—the present and the future—are disconnected from the past. The three elements however are recombined to create a particular sense of unity as time becomes placeless and transient. Yet in order to compel an agreement between the two, the future is projected back onto the present, inevitably distorting both. The deconstruction of time, as Wood argues, is primarily connected to its function rather than to idealised abstraction (13). He adds: "if time is an idealisation, it is also an idealisation that permeates the real" (Wood 13).

In line with Wood, we perceive that Darwish's materiality of time is threefold: exile, space and the metaphysics of presence that privileges the present over the past and future. In his self-narrative, Darwish is in constant search for meaningful moments and bearings that seem to be increasingly out of his control. Ultimately, his exile remains enigmatic, incurable and full of events that require multiple perspectives in order to grasp: "I walk lightly, and grow older/ by ten minutes, twenty, sixty, / I walk and the life in me/ slips gently away, like a light cough […] would I stop time? Would I upset death? / I laugh at my idea […] And my day, Tuesday, was spacious and long/ and my night like a short encore I added/ to the play after the curtain was down" (Darwish, *Almond* 50-1; 57). Here, Darwish cuts portions of time through which he does not pay any attention to future believing that it carries no promises. For him, the present, not the past nor the future, that counts: "I don't look back, for I can return to nothing" (51). Such a closure (or distortion) of time reflects Darwish's destabilisation of his exile including its very existence in time. He perceives time as only reflecting an imaginative reality, the only thing that he can control. The deconstruction of time, as Wood argues, is primarily connected to its function rather than to idealised abstraction: "if time is an idealisation, it is also an idealisation that permeates the real" (Wood 13). Darwish's exile here is timeless, but rather than being lost in time or projecting a predetermined linear progression of events, each moment of the present is independently regarded as reality on its own. 'Tuesday' is singled out from the cycle of the weekdays as "spacious and long" (Darwish, *Almond* 53) since it marks a worthwhile incident in his life, to meet his

lost love. While "Tuesday" is markedly bright, the night is endlessly and repeatedly prolonged very much like post-dramatic theatrical performance.

Darwish displays an utterly de-historicised sense of time in an effort to give his life a meaning that is imaginative and transitional beyond the confines of timeframes. Through this extra-temporality, Darwish articulates his humanistic perspective on exile by establishing an ahistorical space—namely, aesthetics—that operates on a global level. Writing about the exile experience, according to McClennen, reflects the fact that the exiles have been cast out of the present of their nation's historical time, which results in a series of dialectic tensions between time as linear/progressive/historical and the exilic experience that is a suspension of linear time (15). "This suspension of linear time includes a sense that time is cyclical and primordial (linking exiles across ages) and a sense that time is relative and fractured (casting the exile outside of meaningful/monumental time)" (15). Eventually, as McClennen puts it, exiles often understand that they are in exile because of particular historical events, but after being banished from that history, they start to doubt the veracity of historical time (17). Darwish's relation to time is not simply about someone addressing time, but rather he articulates his experience of existing inside the outside and to the sensing of time that emerges within his exilic experience. In short, For Darwish, exile is an interrupting experience of the continuity of time where the existence of the exile is suspended in the between.

Throughout Darwish's work, the notion of language embodied in his poetry has been given immense priority as a signification of the Palestinian case including their exile. Located outside time and place, language, for Darwish, becomes a source of his being, home and self. He writes: "This is my language, my miracle […] the desert idol of an Arab/ who worships what flows from rhymes like stars in his *aba*" (Darwish, *Unfortunately* 19). He also remarks that "I built my homeland, I even established a state, in my language. If there are no humanistic spaces in poetry that touch on the human, the text does […] A presence that exists at the very core of my language" (*Exile* 52). In *Tuesday, a Bright Day*, Darwish emphasises his intrinsic relationship with language, not as a means of articulation, but rather as a mode of survival:

> O my language, help me to learn/ so that I may embrace the universe […]
> O my language, am I what you are?
> Or are you, my language, what I am?
> O my language, prepare me
> for the nuptials of the alphabet and my body.

> Let me be the lord, not the echo!
> Cover me with your wool.
> O my language, help me to differ so that I may
> achieve harmony. […]
> If you are, I am, and if I am, you are.
> O my language,
> Call this new age by foreign names
> and invite the distant stranger to be your guest,
> invite the simple prose of life
> to ripen my verse (Darwish, *Almond* 56-7).

In this excerpt, which could stand alone as a poem, Darwish immerses himself with language, not simply as a source of inspiration, but as an existential reality that identifies his identity including his search for the selfhood in the state of exile. To start his relationship with language, Darwish poses an ontological question about the unity of language and himself. In exile, this relationship is complicated since language is stripped of its capacity as a representational tool since, in a state of dispersion and loss, exiles lose the immediate connection with entities subject to representation (McClennen 120). What at stake however is building a different, essentially existence-based relationship between the exilic self and language. With these two perspectives in mind, Darwish develops a mutually reinforcing relationship in which the self and language nurture one another in exile: "Give birth to me/ and I will give birth to you/ I am your son sometimes, / and sometimes, your father and mother" (Darwish, *Almond* 56). In contrast to his approach to time and place, Darwish views language as a means of uniting the fragmented self and equipping him with the tools he needs to confront the challenges of exile. It is only through his poetic language that he can recreate a reconciled version of the self. As such, language for Darwish serves as a self-recuperation and a simultaneous effort to construct an identity that struggles against extinction. In exile that is overwhelmed by a state of loss and invisibility, language becomes the only means of reconciliation: "O my language, help me to differ so that I may/ achieve harmony" (56). Exile is a condition of invisible being, without language, the exile would not exist; just like a starving stranger coming from distance and looking for a life shelter.

Hence, for Darwish, the interconnection between exile and language becomes a mode of survival that prevents the personal and collective histories and identities from disappearing: "If you are, I am, and if I am, you are" (57). This line, as simple

in its reference as it is in its all-encompassing meaning, not only reflects the status quo of exile but stands deeper analysis, yielding a richer understanding of the existential relationship between, being, language, words, self, and exile. It bears an inherently ancestral genealogy of the moment of articulation and existence. Here, the self, in exile, exists in nowhere else except in an act of articulating difference that subverts the homogenising and hegemonic discourses: "O my language, help me to differ so that I may achieve harmony" (56). As McClennen argues, language functions as a means of intervention under the conditions of displacement to restore the loss of identity: "Language is the chemical connection between dream and reality: it is the key to connecting the physical to the mental" (McClennen 120). Additionally, Darwish survives death through poetry both literally and metaphorically; on the one hand, his poetry becomes a struggle against the extinction of his presence, and, on another, it endows the yet-to-come generations with means for knowing their lost land in their presumed inheritance of exile: "For who, if I don't speak in poetry, / will understand me? / Who will speak to me/ of children longing for a lost age/ If I don't speak in poetry? And who, if I don't speak in poetry, / will know the stranger's land" (Darwish, *Almond* 57). Here, Darwish not only challenges the absence of the self in the state of exile, but he also gives his poetry an enduring and timeless significance that transcends generations.

As discussed above, while Darwish's self-narrative destabilises place and time, it exhibits language as a unity that amounts to an agency for the survival of the selfhood in exile. *Tuesday, a Bright Day* reemphasises Darwish's faith in language as having a welding force of the loss of place and time as well as of the fragmented self. As Mena puts it, "language for Darwish is home and self—it is outside of place and time, because with it 'they carried the place … they carried the time" (Mena 115). Added to this, unlike other Palestinian exile writers who produce their self-writing in other languages, Darwish writes exclusively in Arabic, his native tongue. Probably, he is best known Arabic language poet in contemporary Arab poetry. Therefore, rather than facing a crisis in using a foreign language, Arabic is quite adequate to articulate his living experience as well as his imaginative inspirations. As a writer in exile and in the absence of linear history and defined place, language is all that remains to link him to his cause, people and to his land. In fact, Arabic is deeply ingrained in Darwish's poetry serving as a "*magic wand* that conjures up memories across time and place" (Nassar et al. 2). For Darwish, language has the power to resurrect all that has been lost including, home, time and place, hence he could forsake everything except his language: "Leave everything else as it is/ But bring life back to my language" (Darwish, *Unfortunately* 115). Inasmuch as

language occupies this momentous role in Darwish's poetry, it also serves as a central theme in *Counterpoint*, the other poem we address in this study and through which he narrates significant aspects of Edwad Said's life and scholarship.

Exile: *Counterpoint*

In *Counterpoint*, Darwish creates a unique form of life-writing that blends autobiographical elements with reflections on another individual, specifically the Palestinian-American critic Edward Said. While the poem primarily adopts a linear narrative structure, overlapping dimensions such as language, identity, creativity, scholarship and the exile of both Said and Darwish frequently break up this linearity. To begin with the title of the poem, Darwish deliberately chooses the word, *Counterpoint* to resound Said's theory of *Contrapuntal* reading of the literary text. Derived from musical notes, Said's Contrapuntality is a polyphonic reading that allows different themes in a text to interact with one another while considering all voices instead of just the most prominent one. As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia uphold, "Contrapuntality emerges out of the tension and complexity of Said's own and identity, the text of self that he is continually writing" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 92). In his *Out of place: A memoir*, Said borrows Contrapuntality to explain how different currents interact to shape his identity: "they [currents] are off and maybe out of place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forwards, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme" (Said, *Out of Place* 295). It becomes evident that Darwish's *Counterpoint* reflects Said's Contrapuntality as he alternates between various aspects of his own life and that of Said throughout the entire poem.

Darwish begins the poem with a personal meeting with Said thirty years ago in New York, when, "[t]he time was less wilful than now" (Darwish, *Almond* 76). As the poem develops, exile plays a contrapuntal role in linking the speaker and the addressee, establishing a sense of estrangement for both: "We both said: If your past is experience, / make tomorrow into meaning and a vision! / Let us go, let us go to our tomorrow confidently, / with the truth of imagination and the miracle of grass" (87). Both of Darwish's and Said's voices are articulated simultaneously, archiving a discordant concord between the two while the omniscient narrator meddles in the fate of the two personalities being narrated. The poem moves on registering different aspects of Said's personality and scholarship: "New York. Edward wakes to an idle dawn. / He plays Mozart. He runs around the university tennis court. / … He curses the Orientalist who guides the general/ to the point of weakness in an Oriental heart" (88). Although Said's scholarship is far too complex to be summed

up in a single line, Darwish extracts a single piece of Said's intellectual heritage that is pertinent to both, exile enforced by warfare, which is originally informed by the orientalists who provide the war generals with moral tools to initiate their wars.

Nevertheless, Darwish underscores the complexity of Said's scholarship through the concept of Contrapuntality itself which appears through the recurrent use of contradictory connotations in Said's personal life. Among these connotations that lend themselves to a contrapuntal approach are the opposing dualities of place (there/here), name (Edward/Said), and language (English/Arabic):

> He says: I am from there. I am from here.
> I am not there and I am not here.
> I have two names, which meet and part,
> I forget which of them I dream in.
> I have English for writing, obedient in words.
> I have also a language
> in which heaven speaks to Jerusalem:
> silver-stressed, and it does not obey! (88).

Using Said's voice, Darwish destabilises the notion of place in a manner reminiscent of his approach to place in *Tuesday: A Bright Day*. His counterpoint strategy is also demonstrated by the concurrent affirmative and negative allusions to place, which affirms his enduring belief that place is an element devoid of its geographic potential. More significantly, however, is Darwish's contrapuntal reference to language through which he addresses the duality of Arabic and English which comprise Said's academic and personal identity. Unlike Darwish, Said's relationship with language is marked by tension because it works to divide rather than to unite his selfhood. This is confirmed by Said himself as he remarks: "I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was mine beyond doubt" (Said, *Out of Place* 4). This tension is further intensified by the fact that Said's name is a combination of English and Arabic names, Edward Said: "I have two names, which meet and part" (Darwish*, Almond* 88). In Said's views, his name causes no less tension: "the travails of bearing such a name were compounded by an equally unsettling quandary when it came to language" (Said, *Out of Place* 4). Probably Darwish's recognition of Said's relationship to language is likely best summed up by McClennen's analysis arguing that conflict arises in exile writing when the writer feels compelled to imagine and express in words what she/he cannot physically experience (34). Nonetheless, also in Said's words, language could be a

strategic tool for resistance in academic work: "Knowing how to use language well and knowing when to intervene in language are two essential features of intellectual action" (Said *Representations* 20). Interestingly, Darwish encapsulates these two dimensions in his lines: "I have English for writing, obedient in words. / I have also a language/ in which heaven speaks to Jerusalem: / silver-stressed, and it does not obey!" (Darwish, *Almond* 88).

Furthermore, Said's contrapuntal relationship with place carries both harmonious and oppositional implications through which he frees himself from bounded nationalism. Hence, this apparently conflicting state of being enables him to conduct unbiased research of human conditions. "He loves a country, and travels from it. […] He loves travelling to anything, / and in free travel between cultures, / those who study human essence/ may find space enough for all" (89). This existential status of Said, as Darwish perceives it, is intact, unwavering, and constantly forward-looking: "I am what I am and what I will be. / I will make myself by myself/ and I will choose my exile" (90). Darwish alludes to Said's own thoughts regarding the relationship between the intellectual and exile previously discussed. Added to this, Said conceives exile as a median state between nostalgia and creativity, a style of thought, where those who are skilled at exile survival liberate themselves from rigid ideological positions (Said, *Representation* 22). Therefore, such a status enables his critical views as always in defence of those poets who aspire for justice and freedom: "I defend the needs of poets for a tomorrow/ and for memories at the same time; / I defend the tree that birds clothe, / and as a country and a place of exile" (Darwish, *Almond* 90). This role also reveals Said's commitment to legitimacy of resistance of the oppressed: "I defend an idea shattered by the frailty of its holders, / I defend a country hijacked by legends" (90). Darwish strikes a balance between Said's desire to present a humanist position that is universally understood and his dedication to defending Palestine as his own case. In this, Darwish makes a reference to the myth of Zionism and the Jewish people's right to Palestine: "a country hijacked by legends" (90).

Darwish portrays Said's relationship with Palestine as becoming more intense and personal, which mirrors Said's manner in addressing the Palestinian cause, yet maintaining a humanistic and touching voice of Said:

I stood at the door like a beggar.
Should I take permission from strangers
sleeping in my own bed,
to visit myself for five minutes?

Do I bow respectfully
to the inhabitants of my childish dream?
Would they ask, who is the inquisitive foreign visitor?
Would I be able to speak
of peace and war among victims,
and victims of victims?
Without contradictions? Would they say to me,
There is no room for two dreams in one bedroom? (92).

Once more, this excerpt could stand alone as a poem by itself since it not only captures the conditions of those uprooted from their homelands, but also exposes the hideous reality of occupation. This emotional statement, on Said's own voice, sums up the plight of all Palestinians exiles to return home for even a brief visit: he is pleading for a mere five minutes to see his native country. More intriguingly, though, is how Darwish challenges the ideas of familiarity and foreignness by having the occupier—a foreigner—become the land's owner under coercive power, while the native is revealed to be a foreigner. This sense of foreignness is even more intensified as the native is warily asking for a permission to recall the memories of his childhood at his home. The narrative moves on taking turning points to draw attention to the theme of war and its traumatic aftermath. Despite the fact that war is a pivotal and crucial cause to the Palestinian prolonged catastrophises including the loss of land, displacement and genocide, the speaker seems powerless and even muted to inquire about war and peace. Darwish implies that Said has been subjected to a barrage of criticism because of his support for Palestine, which he is quite often cautious to respond to. As Armstrong argues, Said by far is a polarising figure whose critics and defenders alike miss the complications of his thought: "The heightened sensitivities on both sides suggest that much is at stake in an author's attempt to shape and control his or her persona in an era in which the authenticity of the author's subjectivity is sometimes seen as necessary for establishing the authority of her or his argument" (Armstrong 3).

Although Darwish extrapolates significant aspects of Said's scholarship, he emphasises Said's exile as a person who experiences the same painful effects of displacement, which invites him (Said) to side with the voice of the victim. Using dialogic exchange in this section of the poem, Darwish creates a closer look in Said's personality: "I said: And Identity? / He said: Defence of the person. Identity is the daughter of birth …. But I belong to the question of victims" (Darwish, *Almond* 88). Both Darwish and Said understand the question of identity is troubling

especially under the conditions of exile. As Armstrong argues, Said's identity as an American-Palestinian implies that he harbours a hybrid identity which contrasts his monolithic assertion of the identification of the oriental subject in *Orientalism*—a position he seems to disregard later on in his memoire *Out of Place* (5). In fact, Said recognises the tension that arises between his dedication to unbiased scholarship and the private realm of his own life hence perceiving his identity as "a form both of freedom and of affliction" (Said, *Out of Place* 12). Darwish alludes to such a profound ambivalence through Said's response to the question of identity that lacks straightforward national identity or coherent sense of belonging to a single community. Instead, Said's answer comes in a sort of affiliation with all those subject to victimisation and oppression. Interestingly enough, is how Darwish identifies those subjects to victimisation as the "victims of victims" (Darwish, *Almond* 92). Here, Darwish alludes to the Jewish people as once victims of persecution, but because of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which led to the Palestinians' dispersion, those victims now inflict victimisation on others. As Darwish remarks: "The occupier and myself—both of us suffer from exile. He is an exile in me and I am the victim of his exile" (Darwish, *Exile* 50).

The poem closes with a touching scene of Said's tragic death of cancer. While the poem opens with the first meeting between Darwish and Said, it ends with another meeting between the two thirty years later in a final farewell visit: "When I visited him in New Sodom, / in the year two thousand and two, he was resisting the war of Sadom against Babylon, / and the cancer at the same time. / He was the last hero in that epic, / defending the rights of Troy" (Darwish, *Almond* 94). Probably, in addition to its sentimental gloomy mode, these lines entail significant allusions as departing praise of Said's scholarship and personality. Before his death in 2003, Said's last battle was opposing America's war on Iraq in addition to his private battle with cancer. It is clear that Darwish intends to close the poem with a final scene that immortalises Said's image through the mythical heroes of the ancient epics: "An eagle bids farewell to its peak, rising, / rising, / living above Olympus" (95). Therefore, the insights of Said that Darwish offers through fusing his imagination with references to Said's academic background illuminates the processes involved in the formation of both the individual and his scholarly work. Since Darwish defies the conventions of life-writing narratives, he is able to authentically depict significant facets of Said's life and scholarship as well as the various ways in which his scholarship has been received. By fusing the self in the realm of the other, embodied by Edward Said, Darwish is able to draw parallels between the responses of both to key exilic questions such as language, identity, time and place. His poetic

contrapuntal approach to read Said's life, Darwish manages to offer an impartial reading of Said's life away from essentialism, exclusiveness or polarisation.

Conclusion

To conclude, in the two poems, Darwish sought to depict an instance of the exile through a poetic life-writing of his own and that of Said to demonstrate a deep awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of human beings including their capacity to reconcile with their exile. Breaking with the conventions of life-writing, he subverts many of the concepts he encounters in these narratives, time and place, in particular. While under the conditions of exile and coercive dislocation, it is tempting for writers to essentialise their nationalism and pledges to place and homeland, Darwish manages to transcend all of these ideas by offering a humanistic account of both suffering and resistance. As a poet of a post-national tendency, Darwish employs his aesthetics to balance between his private commitment to the Palestinian cause, but like Said, he unearths those underlying structures of a collective consciousness of the exiled people in general. For example, Darwish inscribes a rich intertextual tapestry such as religious, literary and philosophical allusions and references, including those to Said and Qabbani, to articulate his deeply inner world and how this world is related to other people.

At an aesthetic level, Darwish employs a set of poetic techniques that help narrating the exiled self yet liberating that self from being narrowly tied to a specific nationalist agenda. Drawing from a variety of cultures and religions, he uses intertextual allusions, symbolism, abstractions, and imagery to inscribe the national within the universal. These techniques also help to articulate and come to terms with the collective trauma that both Palestinians and dispersed people in general. As Nassar and her colleagues observe, Darwish blends allusions to demonstrate how Palestine is a confluence of cultures, mythologies, and histories that unite the oppressed from all around the world (12). Furthermore, Darwish artistically experiments with dramatic dialogue, drawing inspiration from theatrical conventions, which permit polyphony and contrapuntality of voices, hence the legitimacy of diverse and multiple points of view are granted. Furthermore, Darwish exhibits a stance of language that is equal to existence. He exalts language to serve a mediator in a process of self-discovery that culminates in constructing an intact selfhood under the conditions of exile. In fact, Darwish is truly considered a man of letters both literally and metaphorically as he spent his entire professional life transforming a lifetime of exile into poetry: "Do not mention us/ when we disengage from your hand/ to the large exiles/ we have learned the vast languages" (Darwish,

Unfortunately 213). Last, Darwish strings together a series of fragmentary reminiscences including loss of country and alienation, but also an intact confirmation of the presence of the self. Despite the fact that both self-narratives include many ellipses, the signification of these gaps and discontinuities grow into a record of the exilic collective experience of Palestinians reflecting the multifarious location of postmodern autobiographical writings.

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Gender Divide and Discriminations: Struggle for Self-Actualization of Women in Anne Tyler's *a Slipping Down Life* and *Earthly Possessions*

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Abstract The word 'gender' is girdled with identity which critically represents an individual's identity as male, female and a combination of certain male and female traits. In other words, gender identity provides a universal acknowledgement for both physical and behavioral manifestations. Conventionally, the patriarchal society brings out the gender discrimination or gender divide to determine the credentials of both men and women in the public or private space of domesticity. Significantly, Anne Tyler's *A Slipping Down Life* and *Earthly Possessions* persevere on to demonstrate the undesirable functions in the expression of patriarchal society. Further, the paper purports to analyze the term, 'gender divide' in order to highlight Anne Tyler's investigation on the unpremeditated intricacies related to gender division in the American family. Markedly, the paper relies on Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation in which woman/man fulfills her/his other needs which include physiological need, safety need, love or belongingness need and esteem need to attain the highest need such as self-actualization in the hierarchy of needs. Thus, the paper ensures that the women in these novels attain self-actualization to illustrate how gender plays a crucial role in everyone's life.

Keywords Gender Divide; Domesticity; Behavioral Manifestations; Patriarchal Society; Gender Discrimination; Self-Actualization

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Introduction

According to conceptual analysis and pragmatic observations, the uniqueness of each society has been experimented with the constructive gender and competencies of patriarchy due to gender division. In general, men encircled within traditional patriarchal norms are entirely clubbed to perform certain behavioral attachments. Considerably, the research analysis of literature is favorable if one contemplates how humanity functions to study the theoretical framework of gender conviction in the society. Markedly, gender identity and patriarchy are two distinguished concepts which can be performed to provide insightful experiments of their influences collectively in American society.

Within the limits of the topic, the term, 'Patriarchy' rules for a longer period to reflect on the male adaptations of canonical, gubernatorial, economical and dialectal power. Analogously, by taking into consideration the restricted charge of dialectal power, the other species of humanity, 'female' performs to maintain the convalescent partnership with superiority of 'male.' On the surface, this restricted analogy of females in the male dominant patriarchy takes a spirit of competency to respond to their 'enmeshed selves' in the domestic incarceration. Nevertheless, the patriarchal authority is connotated with 'male' rather than with 'female.' In short, the work on gender studies aims to replace the power patriarchy of men to ensure that women attain a measurable amount of privilege.

Earlier the terms 'sex' and 'gender' had been prominent in any society with similar ambivalence. It has been observed that the sexual differences between men and women are determined due to their biological formation of medical domain. In

due course of time, the language bestows upon the capacity to formulate its own principles for each gender that men and women are categorized and controlled to follow without protest. Under these circumstances, sex and gender receives responses through feminist perspectives. Being placed on display, this prominence gives forth women to confront the complications of possessing adequate dialectal power in the patriarchal domain. In other words, women try to transform the methods of articulation and implications which are predominant in the patriarchal environment.

Predictably, women's requirement to excel with the multiple dimensions of patriarchy have been persistent to achieve the most desirable goals. Similarly, feminism plays a pivotal role to necessitate the untrodden path for women to identify their gender by breaking the monotonous adaptations of themselves as mere 'suppressed' species. Further, an introspective account of gender can be fixed in the American community with respect to demonstrative and behavioral influences of traditional hegemony by scrutinizing Anne Tyler's novels such as *A Slipping Down Life* (1970) and *Earthly Possessions* (1977).

In the context of gender identity and expression, many of the women writers have been stifling to establish their identities through their female characters in every field of literature. In particular, the women are found to be the ever-grown puppets in the hands of their life partners. Interestingly, Anne Tyler focuses more on the trauma undergone by Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory within the clutches of their partners to lead a traumatic life. Beneath the surface, both the male protagonists, Drumstrings Casey and Saul Emory exhibit the gender- based norms initially but later decline to possess rationality or strength. Astutely, the paper is concerned more with the self-actualization of both the female protagonists, Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory on their journey towards discovering the inexpressible gender based societal standards encountered by their male partners, Drumstrings Casey and Saul Emory.

In actuality, Drumstrings Casey and Saul Emory are self-centered to pose their self- centeredness in their respective professions with complete defiance. Distinctively, both the men with their gender expressions of patriarchy suppress their spouses to accept their orders. For the most part, Drumstrings builds castles in the air to flourish in his unattainable musical profession despite Evie's warnings. Along the same way, Saul Emory poses a threat to Charlotte with his mandatory minstrel preaching of sermons despite Charlotte's antithetical views.

Traditionally, Anne Tyler's female protagonists have their own individual way of perceiving the territory around them with inexpressible perception to cultivate

their conventional thoughts within the patriarchal boundary. While Tyler's male protagonists are of indefinite order, her female protagonists engulf themselves in burdened issues to explicate their individualism as multifarious roles of femininity. In fact, Tyler herself deals with the altercation by expostulating with the notion that is staid for a feminist. In reality, the shift from the 1940s to the 960s shows us the transformation of women in society.

During war, women searched for an opportunity to voice for their rights to establish their independence. Substantially, women moved in quest for identity but they returned to play the role of homemakers. In an elaborate manner, Anne Tyler brings out the concept of gender inequality or gender division and patriarchal expression in *A Slipping Down Life and Earthly Possessions* through the characters of Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory. Therefore, the objectives of the paper are: (i) to analyze the prevalence of surmounting gender divide in these two novels taken for study and also (ii) to identify self-actualization of Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory in these two novels.

In the light of discussing the domestic sphere, Mary Douglas, the British social anthropologist, women in the household have been associated with their children and the household chores, while men have been associated with their whimsical thoughts with their fellow beings in the external world. Gaston Bachelard suggests that "in the intimate harmony of walls and furniture it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside" (68). The inevitable division of labor begins from childhood while boys appear to be socializing externally in the public sphere and girls internally. In compliance with the concept of gender discrimination, Judith Brown in his article, declares that: "No where in the world is the rearing of children primarily the responsibility of men and only in a few societies are women exempted from participation in subsistence activities" (1075). In accordance with this statement, Tyler's both male protagonists, Drumstrings Casey and Saul Emory enjoy the privilege of labeling themselves as 'men' and within this umbrella term, they exercise the power politics of patriarchy to their female counterparts.

In this regard, some enterprises distanced from home are ordained by the parents, such as delivering papers and building the structure of the house by the boys and baby-sitting is done by the girls. Typically, Drumstrings Casey in *A Slipping Down Life* loiters around aimlessly and takes care of himself without prioritizing his partner's needs and thereby spoils his career by building a meaningless mirage. Whereas Saul Emory dauntlessly exercises dictatorship to his partner in looking after the horde of relatives without contributing to his family. However, Bachelard

also recommends that such external enterprises provide them the opportunity for the boys to comprehend the outside world and acquire a sense of place. On the other hand, an activity like baby-sitting seems to provide stress and home-boundness for the girls without seeking adventures.

Methodology

The paper has followed the close reading methodology in order to focus on the two novels taken under study in the light of gender divide. From this standpoint, it is believed that gender roles are to be adopted by having communion with surroundings in which each individual likes to complete the tasks of oneself irrespective of men and women. For instance, in *A Slipping Down Life,* Evie Decker deliberately acts as a breadwinner to seek adventure for her life with an unborn baby in her womb. Adventurously, she breaks the stereotypical manifestation of women to earn a living for her disloyal husband and her baby, the sole provider of her life. Similarly, gender discrimination has been accorded in Tyler's *Earthly Possessions* to project Charlotte Emory as an object for sacrificing her needs for the sake of her patriarchal husband and crowded relatives.

In her article, "Family as Microcosm of Anne Tyler's *A Slipping Down Life,"* Donipati Sumalatha (2014) has assessed the novel *A Slipping Down Life* by Anne Tyler through postmodern parables in which Evie Decker struggles to find self-recognition in a family without a life partner and parents (23-32). Through her analysis, the researcher has confirmed that family is a microcosmic unit without which no soul can exist. Whereas, Mergumi Tanji (2019) in her article, "Young woman's quest for self-hood: A Study of Anne Tyler's *A Slipping Down Life* and *The Clock Winder"* has explored independent and confident women in Evie Decker and Elizabeth Abbott through their attainment of motherhood in these novels (55-68).

The present paper has envisioned to give a detailed analysis of Evie and Charlotte's impregnable complications to win over the patriarchal expression of gender discrimination in *A Slipping Down Life* and *Earthly Possessions.* More appropriately, the paper ensures to bring out the challenges faced by Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory so as to attain self-actualization in their journey.

Surmounting Gender Divide

Evidently, John Gray's book suggests, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,* in which he firmly propagates the contentious variations which are omnipresent between the two sexes. By contrast, as far as the title proceeds, Gray has opinionated that both men and women are two separate beings and they exist

in this universe with a specific disposition to contribute to their personalities and their riveted frames of mind. Relatedly, on these incompatible interpretations of gender, the gender-based division of work has been surmounting and can be examined by identifying their geneses in the archaic period. Repeatedly, men engrossed themselves in hunting and women were the custodians of the household and participated in cooking, cleaning and feeding. Judith Butler, on her views on gender, fixes that Masculine and Feminine roles are not biologically fixed but socially constructed. Contrarily, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender and it is performatively constituted by the very expressions" (33). Juxtaposing this quote, both Eve Decker and Charlotte Emory initiate the question of asking for choices in the patriarchal interventions of dominant men. Structurally, these women characters are reminiscences of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, *The Princess*. In which, Tennyson discusses the determination of gender divide ordained by the society.

> As are the roots of Earth
> and base of all;
> Man, for the field and Woman for the hearth:
> Man, for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man, with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man, to command and woman to obey;
> All else confusion (298).

Sympathetically, Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory in the above -mentioned novels prolong to struggle in the male dominant society from the beginning till the end to ensure their gender with an optimistic outlook. Analytically, the tradition of the family exposes an individual's birth to arrive at their gender identity. In this context, the family milieu settles the roles taken by men and women since their births to instigate the conservative trait that as how, what and when the male and female children should comply with as regards labor. Inquisitively, men are intrinsic in public work with the advent of capitalism to remain as the ruling powers of the public sphere and the depiction of the women are entailed within the domesticity of the private sphere. Despite an inability to earn for his livelihood, Drumstrings Casey in *A Slipping Down Life,* retains his male supremacy and demands, "No Biscuits? Breakfast is not Breakfast without no biscuits. I mean later. For the future. I'm used to having biscuits every morning" (Tyler, *A Slipping Down Life* 115). Further, he asks Evie's father: "Evie and I will need furniture. Do you reckon we could

borrow what you have extra?" (Tyler, *A Slipping Down Life* 125). Thus, gender and patriarchy are inbuilt in Casey whose intention is to gain comfort whereas for Evie, marriage would offer her happiness and peace. In the ancient mythology, the concept of Eve's creation from Adam's rib and her surrender towards her husband is evidently shown and to demonstrate the predetermined idea that Eve being a female should conscientiously conform to the configured frame of rules set by Adam with respect to discharge her duties. Indubitably, the gender-based division has been surmounting since ancient times.

Stereotypical Patriarchal Standards and Behavioral Manifestations in *A Slipping Down Life*

A Slipping Down Life is self-assured as Evie's unbreakable sense of identity has been portrayed within the patriarchal expressions of the society. Further, the genuine love and passion of Evie for Casey as she spoils her forehead by engraving Casey's name on her forehead is one of the most significant aspects of the novel. By the time, Evie is astonished to discover her husband's identity in bed with another woman to reveal the true color and hereby the troubles are prompted to take mountainous shape in Evie's life. Eventually, Tyler brings gender variation or gender divide by uniting the two young people in a discontented marriage to rub salt in a wound of bondage. At this juncture, Drum, in a disconsolate state puts forth that**,** "What is the point in me sitting here strumming? I'll never get anywhere. I ain't but nineteen years old and already leading a slipping down life and hard rock is fading so pretty soon nobody won't want it" (Tyler, *A Slipping Down Life* 133).

More specifically, the paper discusses how Evie has been presented without a mother and obscure presence of the father who hasn't nurtured Evie with proper parental care and remains insignificant, uncommunicative and incongruous. Hence Evie runs away from her home of void space to find asylum in Casey's terrain whereas Drumstrings Casey's love is impure and presumptuous. More crucially, the social and intellectual aspects of women's position are more contemplated to penetrate in depth into the analysis of her freedom which is persistently questioned in the patriarchal standards of men. As being natural with emotions, Evie Decker boldly takes a drastic effort in finding a solution to her unstable mind.

Although Evie clearly imprints on the minds of the readers that she hasn't been consoled with the concept of marriage as an organization and the capacity to enmesh the female self within the connubial relationship. Among the partners, the most affected female suffers with a conservatism of gender discrimination and as regards Evie's prerogatives have been questioned at a larger extent. Zorica Markovic

describes that "relationship between a man and a woman should be a combination of affection and sexual components" (383). But this novel is rooted in adolescence, homely, stylistically conservative as it's heroine, motherless Evie Decker of Pulqua, North Caroline, a plumb drab girl cuts into her forehead the last name of her rock star lover, Drumstrings' name on her forehead with a sole intention to marry him and learn to live a life of a naive housewife.

Emphatically, Evie becomes pregnant with a hope of journeying towards her child with the vexatious rock star who refuses to move away from his stereotypical behavioral manifestations. Without further delay, Evie sooner prepares to swallow her lonely life without her reticent and rather unstimulating father who abruptly dies to leave her in morose. Mysteriously, Casey does not get captivated by Evie for her pudgy appearance. Significantly, she unmindfully remains obese and in fact whole heartedly dictates herself that it is quite normal and inherent in her to stay overweight. Persistently, Evie first becomes enthralled with Drumstrings Casey when she learns his unpredictable plans on the radio and indeed, she gives an instant thought to be crazy with a youngster whom she considers to be naive and discerning. At this point of time, she is conscious of societal views to consider them to be supportive or unsupportive and determined not to give space for the society to contemplate whether she is attractive enough to deserve him. Vehemently, the expression of gender creeps into the societal standard.

In contrast, his wife Evie seems to thrive in marriage due to the expression of patriarchy. Had she been missed within the confinement of the high schooler; she would have been embroiled at home under the patriarchal standards. Unlike Drum, whose patriarchy proves to be insignificant as his rock star persona, Evie succumbs to execute her duties with the blindfolded predicament as regards demanded by the society due to her gender. For example, Evie blatantly identifies the gender discrimination being implanted in Casey when Drum defies having a working wife at home by not giving her a space to think and administer her thoughts. With marriage, the gender divide prompts her to be within the structure of a female framed by the patriarchal expression which Evie forcibly clutches the values and standards of conduct. This newly found gender identity of a house wife provides power of external knowledge to her to move away from the dominative patriarchal structures**.** Laura Mulvey opines that woman then stands in patriarchal structure as a signifier for the male perspective and in other words, Mulvey points out that woman "holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire" (809).

A significant factor to be noted is that Casey's mother acts as a primary concern for the family whose sole liability is to be the pillar of support behind

Casey in all aspects. With reference to Ora, a distinctive quality is that she being the embodiment of permissiveness puts Casey in a self- centered position by permitting him to carry over with his whims and fancies. Sarcastically, even before gaining attention through his musical profession, Casey's mother instills a self-centered element in him as she says: "Deep down I know he has a wonderful career in front of him" (Tyler, *A Slipping Down Life* 77). Unhesitatingly, Casey is built with the gender expression of patriarchy to move forward to achieve the pinnacle point in his unsuccessful career.

Apparently, Evie being conscious of his failure, she elopes with him just as the gender discrimination plays a crucial role in the marital life to think constantly that she cannot leave him in utter failure. Behind the plot, Evie's self-revelation points out her individuality to enable her to get liberated by an autarchic experience of discontented marriage. Specifically, Drumstrings Casey is unclear and mysterious about his life and for the most part, Casey is selfish and accordingly changes his color between closeness and loneliness.

In the similar pattern, being overwhelmed by mother's statement, Casey accepts his mother's words obsequiously when Ora utters: "We may not be college-educated in our family but we are law-abiding" (Tyler, *A Slipping Down Life* 97). Unfortunately, the mother makes him free from shouldering the responsibilities. A key feature to be noted is that being hailed from relatively modest means lower in status than Evie Decker, Casey's father works in a gas station to meet the financial requirements. Aside from believing, Evie is seen as a fallen victim to Casey's false career unmindful of gender expression.

Subsequently, dereliction is projected on the central character Drumstrings as he spends his life in search of stardom. Frantically, he does not accomplish success but completely depends on his wife, Evie to help him win over the unfavorable circumstances. As a needle in a haystack, Drum never succeeds in growing with popularity. In an article, Cecilia Donohue has investigated Anne Tyler's *A Slipping Down Life* and commented: "transcend the carving up of her forehead (and the threat of a slipping-down life) to the carving out of a grounded, firm-footed, reality-based existence sans rock-star fantasies" (54). To a large extent, Evie's slippery slope in her youth with a nugatory marital life gives the reader a premonition of her deceitful marriage. In the final analysis, it is interestingly pregnancy more than marriage that brings out the self - realization in Evie Decker.

In an incisive study, Margaret Morganroth Gullette (1985) observes that Evie "needs a real house and an organized life for the sake of the baby, the boy-husband no longer matters. She leaves him behind when he won't go along" (326).

Symbolically, through dismemberment of her forehead and through elopement discovers the weak Casey's disturbed patriarchal interventions. Without pressing the matter too much, strengthens her womanhood to immerse herself into the role of mother. Selflessly, Evie identifies her gender and attains self- actualization by providing her life and her efforts to support his child selflessly with fulfillment in motherhood.

Indoctrinate Formulations of Patriarchy within Domesticity in *Earthly Possessions*

In discussing another novel, the paper lays foundation on the theoretical framework of defining the conventional roles of the female protagonist, Charlotte Emory as regards gender identity. In the amplitude of discussion, Anne Tyler's *Earthly Possessions* preponderantly manifests the theme of a runaway housewife, Charlotte Emory within the indoctrinated formulations of patriarchy. Basically, Charlotte builds the household to keep her children under her care whereas her husband Saul Emory consistently performs in distancing himself from the domestic space to stick to the notion of administering the household. Though Charlotte Emory estimates her domestic arena as her own possession, this private space gradually becomes cramped for her as her husband Saul brings furniture and loads the house with furniture and people. Charlotte finds her house with "an end table in front of another end table, a second sofa backed against the first. It was crazy. Every piece of furniture had its shadow, a Siamese twin" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 85).

More strangely, Charlotte does not discard the disarranged physical space of the domestic sphere but she considers her husband and children as unavoidable clutters in her life. Frustrated by her constrained thoughts within the littered space of her house, she has been considered not as a subject but as an object of male gaze. Conclusively, Judith Butler emphasizes in her analysis of Simon de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* that "gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired" (Butler 35-49). Unable to endure the silent abuse, Charlotte runs away from the cluttered objects and stuffed people to give vent to her fettered self to acquire the perfect gender identity. Moreover, Charlotte considers "her husband was another encumbrance; I often thought that. And children even more so. How did I end up so much, when I had thrown so much away?" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 31). On a personal note, Charlotte explicates that within the clutter of her relationships, she is unable to take her breadth and for a while, thinks about escaping from the clutters of her children and husband to identify the self within the gender differences.

However, the protagonist fights back the conventional traits of patriarchy in

which a housewife has been burdened to unburden the responsibility in surveillance of the events taking place around the lives of her children and her indifferent husband. From her childhood, Charlotte conceptualizes a complex kind of life to move out of the domestic realm and face the external space of challenges but being a woman of the domestic dimension, she faces the invincible struggles to clear away the haltered sentiments from mind. Therefore, Voelker maintains, "her mother's child Charlotte inevitably became a person upon whom domestic burdens fall; while she has rejected them in principle, she has become in fact the caretaker and servant in Saul's household" (120). Hereby, gender acts as an agent in the case of Charlotte and hesitantly moves out to find for a better survival though she is an object in the male dominion of the house.

Sympathetically, Charlotte Emory being the raconteur of the novel, narrates the escape from the burdensome domestic interventions of her family consisting of ailing mother and dominant and unemotional husband and faces the turbulence in the domestic thralldom of long thirty-five years. Meanwhile, her unanticipated trip with the captor Jake Simms mounts her to escalate pressure by emancipating herself from private stagnation of domestic liabilities. It is observed that apart from being born as an exchanged child in the hospital, Charlotte encounters by being caged in a domestic incarceration of her parents who look at her scornfully ever since she has been exchanged in the hospital. Firstly, Charlotte confronts such miseries unflinchingly. Secondly, she is seen as an unemotional toy in the hands of her husband, Saul Emory from the sight of first infatuation. In this regard, Gender divide is discussed to an extremity while Charlotte's prerogatives have been questioned and remain unanswered in the patriarchal interferences of Saul Emory.

Distinctively, a disrupted setting of her life approaches Charlotte, the moment she meets her husband and gets intimidated. While she expresses her subdued emotions of love towards him, she is unbelievably confident that Saul would be an impeccable man to pursue her dreams and also would travel a distant land to attain peace in her newly found hope of the new domestic possession. Realistically, Charlotte reinforces to assert herself that she is indeed moving out of the patriarchy to possess the dream world of marital life in a strange land with her husband remaining similar with no difference. In other words, the dreams deceive her and prove tactless as the events in her life are unthinkable. At close examination, Jerome Tognoli, (1979) says that "Freudian and Jungian dream symbolism affirm the houses as representing femaleness" (604). Charlotte meets the consequences of gender differences even in the new territory of unfamiliar domesticity in this regard.

Doggedly the idiosyncrasies of Saul Emory's passion are explained at certain

aspects. Ironically, Saul Emory's sympathy towards Charlotte's unwell mother occupies his thoughts more than Charlotte as he cultivates an intimacy with her mother and embeds in his mind to give her protection. Though Charlotte has built in her mind to monitor her bedridden mother, she tries to escape from the reality of the threatening burden of her house. On the contrary, remains calm in the face of precariousness to protest against her husband's patriarchal authority. In this context, Charlotte laments: "I have been trying to get rid of all belongings that would weigh me down on a long foot march" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 21).

Moreover, Saul's stuffed thoughts of issuing six offspring under her care adds intensified pressure and combats the fate without voicing for her ideas as she discourages his fanciful ideas. As a result, she brings forth six off springs as ordained by fate to nurture them but encased in these domestic chores, Charlotte finds a direction to escape. Inevitably, gender expression plays a pivotal role and obstructs her spontaneity of thoughts. At this juncture, she falls in love with her brother-in-law to break the monotonous stereotypical norms of gender by eloping with him to discover her identity. Sooner arrives at a self- revelation that she would be stifling with her self-consciousness. Thus, Charlotte brings out the expression of feminine gender to cling on to conventional roles of a mother more than a wife.

Arguably, Charlotte's troubled self finds an agonized house full of relatives including her husband's brothers, sinners who surrender to her preacher husband by settling to get relieved from their inhibitions. For instance, Charlotte's protest to attend the church and refusal of imbibing these sermons instigate her husband to create petty scuffles with Charlotte. To add fuel to fire, Saul's harsh patriarchal thoughts pollute him and ideate that it is a woman in particular a wife's primal duty to feed the massive relatives including the mourners but Charlotte has the opposite view to perceive and foresee about the distant future. In an utter discomforted state, Charlotte mulls over to escape from the clutches of the patriarchal rules and regulations. As she complains: "What I was aiming for was a house with the bare, polished look of a bleached skull" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 160).

Unquestionably, Charlotte moves out of the expression of gender being looked upon as a woman and escapes from the domestic internment to establish her independence. Before escaping from her household, Charlotte grieves: "My life has been a history of casting off encumbrances, paring down to these bare essentials, stripping for the journey" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 37). Untiringly, with a strengthened power she runs away to the bank for financial expenses. Meanwhile she provides a definition of her escape from the neurotic self as a real dream but she is kidnapped by Jake Simms for his personal accomplishment. Subsequently,

Charlotte realizes that the kidnapper is a blessing in disguise who has served to put her in a comfortable zone by being a protector for her unbalanced state of mind. In due course of action, differing from her imagination, the kidnapper is found to be a sufferer of fatal events and has indeed kidnapped Charlotte for feeding his pregnant wife, Mindy, and also strengthening himself financially.

Conversely, gender takes a new dimension through the kidnapper who erases the faulty self of Charlotte's former self with an inclination to replace her in the same dominion of her household. It is also worthwhile to mention that Charlotte grows in her own idiosyncratic way to tread on the path of traditional patriarchal standards. In the final analysis, Charlotte unconsciously craves for self-actualization which forces her to move past the territory of patriarchy. Hence, Charlotte moves back to reside within the strict and tightened patriarchal structure to arrive at the conclusion which requires her physical presence in order to help define the presence of her partner and children. Finally, through her struggle for self-actualization, she becomes the bearer of her fate. In addition, she is bound by the "silent image" that categorizes her as a good homemaker. When Charlotte returns, her "foot-steps had a steady sound, like rain" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 197).

Nonetheless, Jake Simms interrogates, exhorts and bombards Charlotte with questions about her past life which she describes in crude terms as her life has been confined within the domestic imprisonment and thereby dictated by the patriarchal authority of her husband to live in perpetual agitation. Later, Jake Simms delves into a deeper examination of Charlotte's mind to recreate, reframe and retrieve the memories of the past to regenerate by getting back to former life which has given her the mistaken proof of identity. Eventually developing comradeship with the kidnapper and his innocent wife, Charlotte realizes by adhering to live a principled life with reconciliation and togetherness. Ironically, it is Jake who preaches her the true adaptation of dream in one of his insights. He preaches to her that, "I believe, anytime you see someone running, it's their old fault, self they're running from" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 134).

Ultimately, having come to a possible revelation of self, Charlotte returns to her dominion while Alice Petry Hall (1994), being unsatisfied with this transformation of self in Charlotte maintains that: "Charlotte's return is yet another manifestation of her capacity to be passive Therefore, she concludes that the latter transformed self of Charlotte is nothing but an urge to return to the former self of homemaker's passivity" (38). Contrarily, Robert Scott Stewart put forth his motive that "her life may be identified with home but she has come to reconstruct herself through her travels and has begun to take possession of her life" (Stewart 78). Paradoxically,

Charlotte's return to her domestic boundary has been differently interpreted by him as a fresh beginning of Charlotte who has the capacity to change the mind of her patriarchal husband for a reconsideration of contemplated gender.

In truth, Charlotte expresses bitterly to Saul at the end of *Earthly Possessions.* "We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives. We are still traveling. We couldn't stay in one's place if we tried" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 170). Indisputably, Charlotte, without eschewing the paradigm of relationships, discovers that the gender identity for women can be given a prerogative wherever women reside. Hence, a new Charlotte emerges and now "she marvels at her slipperiness" (Tyler, *Earthly Possessions* 198). Evie Decker in *A Slipping Down Life* is substantially enmeshed in a drudgery to attain self-revelation within the impoundment of turbulent domestic life. While being acquiescent to the demands, Charlotte in *Earthly Possessions* abruptly moves away from the commotion of patriarchy where gender is contemplated.

Self-Actualization of Women in *A Slipping Down Life and Earthly Possessions*

Although the term 'self-actualization' was popularized by Abraham Maslow, it was coined by Kurt Goldstein who acknowledged self-actualization as a denotation or individuation of achieving the need for self. As a matter of fact, Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs, interpreted self-actualization by asserting: "What a man can be, he must be" (370-396). This is what is referred to as self-actualization as declared by Abraham Maslow. In other words, self- actualization can be elaborated as the complete realization of one's internal potential by overcoming the external forces in reality. Magnificently, both Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory get stimulated to overcome the externalities of gender divide to attain self-actualization. Contextually, "Self-actualization to be fulfilled implies courage, effort, risk-taking and sometimes suffering, frustration and isolation. Self-actualization is a *growth motivation* that is found within each individual, a need to develop his own psychic potential" (Rusu 1104). Both Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory strengthen their potential by overcoming risk-taking, frustration and isolation to attain self-actualization.

Consequently, the paper brings forth more ideologies on gender and in particular, Lois Tyson (2006) in his *Critical Theory Today* puts forth the argument that "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive**"** (Tyson 85). Habitually and traditionally, Anne Tyler's men in the latter part of twentieth century novels are vehemently connected to the strict patriarchal procedures of hindering the progress of women with a strong inclination to occupy

the domain of the household. Yet, women in both the novels deliberately crave for gender identity which can be equivalent to men in every aspect of life. On the surface, the men in these novels have been ingrained to be insular, unfriendly, uncooperative to the women folks throughout the narration.

It can be argued that it is only through the clarity of detaching themselves from their current lifestyles that women's faulty vision begins its process of clarification. Instinctively, as per the argument, beyond sacrificing their needs for their families, women have to progress far by detaching themselves. In addition, Evie Decker detaches herself from the disloyal partner to progress for self-definition. Whereas Charlotte detaches herself from the stringent patriarchal norms set by her dominant partner who controls her every moment. Behind the analysis, Charlotte submerges into motherhood deeply and returns to establish within her gender by continuing to be a mother to her naïve children rather than being a wife. At this stage, both the women fulfill the needs of motherhood without connecting with the reminiscences of the past. Moreover, Maslow's hierarchy of needs show that people should fulfill the hierarchies of basic needs, physiological needs, safety needs, psychological needs, belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. These women are able to sustain individually by meeting these needs with self-actualization.

Therefore, through the findings of gender divide, both the female protagonists are bolstered up with vigor and indomitable spirit to define their roles without fear or unhappiness to procure self-actualization. More appropriately, these women characters, particularly Evie Decker and Charlotte Emory have been created to remain in the unflappable crisis of 'womanhood.

Later, these women progress to conquer the identity which has been hidden by the patriarchy of their male counterparts. Incongruously, Evie Decker in *A Slipping Down Life* (1970), hankers after the concealed love and kindness in her birth place to discover another frustrated world of sorrow in the bitter marital relationship with Drumstrings Casey. Nonetheless, Evie builds up self-actualization of attaining motherhood in response to the concept of gender without her partner. Ultimately, Charlotte Emory too emerges as a new woman after undergoing the untold trauma of being a stereotypical home maker in Emory's household. Hence, to achieve a sense of self-actualization, Charlotte returns to exercise the functions of a mother by actualizing herself. Crucially, Charlotte defines her image clearly that it is not mere submission or complete surrender to the patriarchal framework but she has achieved in actualizing herself in her absence during the trials of kidnapping.

Discussion

According to the general perception, our society is constructed such that gender is closely interlinked with behavioral patterns of men and women. A thorough comprehensive investigation of American, social and emotional behavioral patterns is plausible and probable by introspecting and comparing the novels such as *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, Clock Dance* and *Ladder of years* of Anne Tyler. Generally, gender and power are completely a combination of unique areas of study but are related and mutually interconnected concepts. Particularly, a community of men are always possessed with dominance and superiority. By taking at least partial charge of competent power, women try harder to struggle to become more prominent in the male patriarchal community.

Traditionally, feminism dwells on the necessity for women to encounter the ordeals which compel them to be housewives and men to be breadwinners by social conventions. Specifically, gender roles are prominent in these novels. More emphatically, the paper has taken up and compared Pearl Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant,* Willa Drake in *Clock Dance* and Delia Grinstead in *Ladder of Years* along with the novels taken for present study, *A Slipping Down Life* and *Earthly Possessions* to display how these women hanker after success self-actualization to achieve in male dominant society.

The past studies had shown how women have been struggling to identify their roles in their families with particular reference to novels. In particular, in *Earthly Possessions,* Tyler has brought out the insipid life of Charlotte Emory, a helpless house wife who sets far apart to depart her dominant husband but gets trapped in a bungled bank burglary. In addition, she observes the predicament in such an unexpected situation with a bank robber, Jake Simms. During the journey, Charlotte explained her befuddled domestic life to Jake to seek clarification. But Jake convinces Charlotte to accept the former life to find self-realization in her family. Here, she realizes that women's internal expectation of self-identity is being with the family to envision a new life and not to be departed from it.

Similarly, "Ladder *of Years" demonstrated* the theme of another run -away house wife novel which depicts the character of Delia Grinstead who, being born as a daughter to a medical practitioner has never been given an opportunity to enjoy a prestigious life of her own. Neither her father nor her husband has given her complete freedom to make choices in life, Later, Delia escapes into the land of Bay borough, works in a company then becomes a caretaker of twelve-year-old Nara. Suddenly, Delia returns to her family and seeks self-identity in being with her children and family.

Conventionally. Pearl Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* welcomes

to be married at an early age after neglecting her uncle's offer of higher education. According to her plans, she executes and marries Beck Tull to create a family of her own. Fortunately, Pearl accepts to be a homemaker and travels along with Beck to enjoy her family life but Pearl sacrifices by letting Beck move away from her for the sake of taking up his career. Unexpectedly, Beck turns away from taking responsibilities and indeed burdens Pearl to bring forth children. Hence, Pearl works single-handedly as a store keeper to fulfill the monetary needs of the family as executed by Evie in *A Slipping Down Life.* Critically, Willa Drake in *Clock Dance* projects the arduous zeal of herself who continuously struggles to discover an identity for herself in the patriarchal society. It is only at the age of sixty-one, Willa begins to realize and regret the decisions she has made in her life for being lived and sacrificed for the sake of others. From this point, Willa learns to live for herself by possessing the unshakeable vigor and faith in being a powerful woman to question the patriarchal order to which she had been submissive throughout her two marriages.

In *A Slipping Down Life,* Tyler has narrated the story of innocent Evie Decker whose sole relative and companion is her uncommunicative father. In other words, Evie learns the outside world from watching television and listening to the radio. In the first place, Evie Decker being a less pretty girl decides to seek self-identity. Secondly, Evie falls in love with an unsuccessful rock star, Casey and to identify herself with the rock star, she desperately cuts the unsuccessful rock star's name on her forehead to attain popularity for Casey. Correspondingly, Evie has been deceived by Casey who spoils her by developing an illicit relationship with Evie's friend. Hence, Evie's determination to seek self-identity with her unborn baby is commendable as she moves far ahead from the male constructed society. On the whole, Evie Decker, Charlotte Emory, Pearl Tull, Willa Drake and Delia Grinstead, during their quest for individualism become bearers of silent image which projects them as good wives and ideal home makers.

Conclusion

Substantially, the paper has focused on women's quest for identity in the power patriarchal structures of the society. *A Slipping Down Life displays* the traditional patriarchy of men with an influence on society. While Evie Decker is determined to take a courageous step to work for the family, her partner Drumstrings Casey criticizes her and dictates her to be at home despite his failure in his profession. Through his downright thoughts, Casey is more preoccupied with the reaction of the society than prioritizing the needs of Evie. Later, it is understood at length that Evie

Decker in *A Slipping Down Life* has reached the state of hoping for a better place to survive to overcome the gender division in the problematic patriarchal world. Effortlessly, Evie finds self-actualization of gender expression with the meaningful attainment of leading a lonely life with her unborn baby.

In the closing pages of the novel, Charlotte identifies herself with her children who have been longing to meet her in *Earthly Possessions.* As on her return, she ensures that she would transform the whole household with the new definition of gender whereas contrastingly, her partner remains unchanged with his patriarchal power structure whereas the new woman in Charlotte persuades her to have a different outlook of her partner. On the whole, both Evie and Charlotte attain self-actualization by occupying the domestic sphere with the identity of mother in the troublesome patriarchal world. To sum up, the paper signifies firmly as how women in both these novels conquer individuality by empowering themselves to be constructive after confronting with destiny in the world of surmounting gender division.

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A Carnivalesque Exploration of Hosseini's Select Novels

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Abstract This study applies Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of carnivalesque to the select novels of Khaled Hosseini, namely, *The Kite Runner, A Thousand Splendid Suns, and And the Mountains Echoed.* The theoretical framework of carnivalesque is based on the chaotic festivities of carnivals, during which *reversal* is celebrated. The understanding of carnivalesque prepares grounds for a deeper investigation of subversive and rebellious tendencies in a literary work. This paper explores how carnivalesque moments manifest by creating space for alternative perspectives, challenging hierarchies, suspending societal norms, and celebrating grotesque bodies within these novels. This analysis provides instances of power reversal, dialogue among diverse voices, and defiance of societal expectations by unearthing the deeper layers of plot dynamics and the characters in the novels. The present study, ultimately, enhances the understanding of the intricate interaction of culture, power, and resistance in the select works of Khaled Hosseini through the lens of carnivalesque.

Keywords Mikhail Bakhtin; Carnivalesque; Khaled Hosseini; *The Kite Runner; A Thousand Splendid Suns; And the Mountains Echoed;* Subversion of Hierarchies

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Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin is a Russian philosopher and theorist who propounded many unique concepts to decode and analyze the text in unique ways. Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony[1], heteroglossia[2], dialogism[3] and carnivalesque help researchers discern the multiple layers of a text. These groundbreaking concepts of Bakhtin can have a unique impact on literary analysis. Out of these Bakhtinian intellectual tools, carnivalesque helps to understand subversive and reformative tendencies of the voices and forces that often remain at the peripheries of society. Bakhtin propounded this critical concept, which has roots in the chaotic festive life of carnivals in Medieval Europe. Bakhtin observed that political, ideological, moral, and state authorial forces are subverted during carnival.

The spirit of carnival off-shoots a literary form of carnivalesque that allows for the momentary overturning of power positions in the textual universe. Dostoevsky's novels sparked Bakhtin's interest in carnivalized writings and later in the development of one of his key concepts, carnivalesque. Bakhtin introduced this concept in his work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. The thought of carnivalesque is further developed from the close reading and analysis of the 17th-century writer Rabelais and explained in detail in his seminal work, *Rabelais and His World*. Continuous exploration by researchers has refined the understanding of Bakhtinian theory of carnivalesque and it has been established that *reversal* is the fundamental idea at the core of it. Carnivaleque can be seen when a social space is built for the momentary exchange of positions. Bakhtin wrote that "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10).

As a literary analytical tool, Carnivalesque can help unpack scenarios of

1 Polyphony refers to the idea of having multiple voices in the text with different and contesting ideologies. These voices are not guided by the author or narrator. See more, Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics.* (C. Emerson, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

2 The concept of heteroglossia emphasizes diverse languages and discourses used in text and their connection to the social and cultural surroundings of the characters. See more Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays.* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press

3 The concept of dialogism highlights the continuous engagement of present utterances with all past and future utterances of the same context. See more Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays.* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

inversion of societal norms, temporary suspension of hierarchical structures, and celebration of the grotesque. Elements of carnivalesque often highlight the power dynamics in a society that are depicted in the text. Through the carnivalesque lens, it can be understood how certain characters challenge traditional hierarchies and official systems. This analysis gives a closer view of the tension between dominant and marginalized groups and discloses the continuous complex play between control and resistance. During carnivalesque episodes, characters often embrace the spirit of liberation from societal constraints and reveal their hidden desires. The desire to attain personal joy can lead to breaking societal norms and expectations. Thus, the carnivalesque framework helps in dissecting a text to reach the deeper layers of the social, political, and psychological dimensions.

Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque as a framework is used widely to explore various literary works across the genres. This concept is used by Ayşenur to study the Turkish translation of Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, explaining the dual nature of the protagonist and how the desired freedom and equality hinged in the carnival setting (332-343). According to Ravi, Mabanckou's novel *Verre Cassé* incorporates carnivalesque humor through scatological imagery and informal language, building a conflicted utopic world for the black other (33-42). Nadal explained how Hitchcock's film adaptation of *Strangers on a Train* brings in carnival elements to represent the protagonists' mental turbulence through carnival as a reflection of their mental disorder (104-114). Hasibe applied Bakhtin's concept of carnival and grotesque realism to Iris Murdoch's novel *The Italian Girl*, surveying the reestablishment of characters through connections with the Other in society (757-764). According to Violeta, The novels *Johannisnacht* by Uwe Timm and *Lietuvis Vilniuje* by Herkus Kunčius incorporate carnivalization in the strategies adopted for narrative and worldview, rising above the cultural and literary boundaries (67-76). Susan examined carnivalesque by explaining how the author has recontextualized the traditional castaway narratives in Martel's *Life of Pi* and has shown the uncommon, nonhuman, and alternative ways of dealing with the world (1-9).

We have applied the Bakhtinian analytical tool of carnivalesque to analyze Khaled Hosseini's renowned novels *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013). Through this analysis, carnivalesque tendencies infused in these novels will be discovered. Khaled Hosseini is an illustrious Afghan American novelist who is gifted with exceptional storytelling skills. The above-mentioned three novels of Hosseini resonate deeply with readers across the globe. The stories of these novels are woven

with multicolored threads of emotions in the backdrop of Afghan socio-cultural settings and political turmoil. This is why the novels become fertile grounds for scholarly academic analysis. The first and most acclaimed novel of Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, is the story of two friends and half-brothers, Amir and Hassan, who share a very complex relationship. The story is developed against the backdrop of political and social unrest in Afghanistan. The major themes in the novel are guilt, redemption, betrayal, loyalty and friendship. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* explores the themes of sacrifice, love, resilience, and the enduring power of women through the intertwining stories of Laila and Mariam, who are married to the same abusive husband, Rasheed. The story gives readers a very jolting experience as it presents some of the deepest human experiences and emotions. *And the Mountains Echoed* provides readers with a tapestry of colorful, interconnected stories that span across generations and continents. The story of the novel begins in Afghanistan in the 1950s and focuses on the lives of two siblings, Abdullah and Pari, who are separated due to the financial crises in the family. Many other characters and stories are also in some way connected to this main story. The novel explores themes like family, loss, sacrifice, and the intricate bonds that tie people together.

The novels of Khaled Hosseini have garnered significant attention from scholars who have analyzed them using various literary theories like post-colonialism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and subaltern studies etc. Various scholarly articles are written to offer insights into the intricate layers of which these novels are made up. Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* is explored for various themes and issues. Prakash, in his paper, focused on the portrayal of the Hazaras as a subaltern minority in Afghanistan who endure physical and psychological oppression from the dominant Pashtuns (100-106). Vishwa explored the concept of dehumanization, particularly in the conflict between the Pashtuns and Hazaras (84-92). Latha & Velusamy delve into the psychological transformations of the protagonist, Amir, and his journey toward redemption and reparation (621). Khanam et al. studied *A Thousand Splendid Suns* to focus on the sufferings of women in a patriarchal society, specifically in Afghanistan (110-122). Aziz et al. discuss the conflict and challenge between patriarchal and liberal feminist ideologies in *And the Mountains Echoed* (154-167). Inara et al. discuss how this novel challenges stereotypes about Afghanistan by exploring human destinies and characters (623-630).

This article will discuss the carnivalesque tendencies occurring in various forms in the novels of Hosseini. The carnivalesque exploration in this study is based on the carnival spirit of reversal, freedom and subversion. The first section talks

about the polyphonic settings in these novels where diverse voices are heard. In the multiplicity of voices, the dominating voices are often challenged by voices from weaker positions, as happens in a carnival atmosphere. The second section explains the subversion of hierarchies, where the characters perform some acts to jolt the positions of power. The third section focuses on instances in the novels where various characters are breaking society's set norms, expectations and rules to attain temporary liberties akin to carnival. The fourth section explains how grotesque bodies and exaggerated physicality are also carnivalesque and how this form of carnivalesque is meticulously incorporated into these texts. The carnivalesque lens has enabled us to surface the alternative truths presented by the weak voices, recognize the moments of subversion of hierarchies, identify the deviations from set patterns, and analyze the celebration of grotesque bodies. The dominating and oppressive structures are challenged temporarily in these novels by powerless characters. The carnivalesque further enriches the understanding of the complex interplay of culture, power and resistance. Thus, Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque becomes the guiding force for looking for the instances occurring in these novels that represent the momentary switching of power positions.

Polyphonic Carnivalesque

Bakhtin's carnivalesque is based on the idea of subversive forces that disrupt the oppressive system and challenge the established ideologies. Subversive forces thrive in polyphonic settings. "In the atmosphere of the 'carnival', there is no longer the voice of just one person, narrator, or character; henceforth, there is 'polyphony' in the sense that there are now several voices and different opinions" (Ayşenur et al. 337). The polyphonic novels provide space for all sorts of voices with multiple ideologies. As Bakhtin explained about Dostoevsky's works, there is "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 06). The inclusion of diverse voices helps in surfacing the alternative truths that are free from any authorial guidance. These voices contest the traditional power structures and rigid ideologies like patriarchy[1],

1 Patriarchy is the hypothetical social system in which the father or a male elder has absolute authority over the family group; by extension, one or more men (as in a council) exert absolute authority over the community as a whole. See more, Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, March 7). patriarchy. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/patriarchy.

religious extremism[1] and societal expectations and suspend them temporarily by showing alternative perspectives. The suspension of these powerful voices creates a carnivalesque scenario where alternative perspectives, like feminist[2] and religious notions are expressed freely. By examining the diverse voices with contrasting perspectives through carnivalesque gives us the opportunity to understand forces that are ready to uproot the dominant ideologies. “In the ‘carnivalesque’ game of inverting official values, (…) the anticipation of another, utopian world in which anti-hierarchism, the relativity of values, questioning of authority, openness, joyous anarchy, and the ridiculing of all dogmas hold sway, a world in which syncretism and a myriad of differing perspectives are permitted” (Lachmann 118).

The multiplicity of voices embroils in a constant struggle to take the central position and push the other voices to the periphery. “It creates a situation in which diverse voices are heard and interact, breaking down conventions and enabling genuine dialogue” (Robinson).

All three novels under discussion are polyphonic in nature because a range of diverse voices with a multiplicity of perspectives are incorporated here. Hosseini has created the characters in his novels to express their ideologies free from authorial clutches. Like, there are constant struggles among the voices loaded with the ideologies of the patriarchy and feminism and religion and religious extremism. In carnivalesque moments, the marginal voices become louder than the stronger ones. In this section, we try to explain the traditional and dominating voices, such as patriarchal ones, that occur in each of these novels and how feminist voices temporarily counter these robust voices. In the novel *The Kite Runner*, a strong voice with patriarchal ideologies is presented by protagonist Amir's father (Baba) on various occasions. Patriarchy unapologetically targets men and women by setting gender-specific norms. Baba targets his own son Amir for not being manly enough to safeguard himself from bullies. Baba expressed his disappointment for his son in these words; "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything "(Hosseini *Kite Runner* 20). Soraya was also targeted for

1 Religious extremism is a longstanding phenomenon that manifests in different forms. It is a concept that has been viewed as a high sense of ideological commitment that is expressed through certain actions that show deep loyalty to a belief system. It includes practices that characterize and define rituals and customs of many religious groups. . See more Njoku, E.T., Akintayo, J. (2018). Religious Extremism. In: Leeming, D. (eds) Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-27771-9_200132-2.

2 Feminism, the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. See more, Brunell, L. and Burkett, . Elinor (2024, February 28). feminism. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism.

eloping at a young age by her relatives. In *The Thousand Splendid Suns*, patriarchal voices come from characters like Rasheed and Khalil and the Taliban. Rasheed is the most vital ambassador of patriarchy. He believes in strict gender roles and criticizes the idea of modern society where women are free to follow their will and their husbands are supportive. He tells Mariam that women visit his shop without covering themselves properly, and what he despises the most is that their husbands don't object to that. All these things happen in Afghan society in the name of modernity. He tells Mariam that "it embarrasses me, frankly, to see a man who lost control of his wife" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 69). He further affirms that he comes from a background where a single improper word or look of a woman can be the reason for spilling the blood and he declared arrogantly and authoritatively that "where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 69). In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Mrs. Neela Wahdati's father expresses a strong patriarchal ideology. Neela was rebellious and never succumbed to the pressure created by her father to follow the etiquette of a woman as desired by society. They often quarreled about Neela's behavior, which is quite scandalous for Afghan society. In Neela's own words, her father "wasn't accustomed to being talked back to, certainly not by women. We had rows over what I wore, where I went, what I said, how I said it, who I said it to" (Hosseini *Mountain Echoed* 208). Krystyna Pomorska in the foreword of the book *Rebelais and His World,* notes that dialogue among various voices helps in surfacing the truth. "Dialogue so conceived is opposed to the "authoritarian word"*(avtoritarnoe slovo)* in the same way as carnival is opposed to official culture" (X).

In the polyphonic text, when strong voices support one sort of ideology, some contesting voices try to indulge in dialogue with them and bring in contrasting perspectives. These perspectives challenge the ideologies that are forwarded as official truths. In all these novels, if the patriarchal notion is expressed very strongly, then there is an alternative space created for feminist notions to counter patriarchal rants, though temporarily. Soraya in *The Kite Runner* criticizes how patriarchal society overlooks the deeds of men and ridicules women brutally for the same. In her words, men can behave in a reckless manner but not women; they can go to nightclubs and make their girlfriends pregnant, but if she does something of this sort, then she lacks morality, "Oh, they are men having fun ! I made one mistake and everyone is talking nang and namoos(Honor and Pride)" (Hosseini *Kite Runner* 156). In *Thousand Splendid Suns*, there are many feminist voices like Nana, Laila, the lady teacher, and Babi, who try to break away from the accepted norms of patriarchy. Nana, a poor mother of an illegitimate child abandoned by her husband,

voices out the anguish of a wretched woman who was outcasted and kept at the periphery of society. She criticizes the way society functions in powerful words. She tells her daughter not to overtrust any rich man, even her father. She says, "rich man telling rich lies" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 5). She further tells from her own experience of being an outcaste that this male-dominated society would always find fault with a woman: "like a compass needle that points north, a man accusing finger always finds a woman" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 07). Another character of a school teacher, fondly called Khala Rangmaal by kids, opposes the biases against women in society. She told her students, "Women and men were equal in every way, and there was no reason women should cover if men didn't" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 111).

Similarly, Mrs. Neela Wahdati becomes the feminist voice in *And the Mountains Echoed* to unmask the face of patriarchy. She does everything that is considered impure and wrong for a woman in Afghan society to show her rebellion against the Patriarchal system. While talking about her father, she reveals how her own father disregarded her for not adhering to the set gender roles of the society. "We were quarrelling. Quite a lot, which was a novelty for him. He wasn't accustomed to being talked back to, certainly not by women. We had rows over what I wore, where I went, what I said, how I said it, who I said it to. I had turned bold and adventurous, and he even more ascetic and emotionally austere" (Hosseini *Mountain Echoed* 208). "No one in Kabul considered me a pioneer of anything but bad taste, debauchery, and immoral character. Not least of all, my father. He said my writing was the ramblings of a *whore*. He used that word precisely. He said I'd damaged his family name beyond repair" (Hosseini *Mountain Echoed* 211).

The contesting voices from the margins of society are occurring to silence the domineering voices. The anti-religious voice of Baba in *The Kite Runner* is doused by Rahim Khan by giving a religious explanation of heavenly mercy. Baba makes remarks about religion very candidly, "They do nothing but thumb their prayers beads and recite a book written in a tongue they don't even understand" (Hosseini *Kite Runner* 15). Baba uses words like "bearded idiots" and "self–righteous monkeys" for mullahs. This interpretation of religion is quite dominant in the novel. But on certain occasions, there is a religious voice that comes into the picture and overpowers all the anti-religious rants. The Religious extremism of the Taliban is countered by the true teachings of religion that are filled with mercy and forgiveness by Mullah Faizullah in *The Thousand Splendid Suns*. When Mariam was deeply sorrowful after the death of her mother and held herself responsible for the death. That time, Mullah Faizullah, who was constantly telling the positive side of religion

to Mariam, soothes her wound by saying, "The Koran speaks the truth, my girl. Behind every trial and every sorrow that He makes us shoulder, God has a reason" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 38). All these challenging voices are occurring from a weaker position.

The Temporary occurrence of counter perspectives to challenge the dominating ideas generates a carnivalesque scenario as Bakhtin explained that, carnivalesque is a way of challenging the established notions and creating the space for alternative voices to show up, though momentarily. There is a constant fight between official and non-official to establish the alternative truth. These battling voices try to subvert the established notions in the textual universe of Hosseini with the celebratory spirit of carnivalesque.

Overturning of Hhierarchies

Bakhtinian carnivalesque is an umbrella term that can be understood in multiple ways. Denith observed that "carnivalesque has no one univocal social or political meaning, but that it provides a malleable space, in which activities and symbols can be inflected in different directions" (173). In the novel, one can look at the situation where carnivalesque can occur contextually when a very feeble character with an almost silenced voice says something very important or contradicts the authority.

At times in a novel, a carnivalesque situation arises where a weak character rebels and confronts the authority or does something that reverses the power positions temporarily. Denith says that carnivalized writings are those "which has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces, within its own structures and by its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper" (63). Though in *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin's emphasis is more on bodily functions and grotesque, but somewhere, the central tendency behind it is to emphasize anti-authority and liberating spirit.

In *The Kite Runner,* carnivalesque features are expressed by momentarily shifting the power in the hands of the wimpy characters. There are instances of situational and contextual carnivalesque in the novel where a timid character with a feeble voice confronts and challenges the powerful. One such instance of situational carnivalesque arises in the novel *The Kite Runner* when Assef, who enjoys a power position, tries to hit Amir when they were little kids, and Hassan protects Amir by pointing a slingshot toward Assef and asking him to leave Amir and him alone. This momentary overturning of power positions is carnivalesque. Hassan, a servant boy from the minority who often remains silent, takes the center position and threatens Assef in these words; "you didn't notice that I am the one holding slingshot"

(Hosseini *Kite Runner* 37). Assef is an upper-class Pashtun (powerful community) boy who often threatens the people of the Hazara (lower class) community, and he always remains assured that he is allowed to do anything nasty to anyone. This confidence comes from him being upper class. Kids are often afraid of him and never retaliate in any form to the insults he often hurls at them. But when Hassan an agency less boy challenges him, it turns out like destabilizing the mighty as it happens during carnival where positions are exchanged to give power to powerless. One more situational carnivalesque comes when, later in the novel, Amir dares to meet Assef, a Taliban official, to get Shorab (Hassan's son) free from Assef's clutches. Amir was beaten badly by Assef and could not fight back, but even after being beaten red and blue, he starts laughing, "I don't know at what point I started laughing but I did. It hurt to laugh...But I was laughing and laughing. And the harder I laughed, the harder he kicked me, punched me, scratched me" (Hosseini *Kite Runner* 252). Here, laughter in a much-unexpected situation becomes carnivalesque. In this situation, there comes a time when Amir is utterly powerless and accepts defeat, yet he manages to laugh loudly for an instant.

The laughter becomes the mighty weapon to defeat Assef, which leads to a momentary subversion of power. Bakhtin writes in the history of laughter in *Rabelais and his World* that there are moments that depict "the victory of laughter over fear" (90). and one of the important traits of laughter is its relation with people's "unofficial truth"(90).

"The serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are combined with violence, prohibitions, and limitations and always contain an element of fear and of intimidation. These elements prevailed in the Middle Ages. Laughter, on the contrary, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations" (90).

During the same fight, Sohrab, an orphan Hazara boy, screams at Assef to stop hurting Amir by yelling 'Bas'(stop) and pulls the slingshot on Assef's face and injures his left eye. A very weak boy snatches the power position for a moment and defeats the powerful opponent, creating a carnivalesque moment. "The main purpose of carnival is supplanting the hierarchical voice in a context that there is only one dominant source of power" (Hooti et al.).Sohrab has lost his parents at the hands of the Taliban and is also used as a child prostitute by Taliban official Assef. He was so traumatized at such an early age that he remained quiet most of the time. But when he witnesses Amir being beaten by Assef, he, a little boy with no power, rescues him by crushing Assef with one slingshot.

Dentith explains that Bakhtin not only indulges in the scholarly inquiry of a novel but also establishes its aesthetic. This aesthetic becomes prominent and

attractive with anti-authoritarianism and pluralism, where the final word does not come from an authoritative voice (60). When Assef tells Amir he is on a mission of God to make Afghanistan clean of unwanted litter and calls it ethnic cleansing. Amir, though, is very feeble and afraid of Assef but voices out the truth and takes the center position momentarily, he tells Assef "what mission is that?, Stoning adulterers? Rapping Children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam?" (Hosseini *Kite Runner* 248). Above situations depict how power positions are swept swiftly.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns,* Laila, the second wife of Rasheed, hits back at her husband while he is beating her. This is an example of challenging the powerful and also twisting the power dynamics momentarily. "It was the first time she'd struck anybody...She hit him hard. The impact actually made him stagger two steps backward (...) She might have grinned when, to her astonishment, Rasheed calmly walked out of the room" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 292). Mariam, who has suffered the atrocities of her husband Rasheed silently, finally musters the courage and, hits him with all her strength and kills him. This killing indicates an inversion of hierarchy. The weakest character in the novel becomes powerful, though momentarily, and does the most unexpected act.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Odie (Markos mother) once raised the gun against the cruel father of her friend Madaline in order to save her from continuous beatings and physical torture inflicted by her father. As Madaline described, her father was the meanest kind of human being, who liked to show his power by beating his daughter. He was very sure that no one could help her, and he used to threaten her with these words; "all right ,girly, all right, and you knew it was coming-the storm, it was coming –and it could not be stopped. No one can help you" (Hosseini *Mountain Echoed* 294). Her father was so intoxicated with his power that he thought that nobody could challenge him and save his daughter. But to his little knowledge, a young girl who is a friend of her daughter can challenge him by holding a gun and aiming at him. So, the position of someone who is fully socked in power is challenged by a girl. "She went to Madeline's father and raised the barrel and shoves against his chin and says, Do it again and I will come back and shoot you in the face with this rifle" (Hosseini *Mountain Echoed* 296). The so-called powerful male is so terrified of this threat from a girl that he peed in his pants. This situation of snatching power by a weak person is wrapped in a carnivalesque sense and indicates that the power position can be switched at any moment.

By applying the Bakhtinian theory of carnivalesque, the contextual fall of those who hold the power positions can be traced as some of the marginalized

snatch the power positions. A sense of carnivalism seeps in strongly when an agency-less character raises the voice against the monologic established notions, and there is a momentary fall of the powerful characters from hierarchical positions. According to Bakhtin, there is unfinalizability, where no character can remain in the center position all the time. Hosseini tries to demean the power positions of strong characters and denies them to remain unchallenged on power positions continuously by incorporating carnivalesque scenarios in his works.

Temporary Suspension of The Norms

Carnivalesque is also breaking and suspending societal norms and expectations momentarily. "Bakhtin's understanding of the 'carnivalesque' involves a temporary suspension of the normal order, breaking down barriers, norms, prohibitions and etiquettes as well as reversing the existing hierarchical distinctions" (MacMillanp 3). Deviating from established regulations and social standards temporarily also aligns very well with the spirit of carnivalesque. The momentary occurrence of this behavior challenges the official setups. The reason for this kind of behavior heavily depends upon the context and circumstances. "World in which the flouting of, and challenging authority along with disrespect for, and disregard of, what is deemed sacred and valued are vital and instrumental, where individuals are liberated from any restrictions imposed on them outside carnival and are permitted to pursue what pleases them" (Abootalebi & Kargara) The characters in the novels under discussion, like to show their anguish against the system by treading on the path of rebellion by breaking the rigid repressive norms. Challenging societal expectations sometimes helps in developing new perspectives and outlooks. "Institution forms of oppression have periodically been defeated, transformed, or at least temporarily checked by carnivalesque forms of public protest" (Bruner 136). Those who are in power positions and exercise suppression by inducing fear are often confronted by the carnivalesque behavior of the suppressed.

In *The Thousand Splendid Suns* the abuse of power done by Rasheed to torture and beat the women of the house. These women, Laila and Mariam, dared to flee from the house to attain the unknown freedom. This behavior of women is considered outrageous by the Taliban-led government and is quite unexpected in Afghan society. To muster this momentary courage of escaping and discarding the expected gender behavior is carnivalesque.

Laila and Tarique's love indulgence and secret meetings also count as defying the behavioral expectations of society. As soon as they have crossed the threshold of childhood friendship, they develop feelings of love for each other. They started

kissing in the empty streets of their neighborhood, which is quite an alien thing in rigid Afghan society. They got intimate when the situation was quite tense outside due to Taliban-led turmoil in Kabul. This incident led to the early pregnancy of Laila at the age of fifteen years. The narrator describes the scene as very intense: "the terror that they would be discovered. The disbelief at their own boldness, their courage. The strange and indescribable pleasure, interlaced with pain" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 178). This momentary act of intimacy can be viewed as bending the rules for personal fulfillment. The characters are conscious that they are breaking the rules by acting in undesired ways, but they still do so for fun, though temporarily. In carnival festivities, people also defy the official anything for momentary pleasure. A similar case that occurs in the novel is when people of Afghanistan watch the Hollywood movie *Titanic* stealthily under strict Taliban rule of banning all sorts of entertainment and indulging in any sort of banned merry-making invites dire consequences.

Hosseini gives his characters a chance to choose iconoclastic ways and deviate from accepted standards and cherished beliefs. Mrs. Neela Wahdati breaks the gender role expectations of Afghan society and adopts wayward behavior to baffle everyone around her. The deviant behavior is to register her annoyance against the societal systems. Neela's adopted daughter Pari falls in love with her mother's lover and starts living with him for quite a period of time. This is also an unexpected behavior, even in a very frank and open French society. Both mother and daughter try to break away from the desired conventions to present their anguish in the most rebellious ways possible. Mr. Wahdati falls in love with a man who is his driver and cook. Same-sex love is the most scandalous in the rigid society of Afghanistan. These characters broke away from conventions in order to achieve personal fulfillment. The true spirit of carnivalesque is also to behave in unconventional ways for the sake of enjoyment and fulfillment.

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, the friendship between Hassan and Amir poses a challenge to the hierarchies of society by blurring the societal boundaries between the lower and upper classes. The carnival theme of inclusivity becomes true here as a servant Hazara boy is treated equally in a higher order of the Pashtun family of Amir. Despite being from different backgrounds, they share a strong friendship bond. This friendship between these two boys of unequal stature challenges the prevailing societal norms and expectations. According to Keith, Carnivalesque is a technique of subversion that challenges oppressive political structures and undermines authoritarian ideologies by breaking the rules. Carnivalesque elements in these novels light up the ways by which characters smash societal expectations

and fracture tyrannical rules. Through moments of uprising and departure from set standards, characters such as Laila, Mariam, Neela Wahdati, Mr. Wahdati, Pari, Amir, and Hassan claim a temporary hold on the position of agency in the face of the repressive system. Temporary suspension of norms is reflected whether it is Laila and Mariam's heroic attempt to escape from patriarchal tyranny, Hassan and Amir's norm-breaking friendship, and the capricious ways of Wadhaties to dissent against societal expectations. These instances of carnivalesque behavior represent the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Grotesque Bodies and Exaggerated Physicality

The theme of grotesque bodies and exaggerated physicality intertwined with the theory of carnivalesque in the novels. Depictions of deformed bodily features and extreme levels of abuse on the body are also carnivalesque since they depart from the ideal bodily representations. Grotesque bodies and exaggerated physicality are used as persuasive tools for disregarding the established conventions and exposing the superficiality of human set standards of the body. The representation of grotesque bodies prepares grounds for characters that become marginal due to deformity in their physical features or the ones who do not fit into the set beauty standards of society. By giving place to such characters to share their experience, the author subverts the hierarchies that are based on physical appearance. In doing so, the author discards the notion of a fixed and immutable social order and provides space for the voices of physically challenged characters. The carnivalesque celebrates the grotesque and exaggerated bodily representation and provides a critique of societal ideals and norms surrounding beauty, health, and bodily perfection. Hosseini, by depicting the bodies that do not fit into conventional standards, exposes the fragility of these norms and also questions the power dynamics that uphold them. By providing a rich picture of extreme bodily tortures, deformities and injuries, Hosseini confirms the materiality and corporeality of human existence.

The extreme representation of the body through various characters in the novels taken in this study demystifies the ideal idea of the body and surfaces some disturbing realities from the arena of taboo and stigma. The spirit of carnivalesque is manifested in the moments when physical deformities and challenges become the site of the revelation of truth. The characters transform their physical limitations as tools of agency and resilience. Representation of grotesque and exaggerated physicality in these novels significantly embraces the carnivalesque spirit and serves as instrumentation for subversion, critique, and celebration. Bakhtin confirmed that "contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest

of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits (*Rabelais World* 26).

In the novel *The Kite Runner*, the body is objectified on various occasions. The rape of Hassan by Assef highlights the brutality and dehumanization inflicted upon the body for taking revenge or covering the defeat at the Kite Tournament. Stone pelting at the football ground upon a couple who are declared adulterers by the Taliban is an extreme example of bodily torture for merrymaking and showing power. The cleft lip of Hassan, which is corrected later by surgery, shows the physical and mental trauma of not befitting the set standards. Disgracing the body is the source of merrymaking for one and showing resilience for others. Amir was beaten so badly by Assef, but he found a different kind of solace even in that beating because that becomes his way to clearing the debt he owes to Hassan. The suffering inflicted upon the body became the route of mental peace. Amir says, "my body was broken-just how badly I wouldn't find out until later- but I felt *healed*. Healed at last"(Hosseini *Kite Runner* 253). Later while he was recovering at a hospital in Pakistan, there is a graphic representation of his broken body, and the doctor told him jokingly, "your job today is to pass gas. You do that, and we can start feeding you liquids. No fart, no food" (Hosseini *Kite Runner* 259).

In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, extreme torture by Rasheed upon Laila and Mariam gives the reader an opportunity to see the evils of patriarchy. Laila once said that "she never would have believed that a human body could withstand this much beating, this viciously, this regularly, and keep functioning" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns*315). The continuous physical torture and abuses hurled at these women gave them the courage to flee from the situation and later retaliate in the same manner. This physical extremism foregrounds resilience in these characters. At the hospital, Rabia Balkhi, there is a very disturbing representation of human bodies. Human bodies are disgraced to the extreme, women are suffering labor pains, and there is blood all around but no facilities to attain these women in dire need of medical attention. When Mariam was searching for help for Laila, who was about to give birth, she heard groans all over the place; a woman was crying, "my daughter's water broke and the baby won't come,(…) A woman from behind yelled that her girl had broken her elbow(…) Another woman cried that she was passing bloody stools" (Hosseini *Thousand Suns* 280). The worst of all, there was no anesthetic in the hospital for Caesarean section. Laila, under excruciating labor pains, told the doctor that she was ready for a C-section without anesthetic, "cut me open and give me my baby" (*Thousand Suns* 283). These are examples of grotesque bodily representation, of which the main principle is degradation; as Bakhtin also

explained, “To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth” (*Rabelais World* 21).

Graphic representation of the paralytic body of Mr. Wahdati and the deformed body of Masooma in the novel *And the Mountains Echoed* provides grounds for a broader exploration of the human conditions and societal norms within the novel. The author provides them space among the all-abled bodies to offer profound insights into this bodily marginalization. The hint of carnivalesque in this representation questions the idealized representation of the human body and ignites the readers to reassess their preconceived notions of attractiveness and moral values. A character named Thalia, a Greek citizen who, represents a perspective outside the settings of Afghan culture. Her character offers insights into the challenges a person with bodily deformities faces in Western societies. Her face was gnawed by a dog, and that has made her look very hideous. But when Markos’ mother protects her in school and asks everyone to accept her the way she is, everything becomes normal. Markos's mother tells Thalia not to wear a mask to hide her face, and she says very firmly, “I am not ashamed of You” (Hosseini, *Mountain Echoed* 323). Thalia’s character in the novel surfaces the universality of experience related to physical disabilities and deformities.

Hosseini, by putting the deformed bodies against the abled bodies, presents the contrast and tension that make the story richer. The vulnerability and resilience represented by deformed bodies sometimes take the central position in the narrative, sidelining the conventional bodily perspectives. The representation of exaggerated and deformed bodies in the narrative supports the carnivalesque spirit. Hosseini invites readers to confront their own biases and reevaluate societal standards by highlighting the experiences of characters with grotesque bodies, deformities, and extreme bodily torture. In doing so, he aligns his narrative with the carnivalesque tradition of celebrating the marginalized and disrupts the existing standards, ultimately asserting the resilience and diversity of the human experience.

Conclusion

Carnivalesque is like a momentary tornado that uproots the established orders. The analysis through the Bakhtinian concept of carnivalesque generates a different understanding of the novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns,* and *And The Mountains Echoed* that goes far from the authorial intention of fixed meanings. The multiplicity of the voices in the novel provokes a continuous struggle to hold the power positions. Hosseini subtly designs the situations and context where the

spirit of carnival is incorporated and power- positions are toppled. Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque guides us to look for instances, both contextual and situational, where the momentary exchange of power positions takes place. As written in the foreword of the book *Rebelais and His World* by Krystyna Pomorska) "the carnival principle corresponds to and is indeed a part of the novelistic principle itself(...) so carnivalization is the condition for the ultimate "structure of life" that is formed by "behavior and cognition" (X). The novel incorporates the element of *reversal* naturally. The characters fall into situations where they struggle to temporarily gain control over things. In pursuit of libration, the characters break the set norms of society and indulge in carnival-type celebratory mode. The novels also give central positions to grotesque bodies and exaggerated physicality to make them more carnivalesque in nature.

In conclusion, the exploration of Khaled Hosseini's novels through the literary analytical tool of carnivalesque surfaced the hidden threads of narratives, plot dimensions, and characters that challenge and subvert the official order of things. Through the representation of alternative perspectives, subversion of hierarchies, breaking of norms, and depictions of grotesque bodies, Hosseini has woven narratives that reverberate deeply with readers, inviting them to question established societal norms and ideals. Applying Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque to Hosseini's famous novels set out a way to analyze the texts in a very profound manner. The three novels that are being analyzed contain narratives so profound that they have the ability to leave a lasting impression on the reader's mind. These impressions are so powerful that they often generate a strong urge in the reader to explore the story from different angles and interpret it using various approaches. Bakhtinian's approach of carnivalesque helped to analyze the novels in a unique manner where subversion, rebellion and deviation from set patterns is explored.

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A Critical Study of Mahfouz's Novel *The Beggar*: The Psychological Turmoil of the Protagonist

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Abstract This study examines the journey of the main character in Mahfouz's novel, "The Beggar," who experiences intense hopelessness and struggles in a cruel and unforgiving society. The objectives are to explore how the protagonist transforms from despair to psychological disorders and how these are connected to the social issues portrayed in the story. The study investigates the intricate relationship between the protagonist's internal state and the external social environment, examining how his psychological struggles impact various aspects of his life, such as emotional relationships, self-identity, frustration, the meaning of existence, and alienation. Through psychological analysis, the study delves into the protagonist's transformation from despair to psychological turmoil and examines the influence of external factors like depression, alienation, inequality, and social injustice on his mental state. It also discusses psychological concepts related to the character's journey, including the impact of social environments on mental well-being and the consequences of societal exclusion. In conclusion, the study explores the psychological aspects relevant to Omar's journey, emphasizes the importance of understanding how the social environment affects his mental well-being, and discusses the consequences of societal exclusion during challenging circumstances. Ultimately, "The Beggar" serves as a plea for empathy, compassion, and collective efforts to address social issues and create a just and inclusive society.

Keywords Despair; psychological turmoil; social issues; existence; alienation

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Introduction

Naguib Mahfouz was an Egyptian writer widely regarded as one of the most influential literary figures in the Arab world. Born on December 11, 1911, in Cairo, Egypt, and passing away on August 30, 2006, Mahfouz made a profound contribution to Arabic literature with his captivating novels and short stories. Mahfouz's career was extensive and prosperous, culminating in winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, the first Arabic victory of its kind. "Naguib Mahfouz's career is an extended and prosperous one; it culminated in winning the Nobel Prize in Literature, and that was the first Arabic victory ever since" (Naem & Janoory 104). "The Beggar," published in 1965, is one of Mahfouz's notable novels, exploring themes of poverty, despair, and social injustice. Mahfouz's works frequently delve into themes related to Egyptian society, culture, and politics, depicting the struggles of ordinary people, their hopes and dreams, and the challenging socio-political circumstances they face. His writings reflect the transformations and conflicts of modern Egypt, spanning from the pre-colonial era to the post-independence period.

Mahfouz's significant contributions to literature and his commitment to highlighting Egyptian culture and society have left an indelible impact on Arabic literature, earning him a distinguished place among the world's literary giants. His literary style, social commentary, and deep character development continue to captivate readers worldwide, solidifying his legacy as a major literary figure. Mahfouz's writing depicted the complexities of Egyptian society, touching upon themes such as political oppression, social injustice, tradition versus modernity, and the struggle for personal freedom. Mahfouz's impact on Arab literature cannot be overstated. Alkhawaja notes that "the high status of Mahfouz in the literary field, due to the capitals he has acquired, makes translators and publishers choose his work for translation and publishing over the work of other authors" (69). His writings have been translated into numerous languages, making his stories accessible to a global audience. He skillfully intertwined elements of realism, symbolism, and allegory in his works, creating vivid portrayals of the human condition.

As a prolific author, Mahfouz wrote numerous novels, short stories, and plays throughout his career. His writing often depicted the struggles of everyday life, the political landscape, and the changing nature of Egyptian society throughout the 20th century. His works continue to be celebrated and studied for their profound insights into the human experience. He invited readers to delve into his protagonists' transformations, discovering profound insights into the realms of human emotions

and the societal factors that shape our existence. “His tales describe the lives of ordinary individuals caught in struggles of identity and faith that reveal the existential, spiritual, and material character of Egyptian Muslims” (Afridi 3). Set against the backdrop of a society grappling with deep-rooted social issues, Mahfouz’s work serves as a poignant window into the complexities of the human condition and the world we inhabit.

“The Beggar” serves as a poignant portrayal of the hardships faced by those at the margins of society, offering a glimpse into the underbelly of social issues that often go unnoticed. Mahfouz’s compelling storytelling captivates readers as he skillfully unravels the layers of his protagonist’s psyche. Set in the city of Cairo, it explores the lives of several characters, including the protagonist, Omar al-Hamzawi. It is just one of many works by Mahfouz that engage with Egyptian society, culture, and the complex dynamics of its people. “Mahfouz’s fictionalized social history provides insight into that middle level of Egyptian society between the upper strata, whose ideas and actions are known through writings, and the lower classes, whose personal reactions to national events remain unknown” (El-Enany 37). His novel portrays the stark disparities and injustices that pervade communities and provides an opportunity to explore the broader social issues prevalent during the time of its publication. Mahfouz sheds light on the inequalities, injustices, and social barriers that plague the characters and, by extension, society as a whole.

Through his novel, Mahfouz illuminates the struggles and challenges faced by his protagonist. In this captivating narrative, Mahfouz skillfully explores the depths of the human mind, examining themes of identity, societal pressures, and the consequences of one’s choices. He emphasizes the protagonist’s deep sense of isolation and detachment from the bustling city life. Mahfouz delves into the beggar’s psyche, highlighting the internal turmoil caused by his destitution. “The Beggar” exposes the harsh realities faced by the socially and economically deprived members of society. Mahfouz’s narrative skillfully portrays the struggles and despair of the protagonist, inviting readers to empathize with the plight of those living on the fringes of society.

Literature Review

As a prominent Egyptian novelist, Naguib Mahfouz is widely recognized as the father of Arabic literature in the modern era. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988 for his exceptional contributions to the literary world. Mahfouz’s works often delve into complex social and psychological aspects of Egyptian society, shedding light on the human condition and addressing themes of alienation

and existential crises. "The Beggar" is one such novel that explores these themes through the protagonist's journey of isolation and his battle with personal demons. Through Omar's character, Mahfouz examines deep-rooted feelings of loneliness, despair, and emotional turmoil experienced by those who are socially isolated and struggle to find a sense of belonging. "*The Beggar* (1965) is a story of isolation and depression, written by the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, who is considered the father of Arabic literature in the modern era" (Zghair 25). The story revolves around a protagonist who experiences a deep sense of detachment from society and struggles with feelings of despair. Through the central character, Mahfouz explores the psychological and emotional effects of social alienation and the resulting state of depression.

Naguib Mahfouz's novel, *The Beggar*, provides a poignant exploration of a protagonist's journey from despair to psychological turmoil, offering a window into various social issues prevalent in society. The novel is characterized as a political narrative that critiques the policies and economic measures of its time. One of the significant aspects it targets is the nationalization of private property, which occurred under the revolutionary government led by Nasser in Egypt. The protagonist, Omar al-Hamzawi, experiences a profound sense of apathy, losing interest in various aspects of life, including his family, sexual desires, and politics. He withdraws from public life, perceiving life as a constant struggle, akin to a lawsuit that needs to be won. This portrayal suggests that Omar has become disillusioned and lacks motivation to engage actively with the world around him. According to Naem and Janoory, *"The Beggar* is a thriller-like political novel which attacks the policies and economic measures. This attack also includes the nationalization of private property which takes by the revolutionary government under Nasser in Egypt" (1213). The novel is described as a political thriller that criticizes government policies and economic measures, focusing particularly on the nationalization of private property during Nasser's regime. This critique underscores the socio-political themes prevalent in Mahfouz's work, especially his examination of how governmental policies affect individuals' lives and lead to their disengagement from societal matters.

Naguib Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar* metaphorically represents a specific group of people in the third world. These individuals are portrayed as enlightened idealists in their youth, but as they reach their forties and fifties, they succumb to hopelessness and conservatism. Their plight symbolizes the challenges faced by many in developing countries, illustrating how circumstances and societal pressures can gradually erode one's idealism. These individuals may abandon their

earlier aspirations and retreat into armchair philosophy and mysticism, seeking solace in contemplation and escapism. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the disillusionment experienced by those who once harbored hopes for social change but have been disillusioned by the harsh realities of their circumstances.

> *The Beggar* is a representation of the plight and suffering of enlightened people in the third world—people who have been idealist in their youth but have fallen to a state of hopelessness and conservatisms in their forties and fifties. In case they survive the agony, they will have terrible conscience in old age, giving up to armchair philosophy and mysticism. (Hosseini & Sattari 538)

The above quote suggests that these rational individuals, once brimming with idealism and hope in their youth, have now fallen into a state of hopelessness as they reach their forties and fifties. It implies that the challenging circumstances and harsh realities they've faced have led them to doubt their capacity to effect significant change or make a difference in their societies. Furthermore, the mention of "surviving the agony" indicates that these individuals have endured profound suffering and adversity throughout their lives. Consequently, in their later years, they may harbor feelings of guilt and regret for not being able to uphold their youthful convictions.

"The Beggar" narrates the story of an alienated anti-hero living in 1960s Cairo, specifically during Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency. Nasser, serving as Egypt's President from 1956 to 1970, was known for his nationalist and socialist policies. The novel delves into Cairo's post-revolutionary period, marked by significant socio-political change and upheaval. Central to the narrative is the protagonist's existential quest for meaning and purpose in life. The beggar confronts his own existential dilemmas and seeks personal fulfillment amidst a rapidly evolving urban landscape. Themes of identity crisis, social alienation, and the individual's search for significance unfold against the backdrop of historical events shaped by Nasser's rule. By intertwining the protagonist's personal struggles with the socio-political context of Nasser's era, Mahfouz explores the intricate dynamics of individuals' relationships with society and the larger forces that influence their lives. *The Beggar "*tells a story of the struggle for meaning, and the alienated anti-hero's struggle in1960s post-revolutionary Cairo, during Gamal Abdel Nasser's rule. Omar El Hamzawi, the protagonist illustrates the existential suffering of man to understand his place in life and understand his consciousness" (Sabry 26). This quotation underscores the thematic depth of "The Beggar," emphasizing its exploration of existential themes, societal alienation, and the turbulent historical context that shapes

the protagonist's journey.

Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar* is considered an emotional journey that raises various political, spiritual, and religious questions about social responsibility and the search for meaning in society. It explores the transformation Egypt underwent under Nasser's regime and the influence of Islam in Mahfouz's writings. The novel also addresses deep social critiques that connect to Mahfouz's broader literary oeuvre. In essence, *The Beggar* delves into significant societal and historical aspects of Egypt, examining how political and religious forces shape the lives of its characters. Afridi describes the novel as "an emotional journey that asks political, spiritual, and religious questions regarding social responsibility and the lack of meaning" (69). This description portrays the novel as an exploration of these themes, emphasizing its depth in probing social responsibility, the quest for meaning, and its thematic continuity with Mahfouz's earlier works that scrutinized the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

Mahfouz portrays Omar al-Hamzawi in the novel as a symbol representing the Egyptian people's quest to discover the true purpose and significance of life. He focuses on existential themes to examine the challenges, sadness, and disillusionment that arise from ideals that ultimately disappoint. Mahfouz suggests a prevailing sense of betrayal and disillusionment within Egyptian society, where people express frustration and despair over these negative aspects. The novel explores themes of desperation and frustration, illustrating their impact on individuals like Omar al-Hamzawi. According to Zghair, " Omer Al-Hamzawi, the hero of this novel, had accepted death instead of reality by looking for another worth of his own life and restoring its importance through the meaning of life and existence" (26). This context implies that Omar Al-Hamzawi has chosen to embrace the concept of death rather than confront the harsh realities of life. He appears to search for purpose and value in his own existence, aiming to reclaim its significance by exploring deeper meanings of life and existence from alternative perspectives.

Research Methodology

The psychological approach is employed to analyze the protagonist's journey from despair to psychological turmoil in Mahfouz's *The Beggar*, providing insight into various societal issues. Freudian psychoanalysis is utilized to explore the protagonist's unconscious motivations, desires, and conflicts. This approach investigates how past experiences, childhood traumas, and suppressed emotions contribute to the character's psychological turmoil. It also examines the protagonist's social interactions, group dynamics, and societal influences to illuminate how social issues exacerbate their psychological distress. This perspective considers the impact of social

norms, cultural expectations, and systemic oppression on the character's self-esteem, sense of belonging, and mental well-being. According to psychology, "repression plays a part in dreams of exhibiting; for the distress felt in such dreams is a reaction on the part of the second system against the content of the scene of exhibiting having found expression in spite of the ban upon it " (Strachey 264). Repression and the conflict between conscious and subconscious desires are recurrent themes in Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar*. The narrative explores the inner struggles and psychological complexities of its characters by delving into their dreams and desires to illuminate their suppressed emotions and longings. Through introspection and the examination of characters' dreams, Mahfouz underscores the tension between societal norms, personal desires, and the psychological repercussions of stifling one's authentic self.

This approach illuminates the protagonist's cognitive restructuring and behavioral evolution throughout the narrative. In the context of *The Beggar*, it involves exploring the protagonist's suppressed emotions, unresolved traumas, and internal conflicts that contribute to his despair and psychological turmoil. Existentialist themes intersect prominently with psychological turmoil, as characters confront existential crises, loss of purpose, and the quest for identity. Omar al-Hamzawi, a prosperous middle-aged Egyptian, outwardly possesses wealth, social status, and a prestigious career. However, beneath this façade, he grapples with profound psychological conflicts. A central aspect of his character is his internal struggle with existential questions, revealing disillusionment and a search for meaning. This is evident through his continual soul-searching and introspection, as he questions the significance of his existence and the emptiness he feels despite his achievements. According to Freud, "the essence of our being, consisting in unconscious wish feelings, can neither be seized nor inhibited by the foreconscious, whose part is once for all restricted to the indication of the most suitable paths for the wish feelings originating in the unconscious" (348). In Naguib Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar*, the protagonist undergoes unconscious processes that profoundly impact his consciousness. Omar's unconscious struggles are reflected in his battle with societal expectations and his own identity.

It also examines the protagonist's psychological development and evolution throughout the narrative, considering factors such as personality traits, coping mechanisms, and internal conflicts that shape his journey and transformation. An analysis of this topic necessitates exploring how Mahfouz portrays social issues like poverty, inequality, and societal pressures, which influence the protagonist's psychological trajectory. This approach emphasizes the interplay between thoughts, emotions, and

behaviors. Omar al-Hamzawi emerges as a multifaceted character in the novel, with a psychological analysis uncovering his internal struggles, motivations, and actions. According to psychology, "the complex problems of human behavior, and clearly demonstrates that the hitherto considered impassable gap between normal and abnormal mental states is more apparent than real" (Freud 3). A central insight of the novel is challenging the perceived boundary between normal and abnormal mental states. Mahfouz illustrates that the supposed rigid division between these states is more illusory than actual. Through his protagonist, the author contests the notion of a clear-cut dichotomy between normal and abnormal psychological conditions. This exploration prompts readers to interrogate and reconsider their preconceived notions about mental states, acknowledging the intricacies and subjectivities involved.

This approach involves understanding the protagonist's psychological state, tracing the factors contributing to his despair, and exploring the underlying social issues depicted in the novel. To begin, analyzing the protagonist's psychological state necessitates closely examining his thoughts, emotions, and behaviors throughout the narrative. This entails identifying pivotal moments where his despair emerges and understanding its impact on his mental well-being. It is crucial to delve into the protagonist's mindset, exploring his hopes, fears, and underlying psychological patterns that contribute to his journey towards turmoil. As Freud that:

> If we had before us the unconscious wishes, brought to their last and truest expression, we should still do well to remember that more than one single form of existence must be ascribed to the psychic reality. Action and the conscious expression of thought mostly suffice for the practical need of judging a man's character. (389)

This quotation suggests that understanding persons' true desires and intentions, as revealed by their unconscious wishes, can be valuable. However, it also emphasizes that it is important to recognize that individuals possess various facets of existence and that their actions and conscious thoughts should primarily be used to evaluate their characters. In the context of a protagonist in Naguib Mahfouz's novel, the character's actions and conscious thoughts provide valuable insight into understanding his personality and motivations. It implies that even if the character's hidden desires and thoughts were revealed, they should not overshadow the significance of their observable behavior and conscious expressions.

Mahfouz's *The Beggar* requires employing a psychological method that explores their psychological state, traces the contributing factors to their despair, and

uncovers the underlying social issues depicted in the novel. This integrated approach enables us to gain valuable insights into the complex interplay between an individual's psyche and the social circumstances that shape their experiences. In tracing the factors that contribute to their despair, it is essential to consider both internal and external influences. Internally, exploring the protagonist's past experiences, traumas, or unresolved conflicts may provide insights into the development of his psychological turmoil. Externally, factors such as societal pressures, economic hardships, or political unrest can contribute to his despair. By examining how these social issues intersect with the protagonist's journey, we can gain a deeper understanding of the broader societal context in which his psychological turmoil unfolds. According to psychological perspectives, he emphasizes that "such turmoil is never only a matter of wars, economic slumps, and revolutions," and it is "a crisis of human relationship and of the human personality, as well as a social convulsion" (Çakırtaş 3). In Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar*, the protagonist highlights that the turmoil experienced in society extends beyond external factors like wars, economic downturns, and revolutions. While these events can certainly contribute to societal turbulence, the protagonist emphasizes that the root cause of the crisis lies in the breakdown of human relationships and the deterioration of individual personalities.

Unveiling the Protagonist's Despair

"The Beggar" is a novel that explores the theme of despair through the perspective of its protagonist. Mahfouz delves into the depths of despair through the journey of his character, examining the psychological and emotional struggles he faces. In "The Beggar," Mahfouz skillfully unravels the protagonist's despair by exploring his psychological state and inner conflicts. Omar al-Hamzawi expresses weariness and disillusionment with life, people, and even his own family. He articulates a profound dissatisfaction, suggesting a deep-seated despair. Omar's insistence on sharing his thoughts despite the seriousness of the situation implies that he has reached a breaking point and can no longer suppress his feelings. "Omar continued as though he hadn't heard. 'Very often I'm sick of life, people, even the family. The situation seemed too serious to keep silent'" (Mahfouz 12). Omar's statement reflects his inner turmoil and disillusionment towards life, people, and familial relationships, indicating a tipping point where he becomes overwhelmed by his surroundings. This quote encapsulates Omar's despair and underscores a central theme of the novel: the struggles and frustrations of individuals in a society marked by poverty, inequality, and social injustice. From a psychological standpoint, Akhtar and Kay O'Neil note, "to be caught in a vicious interplay between actual frustration and disappointment

and the gratification and sadistic pleasure he obtained from using experiences of suffering and despair to undermine and torment his objects, and himself" (214). Freud's perspective further elucidates that individuals can unconsciously derive pleasure from experiencing suffering and despair, driven by unresolved conflicts or unconscious desires rooted in the pleasure principle.

Mahfouz's novel portrays the profound despair and hopelessness experienced by Omar al-Hamzawi. He articulates the severity of his condition, indicating its deep distress. Omar is so overwhelmed that he no longer desires any engagement with the world. His depiction suggests a state of despair or hopelessness, where he lacks the motivation to think, move, or feel. He laments that everything around him is disintegrating and dying, implying a pervasive sense of decay in his life or surroundings. The speaker's purpose in bringing Omar to this place was to uncover any physical cause for his condition. "The problem is very serious. I don't want to think, to move, or to feel. Everything is disintegrating and dying. My hope in coming here was to find some physical cause" (Mahfouz 12). This quotation from Mahfouz's novel "The Beggar" underscores the character's distress and decline. The speaker underscores the gravity of the situation by noting Omar's withdrawal from cognitive, physical, and emotional engagement. From a psychological perspective, "the signal anxiety becomes neurotic anxiety framed in a psychoneurotic disposition. Equivalent sufferings for this anxiety are the feelings of inferiority, fear to exposure and failure, and fear of authority" (Arbiser and Schneider 112). This perspective could be interpreted within the context of Freud's theory on anxiety and psychoneurotic dispositions. This quotation further elucidates Omar's sense of despair and significant deterioration in his mental and emotional well-being.

"The Beggar" narrates the life of Omar al-Hamzawi, initially a successful government official who later descends into depression on the streets of Cairo. The novel explores Omar's despair, depicting his downward spiral and the personal and societal challenges he confronts. Mahfouz adeptly portrays the internal conflicts of his characters, with Omar's despair reflecting the socio-political conditions of Egyptian society during the novel's setting. He frequently incorporates themes of alienation, existential crisis, and the impact of societal and political upheaval on individuals. He suggests that despite outward appearances, Omar faces an underlying threat or danger. "Omar gave a slight laugh and said, 'That's the picture, in general, but now I've lost interest in everything.' 'Well, there's nothing wrong with you for the time being, but the enemy lurks on the border" (Mahfouz 13). In this quote from "The Beggar", Omar expresses his disillusionment and lack of enthusiasm for life, indicating that while his situation may seem mundane, he has lost interest in every-

thing. The mention of an "enemy lurking on the border" hints at a looming threat contributing to his disengagement. According to Arbiser and Schneider, "anxiety is an existential expression of the disturbing emotional impact certain external stimuli generate on the psyche, and not only the affective expression of a disconnected endogenous energy" (114). This perspective underscores how anxiety reflects the profound emotional impact of external circumstances on an individual's well-being, reinforcing feelings of despair and disillusionment in Omar's life.

One of the striking scenes as the doctor comments on the protagonist's various identities or personas. He acknowledges that the protagonist has played different roles in society, such as a fervent socialist and a great lawyer. However, the doctor specifically remembers the protagonist's face as that of Omar the poet. The protagonist, Omar, responds with a dissembled, or concealed, agitation, masking his true feelings with a weak smile. Omar's decision to abandon poetry might have internal conflicts or regrets associated with it. The interchange between the doctor and Omar establishes a sense of loss or missed opportunities in Omar's life as a poet. "You're a man of many faces: the fervent socialist, the great lawyer, but the face I remember most vividly is that of Omar the poet. " Omar dissembled his sudden agitation with a wan smile. "That's unfortunate." "You've abandoned poetry?" (Mahfouz 15). This quotation explores the theme of identity and the multifaceted nature of the protagonist, Omar. The doctor, in this context, is acknowledging the various roles and personas Omar has taken on in his life. He refers to Omar as a "man of many faces," highlighting his different identities as a socialist and a lawyer.

According to psychology, "the analysis of dreams, in which repressed complexes are operative alike in the healthy and the sick, shows a complete identity both in their mechanisms and in their symbolism" (Strachey 385). The quotation suggests that these repressed complexes manifest in dreams, indicating that even those who appear emotionally healthy may harbor unresolved concerns. By highlighting the "complete identity" in the mechanisms and symbolism of dreams, it further emphasizes how despair can infiltrate both the mentally healthy and the mentally ill; emphasizing the universality of despair in human experience. This suggests that poetry was a significant aspect of Omar's identity, something that the doctor vividly remembers about him. Omar's emotional response suggests that he may have given up or distanced himself from his poetic pursuits, which could imply a potential internal conflict or change in his life.

Mahfouz reflects the protagonist's profound despair and disillusionment regarding his feelings towards a person he once loved deeply. He expresses the realization that Omar no longer loves his wife mentioned. He states that the history of

their relationship, emphasizing the long years of love, shared life, and loyal memories they once had together. He hopes that Omar's lack of love is merely a temporary symptom resulting from an illness or personal struggles, which will eventually disappear with recovery. Nevertheless, they admit that the current absence of love is deeply disheartening and describes it as the most painful disappointment they have experienced. As Omar states that:

> I don't love her anymore. After long years of love, shared life, and loyal memories, not a grain of love remains. Pray that it's just a symptom of the disease which will disappear with recovery, but now I don't love her. This is the bitterest disillusionment. (Mahfouz 44)

After years of love, companionship, and cherished memories, Omar declares that their love has completely vanished. He acknowledges that this lack of love is a bitter disappointment and hope that it is only a temporary symptom of some emotional or psychological turmoil he is experiencing. Omar's lamentation reveals the deep sorrow and despair that accompanies the loss of love and the shattered illusions that often accompany such disillusionment.

Omar reflects on a particular period of time. He speaks about these times extensively, emphasizing their importance and unusual nature with a sense of seriousness. His actions during this period are driven by his emotional pain, rather than any primal urges or desires. He was going through a deep sense of hopelessness or sadness during those nights, which impacted his behavior and possibly his relationships. "He (Omar) referred to these times at some length, speaking with a solemnity befitting the mysterious and strange. Those nights I was not an animal moved by lust, but I was suffering and in despair" (52). Omar expresses his thoughts and feelings about a particular period of time. He speaks with seriousness and gravity, indicating the significance of what he experienced during those moments. He states that during those nights, he was not driven purely by primal desires or lust, but rather he was tormented by suffering and a profound sense of despair.

Omar questions the purpose and significance of a dream he is experiencing, expressing frustration with his current circumstances. He grapples with despair and ponders existential questions about the meaning and direction of his dream. Omar also seeks relief from physical pain in his shoulder and desires freedom from negativity. Additionally, he longs for the world to disappear from his dreams. Through his protagonist, Mahfouz portrays themes of hopelessness, frustration, and the search for meaning amidst despair in his novel. "What is the meaning of this

dream, where is it leading me? When will the pain in my shoulder ease up? When will the devil and his follies be put to flight? When will the world disappear from my dreams? I moaned in spite of myself" (139). In this passage, Omar reflects his sense of despair and seeks understanding of his dream's significance. He asks the direction of his life and when his physical pain will subside. Moreover, he yearns for liberation from negative influences and dreams free of worldly concerns. From a psychological perspective, "delusional schizophrenic behavior seeks to restore the lost fusional sense transforming experienced nameless terror into hallucinatory and delusional projective categorisation of the ill they suffered" (Arbiser & Schneider 115). While autism may lead to a sense of being disconnected from others, delusional schizophrenic behavior aims to reestablish a sense of fusion or connection. This is done by transforming the overwhelming, unnamed fear Omar experiences into hallucinations and delusions. Overall, it captures the protagonist's deep sense of hopelessness, despair and longing for relief from his struggles.

Tracing the Protagonist's Path towards Psychological Turmoil

Mahfouz portrays the novel's protagonist grappling with psychological turmoil. Omar articulates profound distress and despair, underscoring the gravity of his condition. He expresses a desire to disconnect from his thoughts, actions, and emotions, indicating a pervasive sense of detachment and apathy. Omar perceives a world in decay, where vitality is slipping away. His decision to seek help or visit a specific place stems from a quest for a physical explanation for his troubles, hoping to pinpoint an external cause for his psychological anguish. Mahfouz vividly depicts the protagonist's desperation and the profound depths of his psychological suffering, as Omar laments, "The problem is very serious. I don't want to think, to move, or to feel. Everything is disintegrating and dying. My hope in coming here was to find some physical cause" (Mahfouz 12). This quotation reveals Omar's struggle with psychological disorders. He articulates a profound sense of hopelessness and detachment, feeling as though his entire being is unraveling. Omar expresses reluctance to engage in mental or physical activities, indicating a lack of motivation or energy. His hope in seeking assistance or treatment is to uncover a tangible, physical cause for his distress, yearning for a solution that can be identified and addressed. Psychoanalysis is described as "a form of therapy that seeks to heal mental disorders by exploring the interplay of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind" (Hossain 42). Psychological chaos refers to inner conflict, distress, or instability in one's psychological well-being. Through delving into Omar's unconscious mind, psychoanalysis aims to unearth repressed thoughts, emotions,

and experiences that may contribute to his turmoil.

This novel portrays emotional turmoil, disconnection from reality, and a growing indifference towards life and its various aspects, suggesting that Omar may be experiencing psychological distress or disorder. He grapples with intense emotions, possibly sadness or despair, indicating emotional instability or a psychological condition like depression. Omar describes his wife, Zeinab, as merely a symbol of family unity and constructive work. Omar reflects, "Here I am struggling to lose weight and I see in dear Zeinab only a statue of family unity and constructive work. Honestly, I've lost interest in everything" (Mahfouz 27). This statement reveals Omar's broader disillusionment and emotional detachment. Despite Zeinab's role in their family life, Omar expresses a deep disengagement from everything around him. This loss of interest suggests a profound sense of apathy or despair that extends beyond his personal struggles with weight loss.

According to psychological theory, "illuminating similar emotional experiences with multiple women, from various stages of his life, include his childhood with his mother. The anger, highly significant in the manifest dream, was understood now as disguising his despair over previous betrayals" (Akhtar & Kay O'Neil 146-147). This suggests that Omar has encountered similar emotional interactions with different women throughout his life, indicating a recurring pattern or theme in his relationships. Such patterns may signal underlying unresolved psychological issues. However, determining a specific psychological disorder for Omar requires detailed information about his diagnosis and symptoms, necessitating a comprehensive assessment by a mental health professional.

Omar expresses a profound connection between his psychological disorders, his perception of work, and his relationship with his wife. He suggests that his psychological sickness not only affects his ability to engage in work but also affects his feelings towards his wife, who is depicted as a hidden force in his life. This portrayal suggests a transition from positive attributes to negative ones, indicating deterioration in Omar's perception of Zeinab as his mental health declines. He feels disgusted with himself, which in turn causes him to feel repulsed by everything else around him. This intertwining of self-disgust, psychological ailments, the perception of work, and relationships underscore the complex and interconnected nature of the protagonist's mental state and how it influences his experiences. As Omar says that:

> Dear God, Zeinab and work are the same. This malady which turns me from work is what turns me from Zeinab, for she is the hidden force, she is its symbol. So he is wealth, success, and finally illness. And because I'm sick of these

> things, I 'm disgusted with myself, or rather because I 'm disgusted with myself, all else sickens me. (Mahfouz 46)

This quotation explores the protagonist's perspective on psychological disorders and his relation to various aspects of his life. In this passage, Omar expresses a connection between his aversion towards work and his relationship with his wife, Zeinab. He sees Zeinab as a symbol of the hidden force that causes his disinterest in work. He further explains that this force, represented by his wife, transforms him from being driven and successful in his work into being sick or mentally unwell. He suggests that wealth, success, and illness are interconnected in his life, with Zeinab serving as a symbol for this connection. According to psychological approach, "when our relations began to be less friendly, I became involved in the same kind of emotional conflict which, when a misunderstanding arises between a father and son, is inevitably produced owing to the position occupied by the father and the assistance formerly given by him" (Strachey 445). Omar's reaction could be linked to a fear of rejection or abandonment. He might have developed avoidance strategies to protect himself from emotional pain, leading him to interpret disagreements or changes in relationships as potential threats, similar to how a son may fear losing support from their father. Omar describes a change in his relations with someone, which has resulted in a shift towards a less friendly dynamic.

Omar articulates a profound self-loathing, suggesting he detests himself to the same extent as his work and his relationship with his wife, Zeinab. This reflects negative self-perception and possibly feelings of worthlessness. His view that his work, Zeinab, and his own identity are intertwined implies a blurred sense of self and a lack of differentiation among different aspects of his life. These could indicate symptoms of a psychological disorder like a personality disorder, where individuals struggle with maintaining a stable and coherent self-image. Furthermore, Omar's desire to escape from this amalgamation of his work, relationship, and self indicates a deep yearning for freedom and liberation from his current state of mind. "It sometimes consoles me that I hate myself just as much," Omar states impatiently as he crushes his cigarette butt in the ashtray. "My work, Zeinab, and myself are really all one thing, and this is what I want to escape from" (Mahfouz 50). This desire underscores his longing for relief from psychological struggles and suggests he acknowledges the detrimental nature of his thought patterns on his well-being.

According to psychological perspective, "'nocturnal insanity,' in which the patient appears completely healthy during the day but is regularly subject at night to hallucinations, fits of frenzy, etc" (Strachey 114). This means that Omar's psycho-

logical disorder primarily manifests itself when darkness falls, affecting his mental and emotional state at night while leaving him seemingly normal during the day. These nocturnal symptoms could greatly disrupt his sleep and overall well-being, potentially leading to significant distress and impairment in his daily life. This highlights Omar's experience of self-hatred, feelings of entrapment, and a desire for escape, all indicating his potential psychological disorder.

The Beggar indicates the presence of disturbing thoughts and emotions within the character Omar. It suggests a potential psychological disorder, specifically depicting symptoms of intense anger, violent fantasies, and an inner struggle for control.The description of Omar looking sternly at someone and then experiencing an inexplicable urge to kill his partner, Muna, showcases a sense of inner turmoil and confusion. As a result of this, Omar is afflicted by violent and aggressive impulses towards Muna, his partner. The fact that he imagines himself using a knife to rip open her chest further indicates a level of aggression and a detachment from reality. As the speaker describes that:

> Omar looked at him sternly and left with Muna. As he pressed her to him, he trembled with an unaccountable urge to kill her. He imagined himself ripping open her chest with a knife, and suddenly finding what he'd been looking for all along. Killing is the complement of creation, the completion of the silent, mysterious cycle. (Mahfouz 95-96)

The mention of Omar trembling with an unaccountable urge to kill Muna indicates a significant deviation from normal and healthy thoughts and emotions. These thoughts of killing are accompanied by a vivid and grotesque imagery of violently ripping open her chest with a knife. This portrayal suggests the presence of a specific psychological disorder, potentially related to aggression, impulsivity, or distorted thoughts. Moreover, Omar's belief that killing is the complement of creation and the completion of a mysterious cycle suggests a distorted perception of reality and a detachment from societal norms. This perception aligns with a potential disorder within Omar's psychological state.

Omar may be exhibiting symptoms indicative of a self-neglecting personality disorder or depression. When he mentions suffering from a peculiar crisis and quickly redirects the conversation away from his own health, it could suggest a lack of self-worth or a tendency to prioritize others' needs over his own. This behavior might stem from low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, or a sense of guilt. Omar's satisfaction upon being acknowledged for his health condition could also

indicate a longing for validation or a need for others to recognize his struggles. Such behavior aligns with symptoms of mood disorders like depression or anxiety, where individuals often neglect their own needs and focus solely on others' concerns. "You haven't changed in appearance, but your health is not up to par. "Omar was pleased that he'd noticed. Yes, I've suffered a strange crisis. But, please, let's not talk about me. I want to listen to what you have to say " (107-108).

These lines indicate that Omar has undergone significant emotional or psychological turmoil, which has evidently affected his well-being, possibly leading to a psychological disorder. His reluctance to discuss his personal struggles and his preference for redirecting the conversation towards listening to others may suggest symptoms of avoidance behavior, which is characteristic of certain psychological disorders. Psychologically, "psychodynamic conflict—opposition between emotional forces within the mind—can result in neurotic (hysterical) symptoms, which function both to conceal and express an unacceptable idea or impulse" (Mollon 63). This quote underscores that Omar's symptoms may stem from internal emotional conflicts. Psychodynamic conflict refers to the clash between various emotional forces within the mind, and in Omar's case, this conflict might manifest as neurotic or hysterical symptoms. Omar's tendency to avoid confronting his own issues could stem from fear, shame, or a lack of effective coping mechanisms.

Omar's request for explicitness may indicate an inability to grasp abstract concepts or a difficulty in processing information. This response aligns with the characteristics of a psychological disorder such as cognitive impairment or a lack of cognitive flexibility. In response to Omar's reaction, Othman observes that Omar seems to have lost his old vigor. This comment suggests that Omar's psychological disorder has affected his energy levels and enthusiasm for life. It implies a decline in his overall mental and emotional wellbeing. Additionally, Mustapha's comment that touches upon the existential aspect of psychological disorders. It suggests that the psychological disorder Omar is experiencing has led him to question the purpose and significance of his own life. This existential crisis may further contribute to his mental and emotional struggles. As the narrator clarifies that:

> Omar turned toward them."Drop the subject and just consider it an illness. Othman looked at him sharply and murmured, Perhaps it really is a disease, for you've lost your old vigor. Mustapha said, "Or he's searching for the meaning of his existence. (Mahfouz 118)

The conversation among Omar, Othman, and Mustapha centers on Omar's psycho-

logical state. When Omar seeks clarification on a particular topic, Othman suggests that Omar's demeanor could indicate an illness, implying a loss of his former vigor and vitality. Meanwhile, Mustapha presents a contrasting view, proposing that Omar's introspection and contemplation may be his attempt to discover the meaning or purpose of his existence. "Psychoanalysis has been seen as a form of therapy that aims to treat mental disorders by exploring the interaction between conscious and unconscious elements in the mind" (Hossain 42). In Omar's case, his psychological condition might involve unconscious factors such as repressed memories, unresolved conflicts, or unconscious defense mechanisms. Psychoanalysis seeks to bring these unconscious elements to light, examining their origins and significance to provide insight into Omar's condition.

The Impact of Social Issues on the Protagonist's Transformation

The encounter between Omar and a mad man on the road exposes the critical social conditions that affecting on them in Egypt during that time. The mad man criticizes the lack of action from the municipality, suggesting that they will view a certain situation as an encouragement to tourism. This, in turn, will lead to an influx of tourists and an increase in population, ultimately forcing the inhabitants to leave and causing the agricultural road to become crowded with emigrants. The rise in tourism and population growth could lead to overcrowding and displacement of the local people, causing them to lose their homes and livelihoods. Despite these changes, the mad man believes that the price of fish will continue to rise. As Omar says that:

> I met a mad man on the road about a kilometer before the Glim beach. He assails those who pass by raising his hand in the manner of our leaders and delivering obscure speeches…He interrupted me sharply. The municipality won't do anything. They'll welcome it as an encouragement to tourism and it will increase to such fantastic proportions that the inhabitants will be forced to leave and the Agricultural Road will be packed with lines of emigrants and in spite of all this the price of fish will continue to rise . . . . (Mahfouz 25-26)

These lines explore that the actions of a mad man, such as raising his hand like a leader and delivering confusing speeches, represent the hypocrisy and ineffective governance of the leaders in their community. The mad man interrupts the protagonist and expresses his frustration with the municipality's inaction. He predicts that the municipality will perceive certain developments as beneficial to tourism, leading to an influx of tourists. This would result in the displacement of the

local inhabitants, who will be forced to leave their homes due to the overwhelming number of immigrant settlers. Additionally, the mad man comments on the rising price of fish, suggesting that despite the negative consequences of tourism growth and emigration, the economic situation will not improve for the regular working class people.

According to psychology, ”such turmoil is never only a matter of wars, economic slumps, and revolutions,” and it is “a crisis of human relationship and of the human personality, as well as a social convulsion” (Çakırtaş 3). The psychological disorder may influence Omar’s perception to exaggerate or excessively focus on the impact of these internal factors, potentially attributing them as the primary cause of societal crises. Omar’s disorder might make him view social convulsions as a manifestation of the underlying issues within human relationships and personalities, highlighting his preoccupation with these aspects. This observation highlights the disparity between the economic benefits enjoyed by a few and the worsening conditions faced by the majority.

The novelist underlines the protagonist’s struggle within a society where money is prioritized over truth and highlights the social impacts that shape his perspective, leading him to contemplate death as a means of escape. There is a stark contrast between scientists and the protagonist. While scientists derive their strength from their commitment to truth and knowledge, the protagonist’s strength comes from money, which is portrayed as losing its legitimacy or moral standing over time. Mahfouz also emphasizes the protagonist’s disillusionment with the social order. The protagonist sees death as the only escape or relief from the corrupting effects of money and societal pressures. It signifies his belief that the social structure is inherently flawed, offering no genuine hope for a better life.“Scientists are strong through their allegiance to the truth, but our strength derives from money which loses its legality day by day.” “So I say that death represents the one true hope in human life” (Mahfouz 38).

The above lines explore the social impacts on the protagonist through contrasting the strengths of scientists and individuals influenced by money. On one hand, scientists are portrayed as strong due to their commitment to seeking and upholding the truth. Their allegiance to knowledge and discovery gives them a sense of power and authority. On the other hand, the protagonist suggests that his strength, in contrast, derives from money. However, the protagonist notes that money is losing its legality day by day. This implies that Omar’s strength is dependent on an unstable and corrupt system, where the ethical and moral value of money is diminishing. This statement can also be seen as a reflection of the protagonist’s disillusionment

with the societal pressures and injustices that result from the influence of money. It suggests that death, symbolizing an escape from this flawed system, offers the only true hope for liberation or release from the social impacts they are experiencing.

According to psychological theory, "wherever antipathetic people or members of an unpopular minority put themselves in the wrong. Their punishment does not as a rule correspond to their wrong-doing but to their wrong-doing *plus* the ill-feeling directed against them which has previously been without any consequences" (Strachey 484). It suggests that Omar tends to find himself in situations where he is disliked or is part of an unpopular minority. It implies that when such situations occur, the punishment or negative consequences Omar faces are not solely based on his actual wrong-doing but are exacerbated by the prior ill-feelings directed towards him.

Omar reveals the social impacts he experiences, expressing his concern that the problem he faces extends beyond his unbearable work conditions. He also emphasizes that his illness, likely caused by his destitute state, not only affects his ability to work but also adversely impacts other important aspects of his life. Specifically, he mentions his wife, signifying that his illness is eroding their relationship and possibly causing emotional strain or distancing between them. Mahfouz underscores the broader social implications of poverty and illness on individuals, highlighting how it can negatively affect personal relationships and the overall quality of life. "The problem is more serious, for it's not only work which has become unbearable. This illness is consuming other things, far more precious than work-my wife, for instance" (Mahfouz 49).

The above lines highlight the social consequences of the protagonist's circumstances. The protagonist's illness not only affects his personal well-being but also puts a strain on his marriage. It implies that the protagonist's deteriorating condition is negatively impacting their ability to fulfill his role as a spouse and maintain a healthy relationship. From a social perspective, this quotation raises questions about the challenges faced by individuals in marginalized or disadvantaged positions. "Omar is inflicted with what doctor Hamed calls bourgeoisie illness which is incurable. He is drawn to self-gratification and womanizing, resulting in the collapse of his family to the concern of his friends and acquaintances" (Hussein 537). Omar is influenced by the values associated with the bourgeoisie class, such as self-indulgence and a tendency towards womanizing. The consequences of Omar's lifestyle choices are significant and seem to have affected not only himself but also his family. The collapse of his family suggests that his actions have put a strain on his relationships, causing them to break down. This situation has raised concerns among his friends and acquaintances, likely due to witnessing the negative effects on Omar's

personal life.

Mahfouz reflects the societal conditions and economic disparities that impact character Omar's livelihood. Additionally, the personal relationships and societal norms can create disruptions or complications in the protagonist's life. This could imply a sense of resilience or adaptability in the face of adversity. Omar's perspective is shaped by a belief in divine guidance or destiny. This perspective demonstrates resilience and an acceptance of the ongoing cycle of life's ups and downs. Finally, the protagonist finds solace and peace by entrusting his destiny to a higher power. This belief in divine intervention serves as a way for the character to cope with the social impacts on his life and find meaning in the face of adversity. As the speaker states that: "Praise the Lord . . . . Sometimes business is slow, sometimes the club is disturbed by a love affair like Warda's, but the carnival goes on. . . . So you live knowing your fate rests with God?" (Mahfouz 78).

This quotation reflects the protagonist's perspective on the social impacts that shape his life. The phrase "praise the lord" suggests that the protagonist acknowledges a higher power and submits to the belief that his destiny is in God's hands. The protagonist's environment is subject to various disruptions and uncertainties. These social factors significantly affect his life and livelihood, representing the challenges and unpredictability he faces in society. "Omar's affair with Warda, the dancer, remains a desperate attempt to fill a void and to gain enough sexual pleasure to help stabilize his psychological well-being" (Sabry 32). This quote implies that Omar might be experiencing some emotional or psychological emptiness in his life, which he tries to fill through his involvement with Warda. The social impacts on Omar emphasize his attempt to fill a void in his life and seek stability through his involvement with Warda. It highlights the complexities of human emotions and how individuals might navigate challenging situations in their pursuit of well-being. The affair with Warda may serve as a temporary escape or distraction from these struggles.

Omar's encounter with a brunette has certain social impacts on him. When the brunette is enticed by money and chooses to go with him, it implies that the protagonist's financial situation may have influenced their interaction. His encounter may be driven by transactional motives rather than genuine connection or attraction. He acknowledges that this encounter doesn't truly improve his situation, but he still finds some solace in the fact that the brunette's laughter manages to stir his heart slightly. His search for meaning and connection is impacted by societal factors such as poverty, materialism, and the fleeting nature of relationships based on monetary enticement. As the speaker clarifies that:

> The brunette left with him, enticed by money. I t didn't really make things better, but he thought his heart stirred slightly as she laughed. If his heart didn't stir, it would die. Poetry, wine, love-none of them could call forth the elusive ecstasy. (Mahfouz 95)

These lines reveal the impacts of societal factors, such as money and the pursuit of pleasure, on the protagonist's mindset and overall well-being. The phrase "enticed by money" implies that the protagonist's involvement with the brunette is driven by financial motives rather than genuine connection or love. This suggests a transactional relationship, underscoring the influence of materialistic values in their society. The mention of poetry, wine, and love as incapable of eliciting the "elusive ecstasy" indicates that the protagonist has sought fulfillment through various means but has failed to find true happiness or satisfaction. From a psychological perspective, "in social life, which has provided us with our familiar analogy with the dream-censorship, we also make use of the suppression and reversal of affect, principally for purposes of dissimulation" (Strachey 477). In social interactions, individuals often feel compelled to conceal their true emotions and present a different facade to conform to societal norms or protect themselves. Omar might feel pressured to suppress or reverse his emotions to fit in or avoid judgment, leading to a disconnection between his authentic self and the persona he presents.

Naguib Mahfouz highlights Omar's social consciousness and his awareness of the impact of societal issues on individuals. Omar views himself as an integral part of a larger social fabric and believes that working towards societal betterment is essential for individuals to attain meaning and purpose in their lives. When Omar gazes at the moon while his friend Mustapha jokes about him sacrificing his life, it implies that Omar is driven by a deep sense of dissatisfaction with his life and the societal conditions he faces. He feels a strong responsibility towards society and cannot be content with his sacrifices alone. He also believes that individuals have a duty to shoulder the collective burden of humanity to make a meaningful impact, seeing this responsibility as a defining aspect of one's worth or existence. As the speaker states that:

> Omar was still looking at the moon as Mustapha said jokingly, "Aren't you satisfied with what you've already sacrificed of your life?" "Truth is never satisfied." "My dear friend, it's not your responsibility alone." "Man shoulders the burden of humanity as a whole, or else he's nothing." (Mahfouz 117)

The above citation emphasizes the social impacts on the protagonist, Omar, and his deep sense of responsibility towards society. It portrays his belief that one must actively contribute to the betterment of humanity, striving for truth and justice, rather than being content with personal sacrifices alone. Omar's friend tries to console him, saying that it is not solely his responsibility to carry the burden. This illustrates Omar's conviction in the importance of individuals taking on responsibility for the betterment of humanity as a whole. To Omar, if one does not contribute to the greater good or share in society's burdens, their existence holds no value. According to Hosseini, Mahfouz "defended the rights of the people, because although with the revolution many of his national and social dreams were realized, freedom of expression was not established in his country" (535). Despite the progress in other areas, the lack of freedom of speech remains a substantial issue, suggesting that true societal advancement cannot be fully realized without this fundamental right. This quote reflects Mahfouz's commitment to defending the rights of the people. Overall, while the revolution may have brought positive changes, the absence of freedom of expression indicates a lingering social impact that affects Omar and his fellow citizens.

Finally, *The Beggar* depicts the profound social impacts on the protagonist's life, illustrating the dehumanizing effects of stigma, economic disparities, and power dynamics. The novel critiques societal injustices, highlighting the dehumanization and hardships experienced by marginalized individuals. By exploring the protagonist's journey, Mahfouz prompts readers to question their role in perpetuating or challenging these societal dynamics. Through his compelling narrative, Mahfouz encourages readers to reflect on the social injustices faced by individuals and invites us to work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Naguib Mahfouz's novel *The Beggar* provides a captivating portrayal of a protagonist's journey from despair to psychological turmoil, offering a window into the intricate tapestry of social issues. Mahfouz skillfully invites readers to reflect on the profound impact of these social issues on an individual's psyche, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of human existence. Mahfouz illuminates the harsh realities faced by individuals in society and sheds light on the effects of social structures on one's mental well-being. As readers delve into the protagonist's struggle, they gain a deeper understanding of the social issues plaguing our world. Furthermore, the protagonist is confronted with the dehumanizing effects of social stigmatization. His interactions with others are often characterized

by indifference, pity, or even cruelty, reflecting the devaluation of his worth as an individual. His attempts to find meaningful work or establish stable relationships are continuously thwarted by societal prejudices, leaving him trapped in a cycle of poverty and social exclusion. By delving into the depths of despair and unraveling the layers of psychological turmoil, *The Beggar* not only captures our attention but also urges us to actively engage with the social issues it exposes. The novel emphasizes the power of literature in illuminating the human condition and inciting introspection and action in the face of social challenges.

The Beggar serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for compassion, empathy, and societal change to address these prevailing issues and create a more just and equitable society for all. Through its intricately woven narrative and vivid portrayal of characters, Mahfouz sheds light on the struggles of the underprivileged, the oppressive social hierarchies, and the pervasive sense of disillusionment that pervades our world. By delving into the depths of the protagonist's psyche, we are compelled to confront the injustices and inequalities that often go unnoticed in our society. This novel acts as a window through which we observe the intricate struggles individuals face in the face of social inequalities and injustice. As we follow the protagonist's path, we witness the impact of societal pressures and the devastating consequences they have on one's mental well-being. Mahfouz's work reminds us of the need for compassion, empathy, and a collective effort to address these underlying social issues. By diving deep into the protagonist's psyche, the novel prompts reflection on our role in creating a more just and compassionate society. It also leaves an indelible mark in our minds, urging us to examine the humanity in every individual and address the root causes of social despair.

Ultimately, the social impacts portrayed in *The Beggar* paint a grim picture of the protagonist's existence, highlighting the structural injustices and inequalities within Egyptian society. Mahfouz's novel prompts us to reflect on the plight of marginalized individuals and challenges us to address the systemic issues that perpetuate their suffering. Through the intricate narrative, Mahfouz sheds light on the complexities of poverty, inequality, and social injustice that afflict individuals within society. As we witness the protagonist's transformation, we are compelled to reflect on the profound impact of societal structures on human lives and how individuals navigate the challenging path toward autonomy and self-discovery. By pursuing these avenues of further study, researchers can deepen their understanding of Mahfouz's novel and its exploration of the psychological turmoil experienced by the protagonist, enriching literary scholarship in the process.

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Characteristics of Formation and Development and Artistic Description of Romantic Tendency in Medieval Korean Literature

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Abstract This essay studies romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature and looked at the characteristics of its formation in comparison of those of European progressive romanticism. It studies romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature and ascertains that it is a tendency with new ideological and aesthetic ideals which are different from the outdated in the past. The formation and development of romantic tendency in Medieval Korea literature turned out to be somewhat different from progressive romantic literature in Europe in the light of socio-historical environment and aesthetic principle. Both of them are common in showing complaints about the reactionary and unpopular reality of the exploiting society and suggesting progressive ideas. But unlike progressive romantic literature in Europe, romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature is characteristic in the fact that their socio and historical basis is different from each other, and realistic and romantic description are organically combined in the method of interpretation, and the characters' personalities, and their lives reflect deep patriotism.

Keywords progressive romantic literature; method of interpretation; literary trend

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Introduction

The literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature is identified with in comparison with others on the account of formation and development. The

world literary legacies reflect a variety of national life and movements of different countries' people at different times and show creative wits and wisdom, genius and valuable expriences and lessons that have historically been accomplished.

European Romantic literature, which originated and developed with the historical period from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century for its setting, revealed falsity and inhumanity of religion and feudal caste system and, at the same time, criticized the reality of human injustice brought about by the mammon power, which distinguishes it from Humanism and Enlightenment literature.

> Romanticism was one of the literary movements that began in the late eighteenth century and ended around the middle of the nineteenth century – although its influence continues to date." (Jena 555)
>
> The Romantic era or the period of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual period that orginated in Eruope towards the end of the eighteenth century and was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850 . (Argawal 3)
>
> Romanticism could be experienced in most of the western countries between the late 18th century and the early part of the 19th century. (Argawal 36)
>
> The Romantic Movement in literature was preceded and accompanied by the change from monarchy to democracy in politics, from materialism to idealism in philosophy, from conservatism to radicalism in culture and from orthodoxy to emancipation in religion. (Argawal 2)

Its characteristics were clearly shown in the ideal of how to improve the social situation of the oppressed underclass, which was not seen in former times. "The Romantics wanted to change the social world as this would in their opinion make people happier. This movement resulted in the criminal system with better and safer jails, reduction in the severity of sentencing, lesser capital punishment, and the like. It was also suggested that there should be more charity to decrease the hardships of the poor" (Halder 56).

European Romantic literature didn't originate to oppose the caste system and Christianity at the time of their dominance, but it appeared at a time when the illusion of Enlightenment was shattered in the reality of a bourgeois system which was newly established after the abolition of the feudal caste system by the ideas of Enlightenment. "So the general feature of the works of the romanticists is a dissatisfaction with the bourgeois society, which finds expression in a revolt against

or an escape from the prosaic, sordid daily life, the "prison of the actual" under capitalism" (Liu Bingshan 212).

The European Romantics, therefore, still possessed an Enlightenment ideal, but were disillusioned with Enlightenment reality—the bourgeois reality, and couldn't help admiting the unreality of Enlightenment. They had no more rational and noble realistic social ideals than Enlightenment thinkers. However, they had no choice but to find a way out now that they were disillusioned with the bourgeois reality.

> It was also to some extent a reaction against the Enlightenment and 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general. (Jena 555)
>
> Romanticism's aims for humanity thus contrast powerfully with the ancient world in pursuit of naturalness and eudaimonia, with medieval Christianty's ideals of obedience, continence, and beatitude, and with the Enlightenment's commitment to scientific understanding, material improvement and satisifaction. (Eldridge)
>
> Romanticism can be seen as a reaction against all the Enlightenment stood for, and for much of the 19th and 20th centuries this was the dominant interpretion. (Stevens 20)

The way out was finally settled by proposing a fantastic ideal, and when they realized that the fantastic ideal could not come true, they fell into pessimism or compromising with the bourgeois reality. "Throughout the Romantic Age, most of the Romantic poets were in search of the ideal world" (Halder 13). "Romanticism relied on an idealized notion of Reality. Romanticism was more directed towards individualism. It revolved around idealism, emotion, supernatural and passion" (Pattanayak 39).

This pessimism and compromise were expressed in a sermon about moral self-perfection. European Romantics thought that good nature of a man defeats evil, and that the essence and mission of art and literature lies in establishing a society where all people love each other and live happily through the realization of the spirit of freedom, equality and philanthropy. Their outlook on art and literature is based on the idealistic outlook on the world and life and bourgeois humanitarianism, in which the nature of a man consists of good and evil and good nature wins evil. Charles Taylor notes the Romatics' "Resistance to a one-dimensional picture of the human will and their recovery of the sense that good and evil are in conflict in the human breast" (Taylor).

That's why, their works show people beautiful ideals but they make people

fall into disillusion and pessimism on the other hand. “Many realistic writers felt that the Romantics did not act responsibly and they only idealized the world aroun them” (Pattanayak 40). Their fatal weakness is owing to the fact that they did not understand the essence of a man and the law of social development. Romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature has a distinct feature in its formation and development, which distinguishes it from European Progressive Romanticism. It is mainly due to the different specific socio-historical circumstances at that time, and also to the composition of the writers and the literary tradition established in former times. This had also affected the development of literature and society.

Romantic Tendency in Medieval Korean Literature and Its Characteristics

The studies on medieval literature with romantic tendency conducted in the DPRK in the second half of the twentieth century are reflected in many books. The textbook “History of Korean Literature” (1) (Kim Chun Taek), published in 1985, and the textbook “History of Korean Literature” (2) (Jong Hong Kyo) published in 1994 described the typical romantic poems such as “It is painful to live in the world” (Ri In Ro), “To a friend”(Rim Chun) and “A rock”(O Se Jae), which were written by the poets of “Haejachilhyon” (7 writers exiled from the government) such as Ri In Ro (1152-1220), Rim Chun (-1196), O Se Jae (1132-1193) and so on.

And more details were written in the book “The Study on Poetry Written in Chinese Character in Koryo Dynasty” (Ri Song) published in 2009. He analyzed and evaluated more comprehensively and in detail romantic poetic works of “Haejachilhyon.” For example, it described that Ri In Ro had a great yearning for a peaceful and stable ideal society from the hatred of the dark world imposing disasters upon the people and driving their lives to distress in his typical romantic poems, “It is painful to live in the world,” “To a man grafting flowers,” “For an orange tree,” “Looking at women smoothing cloth,” “With a rhythm of ‘An immature peony’ in Janghak Temple” and so on, thus providing preconditions in which a deep research could be made about the tendency of creating romantic poems of Ri In Ro, who was the main writer of “Haejachilhyon.” The book “Theory of Korean Classical Writers” (1) (Ri Song, Kim Jin Guk) (2011) analyzed and evaluated in detail writing activities and poems of the poets Rim Chun, Ri In Ro and others who produced typical romantic poems in the period of Koryo Dynasty.

These studies have done with the successes and experience gained in the literature with romantic tendency in Korea. And the literature with romantic tendency was here approached chiefly in the light of literary forms and genres like poetry, novel and so on. The essay titled “Characteristics of Formation and

Development and Artistic Description of Romantic Tendency in Medieval Korean Literature" proves the existence of the literature with romantic tendency as a literary one in Korea as well as its ideological and aesthetic achievements and stages of development, which intended to excavate more of its successes both in ideas and arts the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea gained to add them to the development of world progressive literature, constituting part of valuable treasure of world literature abreast with other progressive romantic works.

This essay takes a study in which the chief objects of study are a) the formation of romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature and its stages of development, b) characteristics of reflecting the reality, and representative writers with their masterpieces, c) the characteristics of the artistic interpretation.

Romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature was formed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with a distint tendency on the basis of the excellent writing experience and tradition of the preceding literature of oral story and prose of *Suijon* (unreal and unusual story) style and other epics, which used various techniques of describing romantic life.

Romantic tendency in Medieval Korea literature laid a clear foundation in prose of Suijon style. Examples include stories like "Sok Nam" and "Loonghwagu"(An old man changed into a dog). The story "Sok Nam" is about Choe Hang, who had tragic difficulties in romance owing to restraints of feudal moral and realized her dream and lead a happy life after curious revival. And the story "Loonghwagu" is about an old man who can be transformed into an animal in a moment.

In particular, Choe Chi Won (nineth century) laid the beginning of writing methods of romanticism on the basis of rich creative experience of the literature of oral story that depicted life in a fantastic way. In the novel of Suijon style, "A Tomb of Twins" he depicted in a fantastic way the two heroines who were freed from patriarchal feudal Confucian morality and fetters. The novel clearly revealed the romantic character by showing, with the subjective intention and ideal of the writer, but not in a realistic way, that the heroines who died by marriage forced by their parents are returned to life again, meet their favourite lovers and enjoy their lives with joy and happiness to their heart's content.

In this period, however, the romantic writing method was not generalized with one creative tendency. The literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea was actively created with a distinct tendency under a new socio-historical condition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the period of Koryo feudal state on the basis of rich experience and tradition established in the preceding period.

First of all, the fact that the literature with romantic tendency was created

with a distinct trendency in this period is mainly related to the socio-historical circumstance established at that time. At that time, contradictions and conflicts were acute and the society was in disorder in Koryo feudal society owing to Warriors' Coup d'etat by Jong Jung Bu (1106-1179). Hence, the progressive classes showed a strong desire to escape from social chaos, feudal oppression and poverty. In particular, people waged an unyielding struggle to escape from their miserable plight. The intellectual strata tended to seek more ideal realities which were different from unreasonable realities. This provided good conditions for the creation of the literature with romantic tendency in this period.

Secondly, the fact that the literature with romantic tendency was created with a distinct tendency in this period is also related to the advent of the progressive viewpoint of opposing formalism and imitation in the creation of poetry and advocating the writing in conformity with the reality. The reactionary literary sects and venal writers including "Giro Society"(a group of writers patronized by the government) showed strong elements of formalism and imitation in the creation of poetry, but Rim Chun and Ri In Ro and other progressive writers rejected such formalism and imitation views and set forth the progressive idea that people should write in conformity with the reality and their thoughts and feelings.

Rim Chun objected to writing in one schematic pattern with imitating others, saying that people should not lose his nature. Ri In Ro criticized the ostentation without content that imitated others' writings, and put forward the aesthetic idea that the intention should be straightened out on the basis of concrete facts. This progressive view became a factor that made it possible to produce works with romantic tendency that exposed sharply all evils and immorality arising from the reality of the era and confronted them with a stable and ideal life.

"Giro Society" established by Choe Dang in 1230 included literary men aged over 70, who were retired from high government posts. They were government-patronized noblemen such as Choe Dang, Choe Son, Jang Ja Mok, Baek Guang Son, Ko Yon Jung and so on. They were wallowing in luxury under the patronage of military bureaucratic rulers in the middle of Koryo Dynasty. The noblemen in "Giro Society" went on an excursion to mountains and delighted in poetry of praising the feudal dynasty and admiring and rationalizing wealth and honor of bureaucratic rulers, taking advantage of the tendency of the reactionary "Sansu(mountains and rivers) Group" of the early Koryo Dynasty, including Kwak Yo, Ri Ja Yon and so on.

In their works, they embellished the reality at that time as a "peaceful reign", when were characterized by the intensification of feudal oppression and plunder, the upsurge of the people's struggle against it, the aggravation of contradictions

within the ruling class and the increase of social chaos, and they also praised the arbitrariness and tyranny of the military rulers as "benevolent politics" and expressed satisfaction with the king's "benevolence" and "confidence" to them.

Choe Dang's poem "Along with the King to Anhwa Temple" and Choe Son's Poem "After receiving a fan" are typical works showing the reactionary tendency of "Giro Society." The works created by the noblemen belonging to "Giro Society" were rejected by a lot of people at that time because of the reactionary nature of their ideological content and shameless distortion of their real life, so they were of no literary value. They were reactionary bureaucrats who lived in luxury with power before the coup d'etat and had lived in wealth and honor under the patronage of the military ruling forces even after the coup d'etat. This was the class basis, which made them reactionary in their creative tendency.

Choe Rang's poem "Along with the king to Anhwa Temple," Choe Son's poem "After receiving a fan" and "I feel happy that my cousin Mun Mok won the first place in Smasi exam" and other works reflected the attitude and tendency of the writers of "Giro Society" towards the social reality. They expressed satisfaction and joy over "favor" given from the king or rulers, highly praised the feudal rulers and idealized and embellished the contradictory reality of the feudal ruling society which the people despised and denied.

"Haejachilhyon," which appeared in the second half of twelfth century, included Ri In Ro, Rim Chun, O Se Jae, Ri Dam Ji, Hwang Bo Hwang, Jo Tong and Ham Sun who had been driven away from government posts by the military coup and hid themselves. Because of their commonality, they created poems with romantic tendency reflecting the ideas against the arbitrary and tyrannical politics of the new military rulers. They put forward some social reforming ideas including the issue of appointing talents to government posts and fixing the classical examination system for the government service, based on their own living conditions. They opposed formalism and imitation in the creation of poetry, which had been profoundly expressed in the groups of reactionary writers including "Giro Society," and asserted the progressive aesthetic view in which works should be written in conformity with the specific situation and their own aptitude.

They also attached importance to the thematic and ideological content of a work and aspired to genuine reflection of life in writing. On the basis of such a socio-aesthetic view, they produced quite a few poetic works with romantic tendency which exposed the contradictory and unreasonable social reality at that time. The romantic tendency in their poetry is characterized by its combination with a strong critical tone as it is based on the confrontation between the vicious reality

at that time, in particular the dissatisfaction with the military ruling, the progressive socio-aesthetic ideal and the unreasonable reality.

The poem “It is painful to live in the world” also metaphorically romanticised the feelings of anger in which ideal couldn’t be realized with sad singing from a Korean lute and two swords in sheath. Jin Hua and Kim Guk Gi, progressive writers at that time, wrote many poems with romantic tendency in the early days of their writing, making contact with the writers of “Haejachilhyon.” Jin Hua unfolded the dream of a peaceful and harmonious ideal life in the poem “Song of Paradise.” The writer tried to find his ideal “paradise” in the real world, not in a dream.

This was an expression of the people's ardent desire for the ideal world where everyone lives happily without social evils and inequality. Kim Guk Gi sympathized with the point of view of writers of “Haejachilhyon” in his close relationship with them, but his experience of life was different from theirs, thus his personal features were evident in romantic tendency of his writing. He not only expressed the critical spirit towards the reality in the poem "Song in a drunken state" but also skillfully applied rhetorical exaggeration and metaphor. The poem is free and romantic in unfolding mental anguish, ill feeling, grief, anger, grandiose ambition and unshakable faith of the lyrical hero who was suffering from the bitter and harsh reality at that time through the revealing of his inner thoughts and feelings. The writing activities of progressive writers including “Haejachilhyon” clearly show that the method of depicting life in a fantastic way became a tendency among the writers. The characteristic of the development of the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea is that it had been developed steadily since its formation, exploring and applying principles and methods of reflecting romantic life in more diversified ways on the basis of the development of social history and national literature. It was first created at a high level with romantic orientation towards the emancipation of human individuality, a desire for an ideal society and a discontent with Korean feudal dynasty in the field of novel literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In this period, the romantic method of writing was well applied in the works in the collection of short stories "A myth of Kumo" by Kim Si Sub in the fifteenth century. Through his novels, the writer expressed his dissatisfaction with the corrupt and incompetent rulers of Korean Feudal Dynasty and his desire for the emancipation of human individuality in a fantastic and romantic way. The novel “The Tale of Namyombuzu” expressed the writer’s stand and ideal for anti-religion and humanitarian politics through the talk between the hero Pak Sang and the king of an island country on the island called “Namyombuzhu” in his dream and the novel “A party in the Palace of Sea God” showed his dissatisfaction with the reality of feudal

society at that time through the strange and fantastic story in the sea palace.

And the novel "Welcoming the full moon at Bubyok Pavilion" is about a couple's affection and ideal for happiness through the strange meeting between a real man and a girl who went up to the kingdom of heaven and became a fairy after she left the world by the invasion of foreign enemies. This is a typical example of romantic tendency. At that time, it was impossible to achieve their dream under the rule of Korean Feudal Dynasty, so the writer embellished that the love of the two young man and woman had been realized by the help of the Buddha and the strange meeting in heaven.

The romantic orientation towards the emancipation of human individuality was characteristically expressed in the short story "The Love of Ri Sim and Choe Rang." The love of a young man and woman, which suffered vicissitudes under the patriarchal feudal system, was achieved only by the devoted efforts of the heroine Choe Rang. But their happiness was shattered when Choe Rang was killed by foreign invaders. The writer embroidered that their love which could not be realised in reality, was being carried forward and realized by revival of the dead heroine. With this romantic method, the writer artistically clarified the ardent desire that the free ideal of human individuality could not be obstructed or should not be hindered by any socio-historical circumstances or events. The application of the romantic method can be found in the depiction of the dream world in the 16th-century Rim Je's novel "Record of Won's Dream."

The literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea, which formed a romantic tendency in the poetic literature of Koryo and showed a strong romantic tendency in the novel literature of Korean feudal dynasty, was actively developed, broadening its theme and using various romantic techniques with the new socio-historical environment as the background, in which Imjin Patriotic War and War of Byongja in the period from seventeenth to nineteenth century and the idea of "*Silhak*" (useful knowledge) appeared.

The novellas "The History of Imjin War," "The Tale of Mrs Pak," "Mongyudalchonrok" (Record of walking along the River Dalchon in a dream), "A heorine," "The Tale of Jong Su Gyong," "The Tale of Paek Hak Son" "The Tale of Wang Jae Hong," "The Tale of Ri Dae Bong," "The Tale of Hong Ge Wol" "A Record of Dream" and so on reflected anti-aggression and patriotic desire, ideas and feelings of Korean people and the novel "Guunmong"(Dream of 9 adolescents) and the novella "Song of Tongson" showed corruptness of the feudal society and the desire for escaping from the class and status inequality. The novella "Kumsukimong"(a strange dream of birds and other animals) and the short story

"Tale of Ho Saeng" expressed social reform idea and desire for an ideal society.

Artistic Interpretation in the Literature with Romantic Tendency in Medieval Korea

The organic combination of realistic description and romantic description is one of the main characteristics of romantic tendency in Medieval Korea. The relation to realism in the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea can be found in the organic harmonization of the realistic description of man and life in the real world with the main emphasis on the romantic description based on the subjective ideal of the writer. The combination of realistic elements to romantic works was more evident in the novel literature of Korean Feudal Dynasty, especially in the novel literature of the post-sixteenth century.

A typical example is Kim Man Jung's novel "Guunmong." The work is about Yang So Yu, a monk of heaven, who was revived as a human being and fell in love with Jin Chae Bong and other 7 fairies, who were also revived as human beings, before returning to Ryonhwa Peak, a world of heaven. It is realistic in that the stage of the expression of the heroes' characters is basically a real world and their love relations are based on the feudal morality and order of a concubine system, and it is romantic that it is based on fantastic material in the end of their life, affection and destiny.

It is said that "Guunmong" was written by Kim Man Jung to console his mother, saying that wealth and prosperity are just transient while he was in a penal area. It is also said that when Kim Man Jung went to China as an envoy, his mother, who liked a storybook, asked him to buy one from China, but he forgot it and went back, and only when he crossed the Amnok River, he suddenly remembered it and wrote it in the sedan chair.

In the novel, the hero, Yang So Yu and eight fairies were revived as human beings and met each other in the real world and went up to the world of heaven again. It shows the aspiration of the people at that time to escape from the feudal fetters of restraining human individuality. In a previous incarnation, the hero Yang So Yu went to the Palace of Sea God as a servant of a high official for ten years, and after drinking, he flirted with 8 fairies on his way back, and when he returns to the Buddhist sanctum, he forgets Buddhism and admires the human world. As a sin, he is abandoned by the official, exiled to the human world, and eight fairies who met him are also exiled and born into the human world as women of different identities.

The next part of the novel depicts that Yang So Yu enjoys all kinds of pleasure and prosperity in the human world, where he has close relations with eight fairies. He is born as a son of Yang Cho Sa and is promoted to a minister of the country

after passing the exam for the government service. And he meets and falls in love with several women such as Jin Chae Bong, Kye Som Wol and Jong Kyong Pae, who are transformation of eight fairies. The novel ends when Yang So Yu goes up to the world of heaven after he enjoyed all kinds of pleasure and prosperity in the human world, saying that the happiness in the human world is just like a dream for a moment, no matter how good it may be. It criticizes the restraint on the free development of human individuality through portraying the hero Yang So Yu, who breaks the doctrine of Buddhism and Confucianism and behaves as he wishes, while setting the world of heaven and the realistic human world in a fantastic story.

Among the works created by adhering realistic creative methods to the main emphasis on the romantic method are “The tale of Mrs. Pak,” “The Tale of Paekhakson,” “The Heroine,” and “The Tale of Ri Dae Bong,” which are war novels of a patriotic and anti-aggressive theme in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The works portrayed the reality of feudal society, including the invasion of foreign enemies and discord within feudal rulers in a realistic way, and the extraordinary talents of Pak, who does magic in the novel "The tale of Mrs Pak” and the outstanding military exploits of the heroine, Jo Un Ha in the novel “The Tale of Paekhakson,” of the heroine, Jang Sol Bing in “The Heroine” and of Jang Ae Hwang in “The Tale of Ri Dae Bong” were described in a romantic way.

Therefore, they clearly reveal the artistic characteristics of the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea in which the romantic and the realistic are harmoniously combined. The combination of the romantic and the realistic in the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea was also expressed in the fact that the first half of a novel showed the real facts and human beings found in the real world and the second half or the last part showed the fantastic ideal world. For example, in the medieval novel “The Tale of Hong Gil Dong,” the first half revealed and criticized in a realistic way inequality of status such as discrimination of a wife’s child and a concubine’s child in Korean Feudal Dynasty society and the reactionary and unpopular character of the exploiting society which violated the independence of man and the second half created the superhuman character with extraordinary strength and magic, as well as unfolding the romantic scene of building Ryuldo, an ideal society to cope with the unfair feudal ruling society.

The classic novel “The Tale of Sim Chong” shows the realistic portrayal of the miserable and poor life of Sim Chong and her father on the basis of the reality in the eighteenth century in the first half but in the second half, it portrays the romantic life of Sim Chong, who threw herself into the River Rimdang for 300 *soks* of rice offered to Buddha, were welcomed as a guest of honor in the Palace of Sea God,

met her dead mother, turned into a flower after she came out of the Palace, was transformed into a peerless beauty, became a queen and organized a party for the blind to find her father and helped him see again. The novel “The Tale of Ho Saeng” by Pak Yon Am in the eighteenth century emphasized the character of Ho Saeng, an advanced intellectual who actively tried to reform the old feudal society and desired for a new society on the basis of *Silhak* idea. In the first part, it portrayed Ho Saeng’s miserable life and the occasion of the transition to a new life in a realistic way, and in the second part, it romantically described the process of building an ideal "equal society" by exploiting “Islands” and an uninhabited island after he went to an islet, monopolized horse’s manes and earned huge wealth.

One of the typical works of Pak Yon Am(1737-1805), the novel “The Tale of Ho Saeng, is in the 26-volume travel book “A diary of trip to Rehe.” Ho Saeng lives in a very shabby cottage, where rain drops into the room and the inside is very draughty. But he doesn’t care about it and he only reads books and lives on wages of his wife. His wife tells him to become a government official, do business or be an artisan. But he says that he can’t be a government official because he hasn’t finished studying yet and he can’t also do business because he doesn’t have money and he can’t be a artisan because he doesn’t have any skills. But his wife forces him to be a thief. So, he closes his books and goes to the richest man, Byon in his street, borrows 10000 *nyangs* from him, goes to an area, where he does fruit business and earns 100000 *nyangs.* And then he goes to an islet, where he does mane business and becomes a millionare. Later, he meets 2000 “gangs” hiding in an area and goes to an uninhabited island to establish “an ideal society.” Hearing that an area of Japan is suffering from famine, he sells rice to the place and earns one million *nyangs*. After that, he leaves the island with all literate people and throws half a million *nyangs* into the sea and burns down all the ships. He hands over 400, 000 *nayngs* to the poor people, returns 100, 000 *nayngs* to the richman Byon, and goes back to his old cottage to be a scholar.

The novel “The Tale of Ho Saeng” reflected the serious socio-political crisis at the end of the feudal period and asserted the practical economic idea of *Silhak* scholars to cope with it. The novel showed aspiration for coping with the corrupt feudal ruling order through the process in which Ho Saeng established “an ideal society” on an uninhabited island with rebellion peasants after he embarked on business. And this aspiration was more clearly emphasized in the contradiction with Ri Wan, who was so-called vassal trusted by the government. Although expressing sympathy for the struggle of rebellion peasants, it has some limitations, such as failing to support their struggle or represent their fundamental requirements, but

it reflects vividly the reality of the late feudal period, which was tangled with contradictions and when there was a modern tendency, and it also expresses its simple fantasy of a "good-to-live" society. So it is a novel of literary significance.

As we can see, the literature with romantic tendency in medieval Korea has a distinct feature of combining the romantic with the realistic. However, Eropean progressive romantic novels such as "Les Misérables" and "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" by Victor Hugo and "The Count of Monte Cristo" by Alexandre Dumas mainly rely on the romantic description including character relations, describing characters and overall composition in the novels, though there are some realistic elements in depicting some circumstances and events.

As a typical example, "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" (1831) by Victor Hugo (1802-1885), a representative of French progressive romantic literature, showed a typical romantic style. "Victor Marie Hugo was a French poet, novelist and dramatist of the Romantic movement" (Maximud 101). "This extraordinary historical novel, set in Medieval Paris under the twin towers of its greastest structure and supreme symbol, the cathedral of Notre-Dame, is the haunting drama of Quasimodo, the hunchback, Esmeralda, the gypsi dancer, and Claude Frollo, the priest tortured by the specter of his own damnation" (Maximud 101).

The novel is set in Paris in the 15th century. In the novel, Quasimodo, who rings bells, Father Claude Frollo and Phoebus de Châteaupers are competing for winning Esmeralda's heart, who is a beautiful gypsi girl. But only, Quasimodo, the hunchback could give her true love. In the novel, the writer exposed the unpopular character of the feudal ruling class and the medieval church and showed the spiritual and moral superiority of the people through the portrayal of Esmerald, who kept chastity at the cost of her life, and of self-sacrificing Quasimodo. The philosophical basis of this novel is that the world is the battlefield of good and evil and in this battle evil is doomed to defeat. "This novel is a work against ignorance and injustice" (Maximud 101).

Hugo regarded the process of historical development as that of the human spirit. According to him, in this process, man overcomes errors, evil and crimes and develops "from darkness into brightness" and from evil to good and therefore "the final victory of good is predestined to be achieved" by divine providence. This idealism dominated Hugo's writing. In the novel, the writer showed a typical romantic style of writing. Quasimodo and Claude are typical romantic characters. Quasimodo has a noble spiritual beauty in his unusually ugly, deformed body. Claude is an animal with a "noble and beautiful" body. The writer, showing their contrasting love for Esmerald, stressed that although the love was deformed and

ignorant, it aroused genuine humanity to the working people, but it seemingly aroused the nature of a beast to Claude, “a good ascetic.”

But the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea has the characteristic of the organic combination of the realistic and the romantic style of writing, unlike European Progressive Romantic literature. It is one of unique characteristics of the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea that the characters and contents of life reflect the idea and emotions of patriotism. Progressive romantic literature of Europe was generally created by writers who were disillusioned with and denied unreasonable exploitative social realities and aspired to a more beautiful future. Therefore, the heroes of romantic literature are portrayed as those who possess idealized character, superhuman power, spirit and talent as rebels against the reality of the era.

> Their writings are filled with strong-willed heroes, formidable events, tragic situations, powerful conflicting passions, and exotic picutres. (Liu Bingshan 212)
>
> Hero-figures and heroic deeds were accorded huge significance, expressed dramatically throughout different art forms, and often through chosen lifestyle. (Stevens 17)
>
> Simultaneously and sometimes confusingly, rebellious anti-heroes were also sought out, invented or re-interpreted, for example, Prometheus for Mary Shelley, and Milton’s Satan for William Blake. (Stevens 17)

This is common among progressive romantic literatures of all countries. Jean Valjean in “Les Misérables,” who has incomparable physical strength, and Edmond Dantes in “The Count of Monte Cristo,” who takes revenge on his enemies with superhuman wisdom and will, are all depicted as idealized characters as rebels against the realities. The novel “The Count of Monte Cristo” severly exposes and condemns the corruptness of a capitalist society where it is common to sacrifice others for individual comfort and pleasure and which is based on extreme egoism. It is vividly expressed not only through the ill-fated destiny of the hero, Edmond Dantes, but also through the horrible crimes such as Danglars, who became a banker by means of fraud and deception, Fernand, who was promoted to a lieutenant general and a count, and Monsieur Villefort, the crown prosecutor, who pretended to be a so-called "protector of the law", and commited vicious acts.

Through portraying such characters, the novel sharply revealed and criticized the corruptness of a capitalist society where social evils prevail, and it also

artistically confirmed the victory of good and justice over evil and injustice through the revenge of Dantes and downfall of his enemies. The novel deals with the events in an extraordinarily acute dramatic situation, unfolding the plot with great interest, and depicts the hero's destiny, his character and his activities as outstanding and ideal things, which cannot be seen in reality, thus sustaining its characteristics as a romantic work. However, with these general characteristics of romantic literature, the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea reflects the warm thoughts and feelings and passion of the writer who loves the country and the nation ardently, so that the idea of patriotism was strongly expressed in the characters and content of life.

First of all, it can be found in the fact that writing activities had a tendency of fantastically and romantically portraying the ardent desire of Korean people for an ideal society in which everyone can live equally well without any exploitation, oppression and social inequality. The poems of Ri In Ro and Jin Hua, who depicted the fairy-tale ideal world of “paradise,” and “Gwon Sang finds a real paradise,” which unfolded the ideal life world, the fantastic story in which Sim Chong became a queen after throwing herself into the River Rimdang, “A gourd seed” in which the hero became a richman with jewels such as gold and silver pouring out of a guard, the romantic life image of buiding Ryuldo, the story of establishing “an ideal society” where everyone lives equally together after cultivating an unihabitated island and “Byonsan Islands” are works of unique artistic characteristics of the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea which aspires to people’s independent desire and wish.

These romantic images are an expression of boundless sympathy and love for the people who were torn, hungry and maltreated in the exploiting society, and a reflection of the romantic world of progressive writers who were trying to realize the desire of the people by building an “ideal society” where everyone lives on an equal footing. The patriotic characteracteristics of the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korea can also be found in the fact that in anti-aggressive and patriotic works and other works which aspired to demonstrate wisdom and spirit of the nation and ardently desired for the prosperity of the country, the hero and other positive characters were portrayed as extraordinary, heroic and patriotic ones.

In medieval literature with romantic tendency, many war stories about female generals were produced, which created the anti-aggressive and patriotic characters of Korean People during Imjin Patriotic War and Byongja War. The heroines here are wide figures such as Kang Sol Bing, Jang Ae Hwang and Jo Un Ha, who displayed courage and performed heroic feats in the battles against invaders as

generals, and Mrs Pak, who helped her husband be promoted to a government post with an exquisite ink container and killed the enemy commander in an instant with mysterious magic and made other general surrender, thus defeating enemies.

For example, the novel "The Tale of Paekhakson" in which Jo Un Ha is the hero, reflects in depth the spirit of anti-aggression and patriotism and sharply criticizes injustice, so it is appreciated as a distinguished work of certain literary significance. Ryu Baek Ro in the novel is the only son of Ryu Tae Jong who was sacked from the government by treacherous vassals and came to an outback village. He receives Paekhakson (a fan with a picture of white cranes) which has been handed down as an heirloom when he was separated from his father. Baek Ro who set out for looking for Mr Un Pa met Un Ha, a daughter of Jo Song Ro, a dignitary by chance in an area and gave him Paekhakson as a token to form the ties of love. After being taught by Mr. Un Pa for the next three years, Paek Ro win the first place in the exam for the government service and becomes a head of the government academy. And his father, Ryu Tae Jong, is also appointed to a high post.

Later, Paek Ro, who became a royal inspector, toured the country and managed to look for Un Ha. At that time, when a minister of state, Choe Guk Yang tries to have Un Ha for his daughter-in-law, she abstains from food and becomes ill and her father, Jo Song Ro, who also knows the relation between her and Ryu Baek Ro, also refuses his propose. Choe Kuk Yang tries to execute Jo Song Ro family with malice. But the governor of an area, Jin Hung Ro (Ryu Baek Ro's uncle) hid them. On their way to an area, Jo Song Ro and his wife dies of illness and Un Ha becomes orphaned. She goes back to their homeland with her maid and suffers all sorts of hardships.

Then, tens of thousands of foreign enemies invade the country. Ryu Baek Ro goes to Choe Guk Yang, a minister of state and asks him to send himself to the battlefield. At last, he is appointed to a marshal and leads 30 000 soldiers to the battlefield. Ryu Baek Ro, who is driven into trouble by harmful acts of Choe Guk Yang, desperately fights against the enemy. But he is captured. At that time, Jo Un Ha drop in a tavern with her maid and hears that Ryu Paek Ro was caught alive by the enemy and is in trouble. When it is reported that Ryu Baek Ro was defeated by the enemies, Choe Guk Yang tells the emperor that Ryu Baek Ro surrendered. And he takes Baek Ro's parents to jail. At that very moment, Un Ha reaches the capital and writes to the emperor that there is a traitor in the government who is communicating secretly with the enemies and no food and forage was not sent to the battlefielf owing to him and the soldiers are suffering from lack of food, that although Ryu Baek Ro was captured, he hasn't surrender and are still royal to the emperor, and that she is asking for permission to go to the battlefield to kill the

enemy commander in spite of a female.

The emperor plans to appoint Jo Un Ha as a marshal and give her 30 000 soldiers. She defeats the enemies by means of magic of Paekhakson in the battle and Ryu Paek Ro, who was captured, is rescued by her. Jo Un Ha sends the surrendered enemy commander to the captial and releases all captured enemy soldiers. She, on her way back, organizes a paryt to comfort her soldiers and tells Ryu Baek Ro what she has experienced so far and takes out Paekhakson which she has kept for years. Only then, Baek Ro notices that she is Jo Un Ha. The emperor highly appreciates their merits. The novel concludes with a large wedding of Ryu Paek Ro and Jo Un Ha organized by the country.

The works with romantic tendency on the patriotic theme of anti-aggression created at that time were based on historical facts and showed that patriotic commanders and female generals - the main characters including the hero, were superior to the enemies in mental, moral, military and technical way in their strategy and strength, by employing various fantastic and magical methods, thus inspiring the patriotic idea and national pride.

Conclusion

Romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature has a distinct feature in its formation and development, which distinguishes it from European progressive romantic literature. European Progressive Romantic literature was formed in the late eighteenth century and existed until 1830s. But it could not give a correct answer to the requirements of the era and started to decline due to its own limitations and it was replaced with a new trend, critical realism literature. Unlike it, romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature was formed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and existed throughout the whole period of development of medieval literature. The literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature was created in an organic relationship with realism from the overall composition of a work to the depiction of its character. But European Progressive Romantic literature mainly relied on the romantic method.

In European Progressive Romantic literature, heroes are mainly depicted as an idealized character. So they are rebels who fight against the reality. But the literature with romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature is characterized by the strong expression of patriotic ideas in the characters' personalities and contents of life by refecting warm thoughts and feelings and passions of the writers who ardently loved the country and the nation.

Study on romantic tendency in Medieval Korean literature gives people

over the world not only a wide and rich knowledge about the art and literature in Korea, but also adds to the diversity of world-treasure house of literature. It is also significant for enriching culture and emotion of people as well as researchers of literature and developing neighborly relations among the nations and countries in the world by getting better acquainted with the history, culture and national customs and manners of others despite different cultural and emotional backgrounds.

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Faith, Science, Addiction and Depression in Yaa Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdome*

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Abstract Immigration may change a person's outlook on life and shape their cultural understanding. This kind of change can lead to either positive or negative outcomes, depending on the individual's faith and scientific beliefs and how they respond to the variables around them. The study explores the intersection of faith and science through the story of Gifty, a Ghanaian girl living in the United States, and the consequences of living in a completely different country. Gifty is a Ph.D. candidate in neuroscience studying the neural impact of addiction and depression on human mental health, which is influenced by her brother's death due to addiction and her mother's depression. She grapples with her mother's devout Christian faith and her own faith in the power of science. Through a postcolonial approach, the study attempts to examine Gifty's experiences in the United States and how these dynamics intersect shape her cultural and religious identity. The study finds that immigration can awaken a person's potential for better or worse. Gifty's mother continues to adhere to her faith and spirituality, while her brother Nana cannot resist the desires of his body, which ultimately leads to his death. However, Gifty believes in the power of science to change the world for the better and recognizes its impact on the human brain. Later, she realizes that believing in the power of God, faith, and science can change a person's life for the better.

Keywords immigration; intersection; faith; science; transcendent; addiction

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Introduction

A human being always struggles to find a better life for oneself and one's family. This desire leads people to seek refuge in a world that espouses social justice, equality, and open opportunities. Many individuals, especially from economically disadvantaged or politically unstable regions such as Africa and the Middle East, immigrate to America in pursuit of the American Dream, which is often seen as a haven for the most oppressed. Consequently, America becomes the destination for many who suffer from poverty, oppression, social restrictions, wars, and political unrest in their home countries.

In her novel *Transcendent Kingdom*, Yaa Gyasi explores the challenges faced by a Ghanaian family, particularly Gifty's family, upon their arrival to America. Contrary to their belief that all their problems would be automatically solved upon reaching America, they encounter a different and difficult life that takes a long time to adapt to. The family also seeks a church that can meet their spiritual needs, especially the mother, who is deeply concerned about maintaining their religious values and finding spiritual peace in a world that barely provides it.

Yaa Gyasi, born in Ghana in 1989, moved to the United States at a young age and spent her early childhood in Ohio, Tennessee, and later Alabama, where her father was a teacher at the University of Alabama. Her early experiences in the United States significantly influenced the life she was expected to lead. The poetry classes she took as prerequisites for her studies refined her passions and instilled in her the values of faith and ethics that she grapples with in her daily life. This is evident in the epigraphs she uses in *Transcendent Kingdom*, which reference Old's poem *The Borders*, and her appreciation of Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Grandeur of God*, reflecting the struggle between faith and science. Gyasi's novel reflects her experiences as an immigrant in the United States and the challenges she faced in settling and adapting to the new Western lifestyle.

Life of Gifty's Family in America

Gifty's family dreams of leaving their home in Ghana, particularly Gifty's mother, who insists on immigrating to America and competes in the lottery for the opportunity. She believes that this will change their lives and secure a brilliant future for her son, Nana. However, not everyone in the family shares her enthusiasm

for leaving. Gifty's father is not as eager to leave their home for the new world as her mother, but eventually succumbs to her determination.

When Gifty's family wins the lottery and is selected to travel to America, the children are excited to find a new world that fits their ambitions and dreams. However, upon arriving in America, Gifty's father feels miserable and decides to move back to Ghana, leaving a void that cannot be filled by the mother's words or the sparks of American civilization. Nana, Gifty's brother, is deeply affected by his father's absence, as his father was a big fan of his games.

Later on, when Gifty is sent back to Ghana at the age of eleven to care for her ailing mother, she is left under her aunt's care, who revives in her the Ghanaian traditions and culture. Gifty is torn between her responsibilities towards her mother's ailment and her studies to accomplish her PhD. She learns to cook her mother's favorite local dish and takes care of her needs while struggling to balance her own aspirations. Yaa Gyasi intentionally chooses the names of her characters to reflect something about them. The name "Gifty" means "bleeding heart" in her mother's tongue, reflecting her share of the family's suffering and instability. Her mother believes that Gifty's misery arises from her abandonment of the Bible and the church and her indulgence with sinners.

Gifty's Family: Traditions versus Modernism

Sometimes, immigrants have their own means and ways to lead their life and express their impressions about the new world they move to. Some immigrants fight to keep their traditions, culture, and religious beliefs, adhering to their faith even after their settlement in the new world. However, some immigrants look at the new world, such as America, as a world of freedom, where everything is permissible, and the first thing they have to do is to take off their old traditions, even changing their appearance and style of life that fits with the culture and tradition of the new world. The immigrant does not hesitate to wear a new identity that matches the values of modernism. For instance, Gifty's mother keeps adhering to her faith and never offer any concession regarding her faith and beliefs. She always requests her children to maintain their beliefs and keep going to the church and reading the Bible, otherwise, they will lose their faith and their connection with their mother's homeland. Gifty's father, the Chin Chin Man, has a nickname for a type of Ghanaian food that he enjoys so much. He likes the African style of life, Ghana in particular. While Gifty's mother wants to give Nana the world, the Chin Chin Man has reluctantly agreed. They apply for the green card via lottery, and she wins, giving her a chance to move to America.

It is obvious that the religiosity of Gifty's mother continues even when she moved to America. Gifty's mother fasts and prays for three days, and it is certain that this is what brought about the pregnancy she was hoping for. Gifty's mother has a strong faith, not only in God but also in her people's treatment and their superstitions. She has waited for a long time for a son, and her faith in God to respond to her wish does not vanish. Later, she has a son named Nana, and Gifty always calls him her mother's 'Issac,' who comes to her after sincere prayers to God to grant her a son. The name is relevant to a biblical story, Issac being the son of Abraham and Sara, who was a promise of God to Abraham and his wife, Sara, and then Issac was born.

Despite Gifty's mother's faith and insistence on her daughter, Gifty illustrates that she no longer prays. When she was young, she had many questions about God, addressing her questions to her brother, Nana, who has given him another nickname: Buzz. Perhaps she will find healing answers to her questions in her writing to God, "If you're in space, how can you see me, and what do I look like to you? And what do you look like, if you look like anything at all?" (Gyasi 18). Such questions show the simplicity and innocence of Gifty, who wants to know everything about God and religion. And this instinct drives her later to find in her PhD study a solution to her brother's addiction and recognizing the reasons and behaviors behind.

Gifty also reconsiders her relationships with her classmates and friends, her mother's life, and her adherence to the faith and religion. Her mother's life and adherence to the faith and religion cannot give Gifty a space of freedom to live the free life of American culture, particularly at the first stage of her life in America. Gifty's mother, from the first day in America, begins looking for a church that satisfies her faith and beliefs. She is afraid that her daughter will sacrifice her cultural and Ghanaian values to live the western life with its flaws. Dating life has no limit and everything is open in America, and no limits for freedom. She is careful to protect her daughter from the impact of such a civilization. She wants her daughter to save herself for her husband in the future, she wants her to live the Ghanaian life with its details. As a result, she spends a time fearing the men and her connection with them. Further, Gifty, under her mother's domination, tells stories about her origin that she is a princess and her grandfather was a lion tamer. It is a mark in the family to exaggerate their origin and power."

Gifty's Mother and the American life.

The members of Gifty's family find themselves in a far cry from the promising land they had dreamt of and had etched into their memories about America. Gifty's father,

in his pursuit of employment, encounters not only a lack of suitable opportunities but also faces undue scrutiny from law enforcement due to his towering stature. This unwarranted attention becomes a source of humiliation, prompting him to retreat further into the confines of his home. Gifty's mother, similarly burdened, takes on the role of a home health aide for a man named Thomas—an elderly, racist individual. The church becomes a sanctuary for her, offering solace and respite from the daily struggles, but her employment with Mr. Thomas forces her to endure mistreatment in order to provide for her family's basic needs.

Africans arriving in America initially find themselves relegated to low-paying, undesirable jobs such as caretaking, janitorial work, and cleaning—positions that the native population tends to avoid. The harsh reality compels them to accept these roles as they strive to sustain their lives in America with limited alternatives. Gifty vividly portrays her mother's tribulations in her employment with Mr. Thomas, describing the degrading tasks she performs for him, alluding to the turnover of health aides before her. Gifty's mother perseveres through the difficulties, facing Mr. Thomas's insults and lack of appreciation, all for the sake of providing for her family.

Securing employment, especially for Black individuals, proves to be a formidable challenge, and Gifty's mother is compelled to take on a workload that five health aides before her could not bear. The ungrateful demeanor of Mr. Thomas, coupled with his perpetual dissatisfaction, subjects her to daily insults and psychological distress. Gifty paints a vivid picture of her mother returning home fatigued, physically and emotionally drained from the hardships faced at work. Life in America, with its inherent challenges, becomes even more arduous when confronted by individuals like Mr. Thomas, who exacerbate the struggles faced by African-American families. Gifty's father, employed as a janitor in a daycare center, earns meager wages under the table, further underscoring the family's financial hardships. The pursuit of the American dream becomes an elusive goal for Gifty's parents as they grapple with the harsh reality of economic instability.

One prevalent global health concern is the widespread prevalence of depression and anxiety, attributed in part to the fast-paced nature of contemporary living and the emergence of modern lifestyle-related ailments. The relentless hustle of daily life, combined with the demands of a rapidly evolving society, has significantly contributed to the escalation of mental health challenges worldwide. In the current era, individuals often find themselves grappling with a myriad of stressors, ranging from professional pressures to societal expectations, financial burdens, and interpersonal challenges. The constant bombardment of information through digital

channels, coupled with the pervasive influence of social media, further exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and isolation.

Moreover, the erosion of traditional support structures and the diminishing sense of community in many societies contribute to an environment where individuals may feel overwhelmed and disconnected. The pervasive influence of technology, while offering numerous advantages, also introduces new stressors, as individuals struggle to strike a balance between the virtual and the real world. To address this complex issue, a holistic approach that encompasses mental health education, destigmatization of mental illnesses, and the promotion of healthy coping mechanisms is essential. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive community, both online and offline, can play a pivotal role in mitigating the impact of depression and anxiety on individuals. As we navigate the challenges of modern life, it is imperative to prioritize mental well-being, seeking a harmonious equilibrium between the demands of a fast-paced society and the cultivation of a resilient and flourishing individual. Delzell argues Depression: The Last Research:

> If you're one of more than 17 million adults or 3.2 million teens in the United States with major depression, you may know that treatment often falls short. The latest research on this common mental health disorder, also called clinical depression, aims to help you feel better faster, and with fewer side effects. Right now, doctors don't have a precise way to tell which medication is best for you. That's part of the reason that many people with depression have to try more than one drug before they feel better. (1)

Gifty's mother's dream of providing her children with a better life in America clashes with the harshness of their daily existence. The pressures of making ends meet overshadow the pursuit of academic success and personal growth for Gifty and her siblings. The family finds themselves on the brink of financial despair, prompting Gifty's mother to voice concerns about their ability to sustain their current lifestyle. The National Institute of Mental (2023) Health defines depression: "Depression (also known as major depression, major depressive disorder, or clinical depression) is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working" (1).

As Gifty affectionately nicknames her father "Chin Chin Man" and refers to her mother as "asaa," likening her to a berry that sweetens life, a stark contrast emerges in their roles within the family. While her mother shoulders the responsibility of

providing for the family, her father appears detached and unwilling to contribute to the challenges of immigrant life in America. Gifty's father, dubbed the "Chin Chin Man," reveals a reluctance to adapt to their new surroundings, showing a lack of initiative in securing a stable life for his children. Gifty's father, displaying a self-centered disposition, chooses the path of least resistance—returning to Ghana, leaving the weight of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of his wife and inexperienced children. His decision reflects a stark contrast to his wife's initial excitement about immigrating to America for a better life. Gifty's mother, despite enduring a life of hardship and deprivation, finds solace in the belief that her struggles will pave the way for a brighter future for her children.

The father's departure, however, leaves the family vulnerable in a new world where the lack of parental guidance exposes the children to potential dangers. In the absence of their parents' guidance, the children become susceptible to negative influences, such as drug dealers and delinquents in their community. Unprepared for the challenges that life in America presents, the children navigate an uncertain path without the necessary guidance, risking their well-being in a world filled with unforeseen dangers.

Transformations in Nana's Life in America

Nana, at the beginning of his life in America, seeks to satisfy his demands in playing games and finds his father's encouragement. His father, Chin Chin man, regrets leaving home because he cannot achieve something he may be proud of in the future. He begins to establish a comparison between his people, place, and this new world, finding himself forced to be there. He remembers the simplicity of his people and place, which brings comfort and tranquility to him, away from the hustle of American life. He finds American life, which cannot bring comfort and happiness to him. He may not be able to stand the modern life of America with its complications. Nana states, "In my country, people may not have money, but they have happiness in abundance…no one in America is enjoying" (69). The materialistic life makes the people in America like a machine that works and works without enjoyment. This kind of life dominates everything in America at the expense of the values and the health of human beings. Life becomes unbearable for the people who may earn their living barely. Gifty's mother becomes dependent on sleeping pills to forget her stress and exhaustion. She continues to lose weight and brings worry to Gifty, who starts to ask for advice from her classmate, Kathrine.

Gifty has few friends, despite her questions about God and his existence. She keeps defending the existence and the power of God in the class, which arouses

their disgusting and hating for her among her classmates. Her classmates and the people in America may not show the same concern about God and religiosity. Nana's faith is vulnerable and shaky, and he asks Pastor Tom about whether people living in remote African villages who had no chance to hear about Jesus would go to hell. Obviously, Gifty and her brother, Nana, are skeptical of their ideas on God, and they do not know how to describe their beliefs.

Nana adores basketball and becomes a team star. However, his father's return home affects Nana's sportive life, and he gets an injury that drives the doctor to prescribe OxyContin to him to heal his injury. Nana keeps using this kind of medication for a long time and gets addicted to such medication, which turns his life upside down. He becomes seeking for stronger drugs that satisfy his physical and mental desires. Gifty illustrates, "I just knew that Nana was always sleepy or sleeping. His head was always nodding, chin to chest, before rolling or bouncing violently back up. I would see him on one coach with this dreamy look on his face and wonder" (152). Nana becomes uncontrollable, and it is not easy to keep Nana's addiction a secret. Nana's addiction adds more burden and stress on the family, his mother in particular. There were times when Gifty and her mother saw him strung out in front of the carp-filled pond at Big Spring Park, and Gifty would think, "God, I wish it was cancer, not for his sake but for mine…I would have a better story than the one I had. I would have a better answer to the questions 'where's Nana? What happened to Nana?'" (160). Nana's addiction brings shame and humiliation to the family, besides the psychological stress and pain. Ngeh and Nalova pointed out:

> Gifty sends a heartbreaking request to God; she cannot stand the pain of her brother's suffering. Death, according to her becomes the only way to freedom and the restoration of peace in her family. As a Christian, Gifty believes that when her brother dies, he will leave behind all the tribulations of the world to a more welcoming and peaceful place where there is no pain, no sorrow nor addiction—paradise. (57)

Nana's addiction and death leads Gifty to research this topic in her PHD study, attempting to find an answer to such a behavior. " Nana is the reason I began this work…this the science was away for me to challenge myself, to do something truly hard, and in so doing to work through all of my misunderstandings about his addiction and all shame" (160). Nana finds in his addiction a refuge form the harsh realities of life. "It feels amazing, like everything inside my head just empties out and then there is nothing left-in a good way" (145). Nana spends most the time

outdoors. It becomes an annoying fact the family needs to deal with it daily. The Mother and his sister Gifty spend their time searching for him "as the two of us drove around looking for him, I thought about how find Nana must have been, tired of our mother washing him in a bath tub like he'd reverted to his original state, tired of all the nothing in a bad way" (150). Gifty explains Nana's conditions bitterly and what extent the drug addiction change his world to the world of babies who need the assistance of the mother in every movement. "I was sitting in the back with Nana's head in my lap…snuffling…we go to the house he woke up, but in a zombie-like way that people who got high woke up. He didn't know where he was" (161). Nana's addiction makes him another man who cares nothing for his family's suffering even he may not feel the people around him and their pains.

Drugs have destroyed not only Nana's life but also his family's life that leads Gifty to seek the assistance of God "Dear God, I wish Nana just die already, please, just let this be over." The family wishes his death because he becomes hopeless case and his death may be a mercy to his family. "Nana's addiction had become the sun around which all of our living revolved. I didn't want to stare directly at it" (144). Gifty states that the life beside Nana becomes unbearable. He consumes their time and their efforts. Nana becomes drug addict and he does not care from where he has to get money for drugs and he steals money from his mother who spends hard times to collect the money for the necessities of daily life. Drugs makes the person selfish, thinks only how satisfy his desires. His drug addiction is uncontrollable and he does not show any resistance, but he finds himself drifting with the demands of his body, forgetting the pains he causes to his family. The more using drugs, the more the body needs. Eventually, he dies seeking the sensual pleasures which bring only to him destruction and then death. "How do I talk about the day he died… he got four days before we called the police,…so when the police knocked on our door at about nine o'clock to tell us that Nana had an overdose on heroin and died in the parking lot of a Starbucks, we were blindsided. We'd thought our routine will save us and save him" (180).

Drug abuse and addiction, under various aliases, pose a significant and escalating issue in numerous countries, particularly in America and European nations. This problem is particularly detrimental to the well-being of the youth and young generations, contributing to the erosion of societal foundations. The pervasive use of drugs, under various guises, is on the rise, wreaking havoc on the human resources and prosperity of affected countries.

The United Nations diligently monitors and compiles statistics on drug addiction, providing a sobering insight into the extent of the issue and its annual

escalation. The United Nations' 'World Drug Report, 2023,' along with its preceding publications, reveals alarming statistics pertaining to the prevalence of addiction among the youth. These reports shed light on the rapid growth of the drug trade and the corresponding surge in the number of individuals succumbing to addiction. It is imperative to recognize the gravity of this situation and work collaboratively on a global scale to address the root causes of drug abuse and implement effective measures to curb its proliferation. The United Nation World Drug Report, 2023, pointed out:

> Drug use continues to be high worldwide. In 2021, 1 in every 17 people aged 15–64 in the world had used a drug in the past 12 months. The estimated number of users grew from 240 million in 2011 to 296 million in 2021 (5.8 per cent of the global population aged 15–64). This is a 23 per cent increase, partly due to population growth. Cannabis continues to be the most used drug, with an estimated 219 million users (4.3 per cent of the global adult population) in 2021. Use of the drug is increasing and although globally cannabis users are mostly men (about 70 per cent), the gender divide is reducing in some sub-regions; women account for 42 per cent of cannabis users in North America. It is estimated that in 2021, 36 million people had used amphetamines, 22 million had used cocaine and 20 million had used "ecstasy"-type substances in the past year. The proportion of female users is higher in the case of amphetamine-type stimulants (45 per cent of users are women) and non-medical use of pharmaceuticals (between 45 and 49 per cent of users are women), whereas the highest share of men is found in users of opiates (75 per cent) and cocaine (73 per cent). Opioids continue to be the group of substances with the highest contribution to severe drug-related harm, including fatal overdoses. An estimated 60 million people engaged in non-medical opioid use in 2021, 31.5 million of whom used opiates (mainly heroin). (12)

Nana's drugs addiction brings shame to him and to his family in his life and after his death. Nana'a mother cannot stand her son death and she feels that she shares the large part of blame because her insistence to travel to America to help her family in a brilliant future that may not find in their home, in Africa. She gets depressed, calling the Lord by her mother language tongue, Ghanaian language "Awurade, Awurade, Awurade" (184). She regrets her insistence to travel to America, however, her regret may not change the reality of losing her son. Nana's father had wanted to take his son to Ghana, but Nana's mother refused and she was the one who was very

interested to immigrate to America, thinking life will be easier and promising, but she found the reality of American style of life is different.

Gifty's Scientific Research on Addiction

Gifty is a PHD student in neurosciences and she is studying the impact of drugs on the brain through experiments with mice. She was influenced by her brother's death, Nana from a heroin overdose when she was eleven. His death left very deep void in Gifty and the family in general. His mother started to feel depressed and she was blaming herself because she was very excited to leave Ghana on the hope giving Nana a better life and a brilliant future. Gifty's research is to understand the reward-seeking behavior in too much addiction and little depression. She concentrates on mouse's brain to trace the transcendent of the rewarding seeking behaviors of the mouse to be applied later on human ailments which match with human symptoms.

She attempts to help the community to resist drug addiction and she wants to raise awareness of the people towards drug attention and how it may start as a kind of relaxation and comfort and end in destroying the human brain and life. Eventually, Gifty's efforts come to be fruitful. The limping mouse stops pushing the lever after the optogenetic therapy. She wants to record her research results in a paper to get the results published and let the community get benefit from research results. In the end, Gifty manages to appreciate the ideas of walking with God to guide the human being to do the right thing in his scientific life or his daily life in general as the mouse- under study- needs some one's assistance to control the reward-seeking behavior, science and faith work together in human life and definitely the will be intercrossed in all the stages of human scientific life and human life in general. A human being may not arrive to his destination without a strong faith and the guidance of his/her God. Mankind needs to respond, but to accept his God guidance and the humans either.

If the person cannot seek assistance from the family or the community and continue pursuing his fancies and whims, definitely he will lose the right track and immerse himself/herself in illegal things or drugs addiction. He/she drives himself/herself to destruction and then death. Nana keeps ignoring the assistance from the people around him, particularly his family and he does not appreciate the grace of the family to be beside the person in such dark moments so that his life is ended taking overdose heroin. He prefers to live in his dreamy world, in his transcendent kingdom with drugs and other narcotics. He remains in such a kingdom and his soul moves to another transcendent kingdom in the hereafter.

Gifty, in the end, finds reconciliation with her faith and science enhances her

faith and her belief in God and commences to accept the voice of God and what she needs to do to be closer for her God. Prayers become appreciated and the voice of God comes from within. On the contrary, her mother has a strong faith and even life in America cannot change her faith and she seeks the church in America from the first days to keep herself and the family connected with their God who provides them with power to continue their life in spiritual peace. The mother sees God with her in health and ailment, in her straight and in her weakness, in home or in church so that she keeps praying and going to the church to find that comfort she needs in her life. The more she finds obstacles in her life, the more she be with God in prayers and worshipping.

Racial Prejudice, Evangelism and its Impact on the Family

Huntsville, Alabama, serves as a disturbing embodiment of racial prejudice against Black Americans, even within the shared faith that unites followers of evangelical beliefs, irrespective of their racial or ethnic background. Remarkably, the White community, particularly within the evangelical church, harbors a sense of superiority over Black Americans, accentuating their vulnerabilities to underscore a perceived lower societal standing.

The narrative exposes a troubling trend where the struggles of Black individuals, such as Nana's addiction, are unfairly isolated and not recognized as a pervasive issue cutting across different sects, ages, classes, races, and ethnicities within the community. This selective acknowledgment reflects a biased perspective that fails to address the broader realities faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Throughout the storytelling, Gyasi consistently highlights instances of racial prejudice perpetrated by the evangelical church against Black Americans. A poignant example is illustrated in the quoted passage, where the narrator's small group within the church overtly expresses their disdain. The disdain is further underscored by the condescending assumption that someone fervently devoted to their faith as a "Jesus freak" would be inherently ignorant about scientific matters. This observation serves as a microcosm of the broader racial tensions permeating the community, shedding light on the deeply ingrained prejudices that persist even within religious circles. "…my small group didn't bother hiding their disdain for me... After all, what could a Jesus freak know about science?" (89).

In the backdrop of Alabama, Gifty grapples with racism from a tender age. A poignant incident unfolds in her kindergarten years when she fabricates a tale of being a Ghanaian princess to a classmate, only to be met with the dismissive

retort, “No you’re not. Black people can’t be princesses.” Racism, like an insidious undercurrent, permeates the fields where her brother Nana plays soccer, lurks in the unspoken biases of minor characters, and is subtly denied as she steps into each classroom: “When I was a child, no one ever said the words ’institutionalized racism.’ We hardly said the word ’racism.’ I don’t think I took a single class in college that delved into the psychological effects of years of personally mediated racism and internalized racism.”

Gifty’s formative years unfold in a society that denies her inherent beauty, strength, and significance. She reflects:

> What I’m saying is I didn’t grow up with a language for, a way to explain, to parse out, my self-loathing. I grew up only with my part, my little throbbing stone of self-hate that I carried around with me to church, to school, to all those places in my life that seemed to affirm the idea that I was irreparably, fatally, wrong. I was a child who liked to be right. (147)

As a college student, Gifty’s pursuit of success propels her towards neuroscientific research, a realm elevated enough to transcend the treacherous terrain of subjective opinions altogether. This academic sanctuary becomes her refuge, a space where she can navigate the complexities of her identity and experiences without the weight of societal biases, signaling a profound shift in her journey. Gifty’s family stands at the intersection of profound community changes, where Nana’s descent into addiction and her father’s eventual departure from the American community to return to Ghana mark pivotal moments. The family becomes a canvas upon which the complexities of these shifts are painted, demanding resilience in the face of formidable challenges.

Nana’s battle with addiction is not merely a personal struggle but a reflection of the broader societal transformation encircling them. The community’s metamorphosis becomes a catalyst, pulling Nana into the clutches of addiction as a coping mechanism amidst the evolving landscape. Simultaneously, Gifty’s father embodies the harsh reality faced by Black men in America. The narrative intricately captures the perceptible changes in their surroundings, particularly how the atmosphere transforms when “big black men” navigate through societal spaces. The father’s attempt to shrink into himself, to mitigate the prejudice he encounters, is a poignant illustration of the toll exacted by systemic biases.

In parallel, Gifty’s mother shoulders the weight of multiple identities and ailments. The narrative paints a vivid picture of her experiences alongside her

husband, witnessing the altering contours of America through his struggles. The father's diminishing pride and the visible attempt to blend into an unwelcoming society lead to a state of homesickness and humiliation, ultimately culminating in his withdrawal from public life. The vivid image of him refraining from leaving the house encapsulates the emotional toll exacted by the changing societal landscape. Gifty's family becomes a microcosm, navigating the intricate dance between personal and communal upheaval. Their story unfolds as a nuanced exploration of identity, addiction, and the quest for belonging in a community undergoing profound transformation, "But walking around with my father, she'd seen how America changed around big black men. She saw him try to shrink to size, his long, proud back hunched as he walked… Homesick, humiliated, he stopped leaving the house" (27).

The narrative is a typical portrait of a Ghanaian immigrant family and how they grapple with faith, science, culture, religion and love. It illustrates the moments of weaknesses and the moments of power. Nana's addiction and his father's withdrawal form American life because he may not be able to stand the humiliation look of the America community at the Black, "In that moment, and for the first time in my life really, I hated Nana so completely. I hated him, and I hated myself" (173).

Gifty's mother navigates various languages and identities, revealing a lack of confidence and an underlying sense of embarrassment within the Black community. The nuanced exploration of her linguistic and identity shifts suggests that this adaptation is not driven by desire but rather stems from an inability to authentically convey her true self in this new cultural and linguistic landscape. The quote, "And I don't think she did this because she wanted to. I think, rather, that she just never figured out how to translate who she really was into this new language" (129), encapsulates the poignant struggle she faces in reconciling her identity with societal expectations.

Meanwhile, Gifty discovers that the faith and the church, though integral to her upbringing, fall short in addressing her brother's addiction or providing insights into its root causes. In her quest for solutions to her family's daily challenges, she turns to science and experiments, seeking a deeper understanding of her brother's addiction and her mother's struggles. The exploration of science becomes a means for Gifty to unearth remedies for her family's afflictions.

The quote, "...the more I do this work, the more I believe in a kind of holiness in our connection to everything on Earth. Holy is the mouse. Holy is the grain the mouse eats. Holy is the seed. Holy are we" (92), reflects Gifty's evolving perspective. It underscores her conviction that there is a sacred interconnectedness

between all living things, and through scientific inquiry, she seeks a holistic understanding of the world, including her family's challenges. The pursuit of scientific knowledge becomes a pathway for Gifty to bridge the gaps in her family's well-being, transcending the limitations of faith and tradition.

This profound exploration into the psyche and experiences of a Black immigrant family in America is both enriching and thought-provoking. Gyasi skillfully navigates the intricacies of racism, unveiling its subtle yet pervasive nature and the underlying tension it generates as events unfold. While, initially, Gifty and her family seem embraced by their white church and predominantly white small-town community, a gradual realization sets in that this benevolence is tainted with racist judgments, adding a layer of fickleness to the apparent acceptance. Unlike overt, headline-making racism, Gyasi unveils the insidious nature of daily, pervasive racism, eroding the confidence and self-worth of Gifty and her family, ultimately leading to devastating consequences.

Gyasi's prowess in character development, coupled with her distinctive voice and writing style, reflects the artistry of a gifted author. Reading her words is a pleasure, as they resonate with the mastery of a true literary craftsman. *Transcendent Kingdom*, with its focus on characters and their intricate development, stands as an exquisite and fascinating work that will captivate readers who appreciate the depth and richness of character-driven novels.

Gifty finds solace in the realm of science, immersing herself in the study of neural circuits associated with depression in rodent brains. While she possesses a nuanced understanding of these biological processes, she acknowledges the inherent limitations in drawing parallels between the brains of laboratory mice and the intricate complexities of the human mind. Despite this disparity, Gifty is compelled to delve into this limited understanding, aiming to extrapolate insights that can be applied to Homo sapiens, a species she describes as the most complex, uniquely convinced of its transcendence beyond the animal kingdom.

The profound loss of her brother Nana to addiction remains a silenced anguish for Gifty, leaving her with few confidantes and fostering unstable connections in the realm of romantic relationships. Amidst this emotional turbulence, her steadfast companion emerges in the form of Han, a fellow lab mate. Their bond is forged not only through shared scientific interests but also casual conversations that provide a rare outlet for Gifty's thoughts and emotions.

In the crucible of scientific exploration and the isolating silence surrounding her brother's addiction, Gifty's world is shaped by her commitment to understanding the intricacies of the mind and her selective connections with those who share her

intellectual pursuits. The narrative encapsulates the dichotomy between her pursuit of scientific knowledge and the poignant personal struggles that remain unspoken, revealing the complexity of Gifty's journey.

Conclusion

A particularly compelling aspect of the narrative revolves around Gifty's yearning to bridge the gap between science and faith. Her childhood journals bear witness to her intimate prayers, pondering the whereabouts of God and questioning His presence: "Dear God, I've been wondering where you are. I mean, I know you're here, with me, but where are you exactly? In space?" Gyasi masterfully maintains fidelity to Gifty's voice, accentuating this connection by juxtaposing the childhood entries with the adult Gifty's scientific pursuits.

As Gifty embarks on her quest for scientific answers, she grapples with the intricacies of spirituality, her beliefs, and the enigmatic aspects of the human spirit that defy scientific explanation. This struggle becomes even more complex as she navigates life as a closeted Christian among her scientific peers, revealing the additional layer of challenge she faces in an environment where her faith is met with skepticism. Outing herself to fellow students leads to a poignant reflection on the lack of serious consideration for her ideas, tainted by the prejudice against her as a "Jesus freak."

Transcendent Kingdom, in essence, becomes an experiment in storytelling. Gyasi crafts a narrator, Gifty, who serves as a mirror reflecting the reader's own lens of evaluation. Gifty's strength as a character and relatable protagonist stems from the crucible of pressure she endures. Gyasi's structural brilliance lies in the gradual revelations within each chapter, not as solutions to the story's larger puzzle, but as essential pieces that complete the intricate narrative. The novel is a testament to Gyasi's trust in Gifty as a narrator, allowing her to showcase the complexity of the human brain beyond a mere computational device. In Gyasi's Kingdom, there are no facile answers, only the hopeful purity emanating from Gifty's voice. Ultimately, this authenticity proves more than sufficient, offering readers a compelling and nuanced exploration of faith, science, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Gifty emerges as a character deeply engrossed in contemplation, a trait ingrained in her since childhood. Her trajectory into becoming a neuroscientist unfolds as a natural extension of her enduring fascination with profound existential inquiries surrounding the body, life, religion, and the divine. The exploration of key questions about humanity forms a central theme in the narrative, echoing the sentiments of Gifty's high school biology teacher, who emphasized the unique

complexity of humans as the only beings presuming to transcend their inherent kingdom.

The title of the book draws attention to a concept deeply embedded in Western philosophy, one that posits humans as exceptional due to their perceived transcendence beyond biological confines. This notion, rooted in both science and Christianity, perceives humans as distinct entities, with science attributing this distinctiveness to the complexity of the brain, and Christianity ascribing it to the existence of the soul. The novel, however, serves as a poignant revelation, shedding light on the profound shortcomings inherent in these frameworks that attempt to account for the intricacies of the human experience. Gifty's intellectual journey, intertwined with her scientific pursuits, unravels the limitations and flaws ingrained in these age-old myths that have permeated Western thought. Through her lens, we gain a nuanced understanding of the inadequacies in relying solely on the brain or the soul to define the essence of humanity. The novel becomes a powerful commentary on the need to reassess and transcend these conventional paradigms, challenging readers to reevaluate their own assumptions about what makes the human experience truly exceptional.

In the tapestry of immigration, Gifty's journey stands as a compelling narrative, a testament to the profound impact of cultural shifts on an individual's understanding of life. The intersection of faith and science, embodied in Gifty's quest as a neuroscience Ph.D. candidate, offers a rich exploration of the human response to variables encountered in the immigrant experience. Gifty's struggle, shaped by her brother's tragic addiction and her mother's unwavering Christian faith, forms a captivating lens through which we witness the clash and confluence of beliefs. In the crucible of postcolonial dynamics in the United States, the study navigates Gifty's evolving cultural and religious identity, unraveling the intricate threads that weave together the complexities of her existence.

Immigration, as illuminated through Gifty's experiences, becomes a catalyst that awakens the latent potential within individuals, pushing them toward better or worse outcomes. Her mother's steadfast adherence to faith stands in stark contrast to her brother Nana's tragic succumbing to the impulses of his body, ultimately leading to his demise. Yet, Gifty emerges as a beacon of hope, navigating the delicate balance between the transformative power of science and the profound impact of faith. Through her journey, the study underscores the notion that believing in the synergy of God's power, faith, and science can be a catalyst for positive change in human life.

As we conclude this exploration, it becomes evident that immigration, with

its intricate tapestry of challenges and opportunities, has the power to shape the trajectory of an individual's life. Gifty's narrative serves as a compelling testament to the resilience of the human spirit, capable of embracing the transformative potential of both faith and science. In the synthesis of these forces, a richer, more nuanced understanding of life unfolds—one that transcends borders and charts a course toward a better, more harmonious world.

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