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Ecological Ethics in Emily Dickinson's Nature Poems

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Abstract Emily Dickinson's ecological ethics is notable for her humble and tolerant attitude toward nature, namely her reverence for natural wonders and mysteries, her non-discriminatory appreciation of natural diversity and complexity, her recognition of the significance of nature itself rather than that of "human value." With such ethical attitude toward nature, Dickinson presents her ethical choices correspondingly through the personae and narrators in her nature poems. First, they remain humble to nature, no matter it is spectacular or trivial, graceful or destructive, and choose to be modest observers and admirers to honour the sublimity and inscrutability of nature. Second, they are always sympathetic with "Nature's People" no matter these wild lives cater to human beings or not. They choose to live in a state of symbiosis, namely a state of harmony instead of cut-throat competition. Third, Dickinson establishes positive abstinence with her "ascetic paradoxes", which proposes to abstain human beings from their animal-like appetite to prevent the unprotected nature from being spoiled and keep themselves open to higher possibilities. Her ecological ethics is positive: it is mutually beneficial to sustainability of nature and human spiritual self-realization, and to potentialities of coexistence of human beings and nature in the long run.

Key words Emily Dickinson; ecological ethics; ethical choice

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Introduction

Emily Dickinson's critics pay less attention to her ethical attitude and ethical choices underlying her poems about nature. There are two opponent voices about her view of nature: nature as "earthly paradise" or "heaven below" with whom humans beings are in ardent love; nature as the external Other, from whom human beings are estranged, alienated, and isolated. Both sides start from the modern predicament that God is absent and human beings are thrown into an unsupported, purposeless existence.

As a counter measure to the metaphysical predicament, the former holds that Dickinson has veered from the old comfort of sacred heaven and paradise to the secular one to find nature a favorable substitute, that is, "earthly paradise" or "heaven below." For example, Wendy Martin says that Dickinson "portrays the gentleness of the earth's rhythms by describing nature as a nurturing mother," "a kind, careful, and graceful mother who watches over even her tiniest creatures as part of her 'Household'" (Martin, *The Cambridge Introduction...* 87-88). Hence the divine, lofty, absent Father is replaced by the more approachable "Nature Mother."

The latter believes that Dickinson has taken the opposite route to withdraw entirely from the search for external comfort and retire in her own self. For example, Roger Lundin admits that "Dickinson struggled to believe that mind and nature were knit together as Emerson had said they were, but she could not do so. ... for the mature Dickinson the most notable fact about the human spirit was its solitary voice in an otherwise silent world" where in the absence of God, "nature goes on with her business, saying nothing intelligible to us, even as we labor to interpret her" (Lundin 153-154).

It seems that the former is more positive and active than the latter, while concerning the subjective initiatives of human beings, both are passive, for the former shifts the responsibility of human blessedness from God onto the nature, while the latter accepts the forlorn state of human beings, no longer trying to connect mankind with the external world. In a word, both neglect Emily Dickinson's ethical attitude and ethical choices in her nature poems, and neglect her belief in

human subjective initiatives in terms of human-nature relationship.

What is ethical attitude and ethical choice? As Nie Zhenzhao points out, human civilization has passed "the first biological selection of humankind," that is, the "natural selection" by which human beings have distinguished themselves from animals, and have entered into "the second important choice, the ethical one... to distinguish humankind from animals and made savagery people to be ethical beings," yet human beings could not entirely be separated from animals in the ethical sense that "Man is Sphinx (an existence of Sphinx factor), a combination of rational factor and animal factor" (Nie 1). That is to say, every ethical choice people made was fundamentally a choice to be more of a man or of an animal (Nie, Wang 6-7). Ecologically speaking, it is the "animal factor" that has compelled the human beings to make their ethical choices of jungle struggles and to establish their ethical identity as "half-man, half-animal." Now that human beings' animal-like choices for better living conditions have resulted in the deterioration of the conditions and the threat of annihilation of the ecosphere of the living earth, it gets to the point to consider a change.

Emily Dickinson's ecological ethics is represented by the ethical attitude and ethical choices of the personae and narrators in her nature poems. They are moral in that they pay reverence for nature and position themselves as humble companions or carers rather than self-important owners or avaricious exploiters. They appreciate the "Nature's people" equally, sympathizing with them and recognizing their own significance. Emily Dickinson's ecological ethics can also be seen in her literary device of "ascetic paradox," like "to renounce is to possess the more," "sumptuous destitution," etc., which illuminates her abstinent attitude toward nature. She proposes that self-abstaining from the animal-like appetite satisfaction can not only save and conserve the free communion of nature, but protect one's desire for nature from being shattered, as she writes in her poem: "That Hunger—was a way/ Of Persons outside Windows—/ That Entering—takes away—" (J579, F439). In a word, Dickinson's morals about the benign human-nature relationship and human beings' ethical obligations toward nature are not taught by didactic preaches, but revealed in her idiosyncratically literary narration.

Humble Attitude Towards Nature as Modest Observers or Admirers

Emily Dickinson does not preach a sermon of ecological ethics with emotional eulogies or condemns. Instead, she has her ambassadors, the personae in her nature poems who speak out her humble reverence for nature and her ethical choices as moderate observers or admirers rather than self-styled owners of nature.

She depicts her reverence for nature in many poems. The first-person narrator "I" in her nature poems is usually a humble girl or boy who comes across a "Nature's people," may it be a robin, a hummingbird, a bobolink, a spider, a bee, a butterfly, or a cricket. The speaker halts to stare at the amazing "fellow" in open-mouthed wonderment, harping on its miraculous details as if it were the first time that such a little creature had ever appeared on earth. A perfect example is her widely-acclaimed "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (F1096, B)[1]:

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides —
You may have met Him — did you not
His notice sudden is —

The Grass divides as with a Comb —
A spotted shaft is seen —
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on —

The "narrow Fellow" is not given a name throughout the poem as if it were some kind unknown to the narrator, or it were too slippery to be fixed with any human knowledge. The narrator only "catches" him with the sound imitation in the opening stanzas — the repetition of "s" sound like "Grass," "notice," "sudden," "is," "as," "spotted," "shaft," "seen," "closes," "opens," and the kinship sounds like '/ʃ/', "z," "/dz/," etc. — and with the familiar images of a comb dividing the hair (grass) and the shooting arrow (shaft), bringing forward a hissing fellow "at your feet" as a shock or surprise, although it is far more than the first meeting:

Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot —
I more than once at Noon
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it

1 All the poems quoted herein and after are from Franklin, R. W., ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Variorum Edition*. 3 vols. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. The bracketed "F1096, B" is the serial number of this poem in this book, namely "poem No. 1096 edited by Franklin, variant B." The same below.

It wrinkled, and was gone —

The unnamed, defamiliarized narration in the first two stanzas conceals the "truth" that "I" have met this untitled creature several times before. "When I was a boy," the narrator acknowledges in this stanza that, "I more than once have passed such a fellow at noon, and thought it was a whip lash unbraiding in the sun. But when I stooped to pick it up, it wrinkled and was gone." What a pity or surprise! And anyway, the "more-than-once" meeting with this old friend still pleases the narrator with scenes and feelings as fresh as at the first sight.

The "narrow Fellow" is so odd and peculiar that the "boy" cannot but compare it with some other "Nature's people" that he knows well and loves cordially:

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me —
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality —

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone —

The "Nature's people" are of great variety and diversity. "Several" are friendly and sociable as "I know (them), and they know me," while the other shy off social contact like the "narrow Fellow" who wrinkles and slips away to avoid "my" approach. "Several" amiable ones make the boy feel "a transport of cordiality" as it typically happens at the reunion of the beloved ones after a long separation, while the other make him petrified with a "tight breathing" and frozen cold, reminiscent of the coming of the Death itself— "Zero at the Bone." Whereas without strong kinship or cordiality with the cold-blooded guy, the boy does not go to the opposite extreme to take it as a repulsive demon or sinister enemy as the word "snake" or "serpent" has told us. To him, a threatening creature is but another "Nature's People" as well as the sweet and pleasing ones, so all we can see is a boy awestruck at the nature's might and miracle, and watching it pass by instead of fleeing or waging a war.

In correspondence with the humble reverence for nature, Dickinson's personae are normally quiet observers and admirers of the spectaculars and particulars of

the wild world with the least interference except the unequivocal kindness and obligations to "help one fainting Robin/ Upon his Nest again" (F982). Such humble status can be seen in the awestruck boy in the above snake poem or the first-person-plural speaker in "'Nature' is what We see —" (F721, B) who accepts nature's inscrutability as part of its beauty. Emily Dickinson announces with joy her humble status in respect of nature:

> Flowers — Well — if anybody
> Can the ecstasy define —
> Half a transport — half a trouble —
> With which flowers humble men (F95, B)

"Flowers humble men" with the ecstasy that nobody could define—"Half a transport — half a trouble —"—just like those who are carried away by ardent love and are not ashamed of acknowledging it.

Dickinson also admits the humble status of human beings, regarding nature's overwhelmingly destructive forces. The mysteries of nature are not limited to the stupendous sublimity and small blessings; they can also be dark menaces, reckless harms, or even irretrievable disasters when human beings can not pose themselves as dominators any longer. Apart from the hypothetical natural calamities like volcanoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes in her poems, Dickinson portrays the quotidian nature which might annoy, irritate, and harm others:

> Nature — sometimes sears a Sapling —
> Sometimes — scalps a Tree —
> Her Green People recollect it
> When they do not die —

A "wantonly destructive" nature is portrayed here as Wendy Martin names it—"sometimes" sears a sapling, "sometimes" scalps a tree like a wilful villain. Dickinson does not evade the unfavorable dimensions of nature for the sake of an elevated ode, nor does she attempt to "repress the darker aspects of her vision in order to create the illusions of control." (Martin, *An American Triptych* 146, 121) Instead, she accepts nature "in its entirety," including "death, the darkest and most threatening aspect of the cycle of birth, life, death, and dissolution" (Martin, *The Cambridge Introduction...* 96-97).

Hence we can see Dickinson's humble attitude toward nature. Through the

curious and naive personae and the literary device of defamiliarization, etc., she reveres nature for its wonders and mysteries, its commonplaces and trivialities. Once nature is adored as something supreme and magical instead of being degraded into pure objects and possessions, the redemption of human-nature co-existence has started. In correspondence with her humble attitude, Dickinson's personae usually assume the ethical identities as modest observers and admirers instead of dominators trespassing on nature recklessly. The vivid description of admirable nature in her poems should give a telling lesson about the truth of human-nature relationship and eco-ethical choice.

Being Sympathetic with "Nature's People"

Dickinson appreciates nature in a non-discriminatory way, that is, to appreciate diversity and complexity of nature despite human beings' empirical standards. Based on the biological egalitarianism, her personae are sympathetic with the "Nature's People" and make the ethical choice to be the compassionate mates and carers of the wildlife, and live in a state of symbiosis with them instead of striving for human beings' absolute monopoly.

Dickinson is noticeable for her spirit of equality and craftsmanship, which determines her appreciation of nature with discernment and without discrimination. For one thing, she can appreciate the natural world with careful observation and discerning sensibility. Her relationship to nature is personal, experiential, and affectionate. Far from the stereotyped image of a voluntary captive whose circumference was within the building of her father's Homestead, or a "nun" whose horizon was beyond this world, Emily Dickinson had had a physical experience with nature. As a child, a girl per se, or "a boy" as she pretended to be (Habegger 126-127), she was a bold hiker in the neighboring forest of Amerhest for the sake of her herbarium, a collection of 424 preserved dried plants arranged on 66 pages (Martin, *All Things Dickinson*, 441). In an 1862 letter to T. W. Higginson, she recalled her woodsy childhood with pride and said: "When much in the Woods as a little Girl, I was told that the Snake would bite me, that I might pick a poisonous flower, or Goblins kidnap me, but I went along and met no one but Angels, who were far shyer of me, than I could be of them" (L271). [1] The woods are home to human beings' neighbors who are of great variety and diversity to include not only benign grannies who dote on kids, but the narcissists and the grumpy cats, which does not mean that

1 All the letters quoted herein and after are from Johnson, Thomas H., ed. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. 3 vols. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958. The bracketed "L271" is the series number of this letter in this book. The same below.

the visitors have any right to expel the disagreeable hosts and hostesses, the forest dwellers. Dickinson's impressive knowledge about botany and biology enabled her to identify the rare herbs and creatures; moreover, she was keen and sensitive to the nuances of the quotidian with aesthetic and affectionate discernment. As an attentive observer of nature in general and the qualified carer of her garden in particular, Dickinson factually "knew the wood-lore of the region round about, and could name the haunts and the habits of every wild or garden growth within her reach" (Knickerbocker 187) .

For another, Dickinson treats the natural world in an equal and non-discriminatory way. She juxtaposes the sublime and the ordinary, the appealing and the misshapen, the human and the nonhuman in her lyrics. A nice example is the following lyric, "'Nature' is what We see—" (F721, B), where the small chirps of bobolinks and crickets, the mighty roar of the sea and thunder are put in juxtaposition in the first two stanzas to compose a marvellous reverberation of the Sound of Nature.

"Nature" is what We see —
The Hill — the Afternoon —
Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —
Nay — Nature is Heaven —

"Nature" is what We hear —
The Bobolink — the Sea —
Thunder — the Cricket —
Nay — Nature is Harmony —

Nature is what we see, hear, and know as the natural phenomena present themselves. We can see the hill peaceful and the afternoon magnificent, we can appreciate squirrels, eclipses, and bumble bees in their rhythm of life, and we can find that "Nature is Heaven" to have myriads of things in their element in the "heaven below." We can also hear the tweets of bobolinks, the chirps of crickets in symphony with the roar of the sea and thunder playing a Sonata of Nature, which evokes our sigh that "Nature is Harmony."

Such is Dickinson's ethical attitude toward nature, that is, non-discriminatory appreciation of the diversity and complexity of nature. In fact, her poems abounds with the minutest details of nature to record equally the notable and the negligible, and even those normally deemed hostile and evil. This kind

of biological egalitarianism enables her to follow the natural world with equal care and interest, to produce a splendid volume of miscellaneous plants and creatures, blossoms and insects, landscapes and climatic phenomena in her nature poems.

Correspondingly, Dickinson chooses to be sympathetic with the wildlife and put her personae in a state of symbiosis, namely living together with the "Nature's people" instead of stressing the life-and-death struggle between human beings and and their "adversaries." Facing the ferocious nature, her personae and speakers keep in company with wildlife in distress, for example, the victims of wintry violence, and sympathize with their sufferings heart and soul. The sombre and barren winter is a major villainous role in Dickinson's nature poems where she sympathizes with the snow-stricken creatures for their predicaments, and expects the seasonal chance of their recovery:

> To lose — if one can find again —
> To miss — if one shall meet —
> .....
> You and I the secret
> Of the Crocus know —
> Let us chant it softly —
> "There is no more snow!" (F30)

Bulb plants, together with the metamorphosis of caterpillars into butterflies, are among Dickinson's favorite hibernation-resurgence symbols. With the magical bulb, crocus enjoys the secret that the death of its aerial part does not necessarily mean the complete death since the well kept underground stem may resurrect the crocus itself next year other than passing on its life to the "next generation" by seeds as most plants do. But the truth is that every time we lose and miss each other, we do not know whether we shall meet again or not, so the highest blessing here should not be "Struggle and see!" but the soft prayer that "There is no more snow!" Only in this way, the bulb need not sink into slumbering and hang between life and death.

Winters in New England can by no means win Dickinson's favor when the earth is shrouded in pure elimination and oblivion of whiteness to become a "Disc of Snow" (F124, C), which is a land of inanimation and death insomuch that even a pallid ray of afternoon sun turns out to be depressive and oppressive:

> There's a certain Slant of light,

Winter Afternoons —
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes —

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us —
We can find no scar, (F320)

To the first-person-plural narrator here, winter is so cheerless that even "a certain Slant of light" can bring no warmth and illumination but oppression and depression, which weighs like the holy "Cathedral Tunes," imposing the unavailable grace upon the "poor damned souls" (the unconverted sinners) and leaving a "Heavenly Hurt" where the injured can "find no scar."

Dickinson does not create a utopia in her lyrics. There are always disaccords and conflicts between human and nonhuman, for example, when a diligent house-building spider meets with a diligent house-cleaning housewife:

The Spider holds a Silver Ball
In unperceived Hands —
And dancing softly to Himself
His Yarn of Pearl — unwinds —
.....
An Hour to rear supreme
His Continents of Light —
Then dangle from the Housewife's Broom —
His Boundaries — forgot — （F513)

Here the insidious and creepy insect which is often considered ugly and venomous, appears on the stage again with a new look: a soul dancer and weaver which is holding some dance prop or weaving stuff ("a Silver Ball," "Yarn of Pearl") in unperceived hands, and dances "softly to Himself." He's dancing to himself and for himself. The audience may fail to keep up with his rhythm or perceive the movement of his hands, yet never mind because that's not the point. It is obvious that the stereotype of spider as darkness and ominousness now comes the illumination of appreciation and tender feelings. However, this dancing weaver's masterpiece — "Continents of Light" — and the boundaries he has set up within an hour is destroyed by a housewife's day-to-day clean-up. In this round, human prevails with the help of the more powerful tool (a broom) , yet the winner does

not pursue or attack to root out the enemy, and the weaver dangles "from the Housewife's Broom" before starting another dance of life. Although there exists the eternal territorial dispute about whose home or "boundary" it is, there's no life-and-death combat in this poem, which displays flourishing chances for both sides, and provides another solution to the dispute between human and nonhuman.

In her garden poems, the nature is in miniature and Dickinson assumes more ethical duties than a pure observer or admirer only. She was in life a reputable gardener who cared for every trifle of her earthly paradise and took the blame for every misfortune that befell the little residents in her trust:

> It bloomed and dropt, a Single Noon —
> The Flower — distinct and Red —
> ...
> The Sun in place — no other fraud
> On Nature's perfect Sum —
> Had I but lingered Yesterday —
> Was my retrieveless blame —
>
> Much Flowers of this and further Zones
> Have perished in my Hands (F843)

The speaker is remorseful about a plant's perishing in her unwary absence and wishes it might be retrievable: "Had I but lingered Yesterday —." It's a complicated accusation of oneself as she said that the sun was "in place" and there was "no other fraud On Nature's perfect Sum," which was another way to say that there WAS a fraud in "Nature's perfect Sum" now that a plant had perished and made it incomplete. The speaker extends her guilt to the claim that "Much Flowers of this and further Zones/ Have perished in my Hands" to suggest John Donne's enlightening sentence: "Therefore, send not to know/ For whom the bell tolls,/ It tolls for thee." The speaker undertakes the duties and obligations of attending to the garden in such a painstaking way that it is reminiscent of the biblical text: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). In fact, Dickinson is proud of the fruit of her meticulous care and calls her garden the "Heaven below" or "paradise" in a letter to her friend: "If roses had not faded, and frosts had never come, and one had not fallen here and there whom I could not waken, there were no need of other Heaven than the one below—and if God had been here this summer,

and seen the things that *I* have seen—I guess that He would think His Paradise superfluous" (L185).

Dickinson makes her personae and herself to be sympathetic with nature, compromising with natural need and living together with the wildlife rather than monopolizing the world. When she sympathizes with the wildlife in distress, the wildlife's company also gives her hope and warmth in return. Even if human and nonhuman are in disputes, there is always an option for them to coexist rather than a cut-throat competition, which is of vital importance to relieving the ecological crisis nowadays.

Positive Abstinence

Dickinson recognizes the significance of nature itself rather than that of "human value," and accordingly, she establishes a strategy of abstinence for her personae and speakers to leave the free communion of nature unspoiled, which will in turn potentiate human amplified self-realization and human-nature coexistence by abstaining the "half-man, half-animal" species from the bestial demand. Such a positive and transcendent attitude will make the "savagery people to be ethical beings" (Nie 1).

Pragmatically speaking, nature has long been the synonym for "means," "provisions," "living environment," etc., or in Aldo Leopold's words, the wild things "had little human value until mechanization assured us of a good breakfast, and until science disclosed the drama of where they come from and how they live" (Leopold XXXi). Namely, nature and its belongings have long been judged by "human value" only as benign, useful, significant, or the otherwise. Culturally and historically, nature has been considered not as here and now, but as a "vehicle" to convey some voice beyond. Both the Christians and the Romanticists read nature as revelations of some higher truths, be it the Christian God, or Wordsworth's "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe," or Emerson's "Oversoul" or "Universal Being."

On the contrary, Dickinson appreciates nature as it is, who admires its vitality and autonomy, diversity and complexity, as the concluding stanza of "'Nature' is what We know —" (F721, B) advocates:

"Nature" is what We know —
But have no Art to say —
So impotent our Wisdom is
To Her Sincerity—

Nature is what we know intuitively, yet we "have no Art" to decode it with human mind and language as our wisdom proves to be impotent for her sincere yet fathomless mystery. The simple style and clear elaboration in the first two stanzas turns out to be a foil to the absolute Otherness of nature which is disclosed in the concluding stanza. R. W. Franklin collects two versions of this poem in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1998) and one of the major variants is the alternative between "Her Simplicity" and "Her Sincerity" in the final line. No matter nature is simple or sincere as the opening stanzas have shown to us, it is external to human mind, as in a bird poem of Dickinson, which starts with a "desire to domesticate the 'raw' natural scene and make the bird accessible to human understanding" and ends in "the shift in the speaker's epistemological relationship to the bird from near-communion to unknowableness," "amplifying the bird's beautiful otherness" (Knickerbocker 195).

Dickinson recognizes the significance of nature itself rather than that of "human value," which is also the core of the radical ecology, especially the deep ecology nowadays. As Arne Naess, the founder of deep ecology, preaches earnestly: "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth have intrinsic value, inherent worth. ... Richness and diversity of life-forms contributes to a realization of these values and are also values in themselves" (Arne Naess, 18). Dickinson goes even further to recognize the significance of natural darkness, inscrutability, epistemological unavailability, not alone its factual diversity and complexity, which teaches a vital moral that we shall stay in awe of nature, rather than recklessly assuming self-styled "owner" or "master" and reaping the bitter fruit we sow ourselves.

Acknowledging nature's significance in itself, Dickinson establishes positive abstinence to prevent human beings from objectifying nature by regarding it as purely substantial or potential property. Emily Dickinson's readers can not but notice her status of deprivation and abstinence concerning the unfulfilment of love, religious assurance, literary recognition, and so on. While the flip side is that the withdrawal from social life makes room for her busy and serious output of poems persistently, and the lack of religious support leaves her to ponder over the long-standing questions like death, eternity, heaven, and God in a fire-new and independent way as she can not pass the buck to the orthodox Church or the Calvinistic God whom she has not confessed to trust.

The most educational ethical choice Dickinson has made is her proposal of abstinence from the free communion of nature, through which she can keep open to more possibilities of self-realization and desire-object relationship. She proposes

such a positive abstinence to leave the world's wonders and mysteries intact, so does our fancies about the objects which are sometimes thwarted by our corporeal possession of the once-tantalizing objects. In ethical sense, we can surely learn from Dickinson's "sumptuous destitution" (F1404) the wisdom to deal with the relationships between desiring and enduring, satisfaction and disillusion, human and nonhuman, which may prevent us from depleting the Earth Mother's over-generous communion at a killing speed:

> Who never wanted — maddest Joy
> Remains to him unknown —
> The Banquet of Abstemiousness
> Defaces that of Wine —
>
> Within it's reach, though yet ungrasped
> Desire's perfect Goal —
> No nearer — lest the Actual —
> Should disenthrall thy soul — (F1447)

To leave the rare treasures where they are might be the best way for both the objects and the human beings. Psychologically speaking, the "maddest Joy" came only from those unknown and unattained, just as the sweetness of the nectar was peculiar to the infinite possibility of "Banquet of Abstemiousness," yet the drinking of the best wine can spoil it. In Dickinson's words, it is the unfulfilled desire that makes the "perfect Goal," so pray not to move "nearer" lest the realization of it should disenchant the goal and the aspirations for it.

This kind of strategy is called by Richard Wilbur "the economy of desire" where he distinguishes "appetite" from "desire" and justifies for Dickinson's eccentric "ascetic paradoxes," such as "privation is more plentiful than plenty," "to renounce is to possess the more" by summarizing that "The moral is plain: once an object has been magnified by desire, it cannot be wholly possessed by appetite... the effect of intense desiring is to render any finite satisfaction disappointing." Similarly, he distinguishes "the creature of appetite" who merely "pursues satisfaction, and strives to possess the object in itself" from those who can hold "the vaster economy of desire, in which the pain of abstinence is justified by moments of infinite joy, and the object is spiritually possessed" ("Sumptuous Destitution" 56-58).

Morally speaking, the demand for appetite satisfaction is the instinct of all animals, while the rational call to be abstained from corporeal possession of

finite things so as to keep open to more possibilities and infinite joy is peculiar to human beings. In other words, abstinence does not necessarily mean distress and deprivation; it can bring higher pleasure, just as Dickinson names it, the supreme pleasure to "dine without Like God—" (J1282, F1311) It is the most illuminating part of Dickinson's dialectical strategy that she achieves an amplified Self by restraining herself from this or that object so as to remain open to all of them. According to Wilbur, Dickinson "discovered that the soul has an infinite hunger, a hunger to possess all things" in the way of metaphysical desire rather than physical appetite, so she distances herself from the things with "their sweetness increasing in proportion to their remoteness." (Wilbur 57-58) Thus, the domains of Dickinson' Self and her poems are expanded infinitely to accommodate the strange, exotic things such as the Italian volcano, Ukrainian river, Indian city, and all sorts of legal jargons and scientific findings. Such a strategy of desirable instead of deplorable abstinence is definitely of positive significance to advancing the ecological practices today.

The dialectical relationship between positive abstinence and amplified self-realization can also be seen in Arne Naess' radical "Self-realization" and "symbiosis" in the sense of deep ecology. Naess stresses that the "self" should not be just the ego who is confined to his or her being, but the capitalized Self "when we identify with all living creatures and ultimately with the whole universe, or Nature" (Naess 315), which helps to achieve the "higher levels of self-realization" and to encompass others in a state of "symbiosis"—a state of "'living together', rather than cut-throat competition" (Naess 389). The biological term of "symbiosis" is a perfect summary of Dickinson's attitude to nature, in which she sympathizes with blessings and misfortunes of the "Nature's people" day by day, and is pleased to have them as parts of her solitary yet all-inclusive Self.

Compared with human communion services where there are strict entrance requirements and ritual procedures, the nature communion is free and limitless, too generous to stand immoderation for long. As Barton Levi St. Armand has reminded, "because such a communion was free, however, it was the communicant and not the celebrant who now had to exercise due restraint" (St. Armand 191). When the ethical obligations are totally on the communicants, their ethical choices of being moderate or insatiable will decide the fate of the Nature and human beings themselves.

Hence Emily Dickinson's third ethical choice for her personae and herself is to abstain oneself from asking relentlessly for corporeal appetite satisfaction so as to keep open to higher level of metaphysical possibilities, amplified self-realization,

and better co-existence of human beings and nature. What we can learn from Dickinson's positive abstinence is also confirmed by Naes's admonitions: "Clearly, a policy of restraining certain forms and lifestyles in favor of others is called for — in favor of those with high levels of symbiosis, or more generally, good potentialities of coexistence" (Naess 292).

Conclusion

Emily Dickinson is not a pure moral poet, nor is she a pure nature poet, yet her voluminous nature poems set a righteous example for the benign human-nature relationship. The ecological ethics in her nature poems is not only morally sound, but catchy and thought-provoking when the moral principles are embodied in the ethical attitude and ethical choices of her personae and the "ascetic paradoxes." The awestruck girl or boy who remains humble, curious, sensitive, and respectful to nature miracles is a metaphor for human proper orientation in regard to nature. The suspense of disputes between the housewife and the spider, the hiker and the snake, allows the potentiality of co-existence of both sides in their mutual homeland. Dickinsonian observers and narrators juxtapose the myriads of natural phenomena, and appreciate them in a non-discriminatory way, recognizing nature as an end in itself.

Besides the underlying biological egalitarianism, Dickinson proposes positive strategy of abstinence through her illuminating "ascetic paradoxes," which is of important value to alleviating the ecological issues nowadays. It is positive because nature is unable to protect itself from being spoiled and human beings are the only ones who can claim the identities of ethical subjects and solve the deteriorating ecological crisis by simply abstaining themselves from their insatiable appetite. Dickinson's "ascetic paradoxes" are more than an artistry, but an ethical call for human beings to curb their "animal factors" and make more humane and rational choices. It is positive because Dickinson stresses the positive effect of abstinence, which may set the soul free to infinite metaphysical desire and a higher level of an amplified self-realization.

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Horse Imagery in the Yakut Epic "Nurgun Botur the Swift"

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Abstract The paper focuses on the representation of the horse in *Nurgun Botur the Swift*, a Yakut heroic epic recorded by a writer and scientist Platon Oyunsky. The current research objectives are to consider the horse imagery in *Nurgun Botur the Swift* and identify the horse with the epic hero. The horse is an important element not only in the spiritual culture of the Yakuts but also in that of other ethnic groups. In the paper, the comparative, descriptive and historical methods, and the method of interpretation are applied in building and systematizing of materials and linguistic sources. The English version of *Nurgun Botur the Swift* is used as the basic research material. *Nurgun Botur the Swift* embodies the image of the horse as a true friend of the epic hero, Nurgun Botur, and overall, as the magnificent creature with the hyperbolic features. The Yakut epic storytellers traditionally adorn the heroic horse with the superb qualities such as unusual strength and endurance, beauty and intelligence. Therefore, the epic is filled with many archaic words and phrases, parallel and complex constructions; traditional poetic forms only emphasize the romanticized image of the epic horse. It is so because this mythological creature symbolizes the desire of the Yakuts for freedom, goodness and justice. Thus, the image of the horse is one of the most common in the Yakut heroic epic tales; the physical and mythical attributes of horse imagery convey complex nexus of symbolic meanings.

Key words Olonkho; heroic epic; folklore; epic text; horse imagery

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Introduction

The epic *Olonkho* is the oldest artifact of literature of the Yakuts (*Sakha* is the Yakuts' native name for themselves). The Yakuts are a Turkic ethnic group who mainly live in the Republic of Sakha (also known as Sakha Republic) situated in the Far East of the Russian Federation. Olonkho is considered the foundation and canon of Yakut folklore and culture. The term "olonkho" stands for the oral cultural tradition of the Yakuts that contains and later branches out to other few heroic epic tales.

Nurgun Botur the Swift (English transliteration of the original Yakut title — *Djuluruiar Nyurgun Bootur*) was recorded by Platon A. Sleptsov-Oyunsky (1893—1939), a distinguished Yakut poet, a famous epic researcher and a founder of the modern Yakut literature. Platon Oyunsky was also an outstanding public and political figure. He reproduced *Nurgun Botur the Swift* in its full length at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s and made no changes to verse, style, archaic language and mythology. The epic consists of numerous legends about *boturs* (ancient warriors), deities of the Upper and Lower Worlds, good and evil spirits, demons, animals, including horses that are represented as divine beasts, on the one hand, and as evil creatures, on the other.

Olonkho also addresses contemporary events, such as the disintegration of nomadic society. The events in *Nurgun Botur the Swift* first unfold slowly, at a slower pace, but then they gradually intensify in scale and pace, and turn into a turbulent flow of diverse encounters and clashes. The horse, in the subordinate position, is the integral part of the progression of events in the plot.

The Yakut heroic epic Olonkho is gaining international recognition among the world's literary monuments, art masterpieces. It made a great contribution into the formation and development of Yakut written poetry. Popularity of *Nurgun Botur the Swift* is strongly supported by the fact that it is traditionally determined as the "encyclopedia of the Sakha people" and is the symbol of self-identity of the Yakuts. Therefore, the study of poetic style of Olonkho is one of the current events in modern national literary developments.

The study is theoretically and methodologically based on the works dealing with the characteristic features of the Yakut epic texts. Yakut national folklore and literature researchers such as I.V. Pukhov, G.U. Ergis, N.V. Emelyanov, etc. focus on the core contents of olonkho genre: poetic mythical imagery and plot's synthesis. The great literary legacy of Platon A. Oyunsky has been represented in the monograph written by Vasily A. Semenov, an unheralded Yakut philologist who worked at the Institute for Humanities Research for many years. Another Yakut linguist Yury I.

Vasiliev has researched the similes used in *Nurgun Botur the Swift*.

Nurgun Botur the Swift was translated into Russian by Vladimir V. Derzhavin in 1975, and into English by a group of translators from M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (Yakutsk, Sakha Republic, the Russian Federation). The first English translation of *Nurgun Botur the Swift* was published in 2014 by Renaissance Books in London. The significant value of the English version is that the translation has been performed from the original Yakut text. *Nurgun Botur the Swift* is also translated into other modern languages, including French.

The Scientific Research Institute of Olonkho and the Institute for Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North are responsible for studying the Yakut heroic epic in Sakha Republic. One should mention that in 2005 Olonkho was included by UNESCO in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Olonkho: Yakut Heroic Epic

Olonkho is a general term for the entire Yakut heroic epic that consists of many long legends. A famous Yakut linguist and literary critic Innokenty V. Pukhov called Olonkho "the pearl in the crown of the Yakut people's literary art" (Pukhov, *Olonkho* 15). Olonkho is a work of fiction of grand scale, which usually consists of 10,000 to 30,000 verses (or more) in length. Traditionally, it is performed by *olonkhosuts* (Olonkho performers) during a span of seven nights. By synthesizing a variety of the existing folk plots, Yakut olonkhosuts in the past used to create a larger number of Olonkho couplets, but they were never recorded. As of today, there is no fixed evidential data to consult with to learn how many of the created and performed Olonkho pieces ever existed or were produced. It is an impossible task now and the greatest challenge for the researches in the field to reveal or to identify the exact number of the produced songs. There is only a place for a hypothetical claim, which can be excused with the learned fact that is the initial and generic plot structure of Olonkho can be more or less painlessly transferred and modified from one narrative to another. One could claim that the process of adaptation during the years of progress and modernization of the traditional Sakha literary and oral tradition caused possible shortening of some parts of the heroic epic tales and even an elimination of some. However, "interpenetrability" of the foundational core of the generic epic plotline that is responsible for similarity of the Olonkho plots remains. Moreover, this particular feature keeps sustainable, timeless, and unique.

The origin of Olonkho dates back approximately to the eighth—ninth centuries, to the times when the ancestors of the Sakha people lived in their former

homeland, the region of Lake Baikal, and were in close cultural, and socio-economic contact with the ancient ancestors of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Altai and the Sayans (Pukhov, *Olonkho* 30). The Kurykans, Yakut people's ancestors, had contact with the ancient Turkic peoples during the sixth and eighth centuries. The Yakut epic belongs to the late tribal period and reflects patriarchal relations in the tribal community. Olonkho mythology depicts battle scenes with mythical creatures and monsters. See the example from *Nurgun Botur the Swift*:

> In ancient times
> In warring, bloodthirsty times
> Before the world changed,
> Beyond the evil horizon
> Of the awful earlier years ... (Oyunsky 4)

Since the ancestors of the Yakuts had socio-economic and cultural contact with the Turkic and Mongolian peoples, Olonkho shares some common features with such epics as *Manas*, Üliger, *the Mongolian Epic Cycle of Jangar* and others. First, it relates to the similarity in the structure of languages and vocabulary. There are common elements in the names of heroes: *khan* (a title for a ruler in Turkic and Mongolic languages), *mergen — bergen* (an Altaic word *mergen* means a hunter; a Yakut word *bergen* implies a brave fellow), *botur* (a hero, a warrior), etc.) (Pukhov, *On the genetic* 203). In addition, we can see some structural and compositional similarities between Olonkho and other epic tales.

A Russian archaeologist and ethnographer Alexey P. Okladnikov who devoted his life to the study of the ancient cultures of Siberia, speaks about the presence of "southern" features in the epic of Olonkho (257—77). The evidential presence of the "southern" atavistic features in Olonkho reflects the true national identity and specificity of the Sakha culture. Therefore, the system of symbols in the Yakut epic carries multi-layered information about the lifestyle, worldview, and psychology of the ancient Sakha people. The expressivity of Olonkho symbols requires thorough study due to the layered contextual field they are connected to or represent. Zoomorphic images, for example, one of those symbols and are of particular importance in Olonkho.

The recent hermeneutic analysis of archaic folklore texts has acquired particular relevance to the complex nature of the origin of the Sakha people and their customs. Therefore, the need to interpret the mythopoetic texts should arise from the reasoning of the allegorical and metaphorical moments in the song. As a Yakut

linguist Luiza L. Gabysheva claims that the provided imagery even of the material world of the Yakut epic tales are allegorical. “Even the presence of animals in the narratives contains the most ancient information of an esoteric character” (81).

The Cult of the Horse in Yakut Tradition

The cult of the horse and its idealization can be traced in many mythological systems of the peoples of the world. Horses appears throughout global mythic and epic traditions. They carry significant functional and symbolic value for humans, and convey remarkable beauty, physical stature, and dynamic movement. Equines appear in myths and epic tales both as monstrous creatures and as magical animals, for instance, in the form of winged horses.

Since the horse was important in everyday life and the household, it was also reflected in the spiritual culture and social life of the Yakuts, as it is seen particularly in the heroic epic tale. For example, in the old days the beauty of girls was compared to the beauty of horses. With a change in the aesthetic views of the Sakha people, such comparisons disappeared, but they are used in relation to a young and strong man. This annotation of the heightened aesthetic of the horse’s interior reveals that the ancient Yakuts considered horses to be animals of heavenly origin, which are patronized by the deity Jehegei. A Yakut anthropologist Vasily T. Petrov observes in his essay: “According to the figurative and mythological ideas of the Sakha people, there was a deity that gave the horse to people. This confirms the idea of the sustainability of the horse archetype” (139). Thus, the horse was considered a divine and sacred animal. Further on, Nadezhda R. Baizhanova (Oinotkinova) states: “The cult of the horse among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Siberia is most vividly represented by the Yakuts. The features of the ancient ritual cult, which partially or completely disappeared from the peoples of the Altai-Sayan region, have been preserved in the Sakha people” (102).

The horse is an important element not only in the material, but also in the spiritual culture of the ancient Turks. In Yakut heroic epic tales, the horse acts as an assistant to the hero. It is also endowed with the gift of speech, warns his master about the dangers and thereby helps him in difficult situations. It is interesting to note that one of the earlier German fairy tales also have this anthropomorphic feature of the horse.

This anthropomorphic and highly aestheticized image of the horse is quite frequently represented in Olonkho. As I indicate earlier, some scholars refer this type of the pristine and heightened image with the cult of the horse in many Turkic cultures, and in particular, in the epic tales of many Turkic and Mongolic peoples.

For example, a Russian historian Rakhil S. Lipets emphasizes that “the epic horse is the patron and leader of his host, surpassing him in the gift of foresight, speed of reaction in difficult situations, and having a strong will to subordinate the *botur* (the hero, the warrior) to himself when he shows weakness. Even in the sense of his duty, the horse sometimes stands higher than the epic hero” (124—25).

The traces of horse cults are also preserved in rituals and beliefs of the Sakha people. As many anthropological and ethnographic works indicate, the horse has a foundational function in the everyday life of the Yakuts. Some Yakut sayings and proverbs substantiate this claim: “Five troubles await a walking man, none is reserved for a man on a horse” (the original Yakut proverb — Сатыыны биэс эрэй то*h*уйар*,* аттаахтан биир эрэй куотар), “If the good horse is glorified, the journey becomes famous” (the original Yakut proverb — Ахсым ат айанынан аатырарыгар дылы). During the Yakut national festival *Esekh*, people made offerings of the horsehair strands to *itchi* (spirits) of the valley. They also used the horsehair to decorate *chorons* (wedding wooden jugs), leather bags and huge buckets to keep trouble and sickness away. People tasted the legendary drink of the Yakut epic heroes — *kumys* made from fermented mare’s milk. The Yakuts tie horses to the *sergeh* (a traditional wooden post), which is considered sacred. Due to the established and sacred connection between the post and the horse, among the wealthy Sakha people was a custom, before moving to a new place they would dug out the sergeh and took it away with them. The sergeh decorated with rich carvings and tufts of ribbons can be found on mountain passes or at the crossroads. Nowadays, the sergeh is placed at the entrance to villages or inhabited localities and in memory of significant events.

This realistic and mythologized presence of the horse makes *Nurgun Botur the Swift* unique, and therefore, the best-known epic olonkho that consists of more than 36,000 verses and comprises nine songs (or parts). *Nurgun Botur the Swift* is often referred to as “northern Iliad” and “Sakha Odyssey”.

The story features the protagonist of wondrous powers and abilities, Nurgun Botur, who fights against dark forces and foreign invaders to protect the nation of those whose backs are followed by the sunrays. This epic was created and traditionally performed by the olonkho performers from the Boturus *ulus* (an administrative division of the Sakha Republic), Tatta Region. A Yakut researcher Vasily V. Illarionov states that the olonkho performers of *Nurgun Botur the Swift* belong to the famous “Tatta School of storytellers” (27). One should emphasize that Tatta Region located in Central Yakutia is considered the cradle of Yakut culture, and the homeland of famous olonkho performers, writers and poets.

According to Pyotr A. Sleptsov, Platon Oyunsky represented logical complete-

ness to the olonkho language. The scientist concludes that due to the painstaking and scrupulous research conducted by Platon A. Oyunsky "the spoken form of literary language has become exemplary" (12).

Horse Imagery in *Nurgun Botur the Swift*

This section of the article discusses the representation of the horse in the epic *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. The first chapter of this heroic epic (Song 1) opens with the narration of life of the Urankhai-Sakha people, an ancient name of the Yakuts, and the way they rely on and connect with horses:

> Kun Jehegei Toyon, Kureh Jehegei Khotun
> Were settled following a great decision
> Of the highest deities
> To increase unbridled horses and white furs,
> To look after whole-hooved horses,
> With long bushy manes,
> Which graze on the meadows
> And along the rivers. (Oyunsky 13)

This fragment provides especially acknowledged and ornate names of two deities — Kun Jehegei Toyon, the son of the God of Sun, patron of horses; and his wife — Kureh Jehegei Khotun.

The following stanza is devoted to the emphasized almost fantastic description of the warrior's horse:

> The butterfly-like white horse
> As big as a rock,
> Strong and sturdy,
> And the bluish-grey horse
> Galloped up to the heroes,
> Raising the dust. (Oyunsky 253)

In this example we can see that Nurgun Botur's younger brother called Urung Uolan rides a "butterfly-like white" horse. The horse of another mighty and powerful warrior called Kun Jiribineh is "bluish-grey". For instance, Khatan Temerieh, the spirit of fire, also rides a "steel-grey horse". This gradation of colour is symbolic and representational. The white and grey horses and horses with bright colours are

associated with brave and glorious warriors, deities and spirits of the highest rank. White in Olonkho typically means good, blessed and clean. For example, in Song 7 we can see the description of the white horse of Tuyarima Kuo, the Yakut epic heroine who represents the symbol of beauty:

> And brought her
> Destined, sparkling salt-white horse
> Named Tunaly Joro (Oyunsky 317)

The wide and extensive use of ornate descriptions and various figures of speech is peculiar to epic tales. Even a cursory reading of Olonkho shows that its style is laden with similes, epithets, metaphors and other features of epic poetry. Here is the description of Nurgun Botur’s horse. The following simile such as “like a snowstorm” provides the sense of universal gargantuan importance of the horse:

> Stood excited
> Bucking up,
> Snorting and neighing
> Stamping
> Its four stony spread hooves,
> Its tousled, scattered mane
> Soaring like a snowstorm,
> Its high, boat-like, fiery tail
> Beating and swishing the air… (Oyunsky 84-85)

Along with the *boturs* (warriors, or heroes), the horses obtain the roles and functions of the epic protagonists. The horses gain considerable span of affecting the promulgation of the narrative, being active participants in all the events in which the warriors are involved. The epic horses not only help and advise the heroes how to act but also rescue their defeated masters, carrying them out of the battlefield, and fulfill all their orders. In *Nurgun Botur the Swift* the horses show their fantastic abilities while they are near their master. Similarly, the epic heroes are strong and invincible while they remain on their horses.

The horse is a purely physical supporter of the warrior endowed with human speech and the gift of providence. The battle scenes also describe the connection between the hero and his horse — not only does the warrior fight in a battle, but his horse is also locked in it. For example, Nurgun Botur’s horse warns his master to be

careful before starting to chase Ehekh Kharbir, one of the *abaasy* (demons) from the Lower World, who abducted Nurgun Botur's sister — Aitalyn Kuo:

> Annaha! Nay! Nay!
> Born to be the master
> Of my rounded croup,
> My intended companion,
> My sovereign!
> It looks like the time has come
> For the sun to fall…
> Born in the age of enmity
> Ehekh Kharbir, Three Shadows,
> If he reaches first
> His disgusting den
> He will quench his thirst with clots of blood,
> The door will open to welcome
> Endless mortal miseries
> And everlasting misfortunes… (Oyunsky 128)

The "butterfly-white horse" of the mighty warrior Urung Uolan also warns his master about the dangers of the Under World. It says that three daughters of *Ajarai* (demon) will disguise as three daughters of *Aiyy* (Supreme Deity) and lure Urung Uolan to their enchanted house. However, the naïve and credulous Urung Uolan stepped forward into their house:

> Suddenly the bed broke in two,
> And he fell through the gap
> Into the Under World,
> Into the darkness… (Oyunsky 167)

Feeling his Master's upcoming demise, the "butterfly-white horse" leaped high towards the sky to ask for help from the *udagan* (female shaman) Aiyy Umsur. The horse begs the udagan to address the lord Aiynga Sier Toyon, the Supreme Deity of the Upper World and the Universe, and to request the deity to save Urung Uolan. The Udagan Aiyy Umsur gets Aiynga Sier Toyon's golden hair and rescues Urung Uolan.

Here is the horrifying description of Muus Kudulu, the Icy Ocean in the Under

World, where Urung Uolan and his horse are going to rescue the beautiful Tuyarima Kuo, who was carried off by evil beings. Urung Uolan's horse provides the thorough description of the land, since it is an integral part of the natural world:

> Muus Kudulu, the bottomless ocean
> Whose shores are unseen,
> Whose waters are untouched,
> And no man can reach its bottom.
> Its breakers polish
> The skulls of the dead warriors,
> Its waves wash ashore
> The bodies of disemboweled corpses,
> Its ripples roll off
> The dead young women,
> Its ice clods keep
> Numberless dead
> Who dared to cross it once … (Oyunsky 164)

In *Nurgun Botur the Swift* the image of the epic hero's horse corresponds to the image of his master. Therefore, Nurgun Botur's horse has some fantastic features and is represented as a mighty beast:

> Its temper becoming uncontrollable,
> Its conduct becoming unruly,
> Having squealed for a while,
> It leapt up
> Like a sonorous arrow
> That whistled loudly
> Like the wing strokes of a goldeneye
> In the two ears of the dear child,
> Whipping up
> Nine raging whirlwinds (Oyunsky 85)

Here is another description of Nurgun Botur's supernatural and extraordinary horse:

> With four round, iron hooves
> The size of a haystack covered with snow,

Kicking big, black stones
The size of the belly of a cow,
Causing them to scatter
Like hailstones,
With a seven-bylas-long
Magnificent mane,
With a three-bylas-long
Flying forelock,
With a nine-bylas-long
Wavy tail with reddened ends,
Flitting fast Like a falling star… (Oyunsky 124)

In the above lines from *Nurgun Botur the Swift* there is a Yakut word *"bylas"* which means the unit of length in the Yakut metric system, equal to approximately 2.5 metres. If we convert the traditional Yakut unit of length *"bylas"* to the metric system, we can realize that the epic horse is unbelievably huge.

The horse racing is fascinatingly described in Songs 6—7. It all starts when two *Ajarais* (demons) from the Upper World — Buhra Dokhsun and Uot Uhumu Tong Duhrai — have a terrible quarrel with one another trying to find out who deserves to marry the "fair-faced" Tuyarima Kuo. In order to stop "this useless quarrel", the brave warrior Kun Jiribineh, Tuyarima Kuo's elder brother, says that the one who wins all competitions and whose horse wins the race will have the right to marry his sister. Nurgun Botur also participates in the competitions (wrestling, running, and jumping). Using his magic, he turns himself into Sodalba Uol, a strong young man, and transforms his "swift fleet of foot black horse" into Sordaiy, a black young horse. Sordaiy runs in the race:

He flew swiftly,
Jumped high,
Stepped vigorously,
His body stretched,
His lungs widened,
His breathing got deeper… (Oyunsky 297—98)

The demon called Buhra Dokhsun also gets his black horse involved in the race:

The Black Mangastai

Heaven Horse
With ringing hooves
Neighed shrilly
And, being a swift-footed horse,
Jerked and disappeared
Like a puff of smoke
From a smoking pipe! (Oyunsky 292)

The horses race over the mountains and forests, across the sky and around underground. They are described as extremely swift moving beasts. They have the same emotions and feelings as humans. For example, the Black Mangastai agonizes over his defeat in the race:

Anyaha-anyaha!
Having left the place
Where I belong
I have let down
My good name,
Known on every road!
Do they understand
The bitterness of it or not?!
Do they hear it or not?!...
He said and ran up
Towards the rising top
Of the high skies.
He flew up,
Crying and neighing
Like a ringing arrow… (Oyunsky 299—300)

In *Nurgun Botur the Swift* there are many symbols, archaic words and phrases, parallel and complex structures, fantastic images, traditional poetic forms. Its style is distinguished by the usage of various figures of speech (epithets, metaphors, similes, hyperboles). Almost in every long description, one can find not only individual similes, but also complex constructions — a chain of metaphoric similes. Sometimes similar syntactic constructions are headed by epithets characterizing and constituting the whole chain of epithets.

The description of the hero’s horse is enhanced by the usage of complicated,

colorful and heavily ornate epithets. That could be explained by the fact that the characteristic of the horse is regarded as an integral part of the characterization of the hero himself: the more beautiful and powerful the hero's horse is, the stronger and more majestic the hero himself is. The constant list of epithets used in the description of the horse is the poetic tradition of Olonkho.

Repetition of certain lines occupies a significant portion of the epic text and contributes to the memorization of the text. It is very important because the length of *Nurgun Botur the Swift* averages 36,000 verses and the olonkho is performed orally. It is also of great compositional value. Repetitions are the strong points of the heroic tale that keep the text together and focus the attention of listeners on the most important places of the narration.

It should be noted that the translation of Yakut names, nouns, onomatopoeic words and interjections from the Yakut language into English is a specific problem. A Russian linguist and translation theorist Tamara Kazakova states that the semantic translation is focused on the text of the original and, as a rule, is applied in translation of literary texts of high artistic value for academic publications (33). A Yakut linguist Tamara Petrova (2010) agrees that the semantic translation contributes to the precise preservation of the national originality of the Yakut epic in the secondary texts (27).

The team of translators from North-Eastern Federal University has achieved the perfect English translation of *Nurgun Botur the Swift*. The translators ignored almost all the rules of transliteration, since the words transliterated according to these rules would be cumbersome or at best slow down the reading. Their goal was not to put off the English-speaking readers but to inspire them to go on reading this magnificent poem.

Conclusion

The epic horse is one of the most vivid and fascinating images of Olonkho. The description of properties and qualities of the horse is an innate characteristic feature of the Yakut heroic epic. The horses are endowed with fantastic properties — winged, proficient in human speech, capable to express human emotions. We can see a detailed description of strength, endurance, dauntless courage, dignity and beauty of the horse. That allows Olonkho performers to equalize the horse with the properties and qualities of the epic hero. One should emphasize that the horse is a continuation of the hero's powerful force.

In *Nurgun Botur the Swift* the inextricable link between the hero and his horse is clearly recognized. The horse is a wise, perspicacious, irreplaceable and devoted

friend of the warrior. There is a close relationship between the hero and his horse. The horse warns his master about the impending dangers and the disaster that might happen. Using the image of the horse makes it possible to more accurately and colorfully convey the psychological state of the heroes, their appearance and behaviour. Olonkho performers describe the epic horse as a divine messenger using sublime epithets, metaphors, similes, hyperboles, parallel and complex constructions, archaic words and phrases.

The heroic tales of the Sakha people tell about the deeds of the warriors. The horse prominently figures in the spiritual life and culture of the Yakuts. The heroic epic Olonkho is the top achievement of the oral poetry of the Sakha people. It is a precious legacy of the traditional culture of the Yakuts, which is still of great educational value and cognitive significance.

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Sense and Sensibility: Hushing and Dwarfing the Ladies of the Era

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Abstract This paper argues that Jane Austen is one of the wisest female writers who have approached the feminist case during the conservatism of the Georgian era, Regency period and beyond. Although hushed and unassertive, she adopted a reconciliatory strategy trying to gain the willful acceptance of society to the change in women's positions, one step at a time, with each work and character adding a new emancipatory dimension to her prototypes.

In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), her argument may seem frail and anti-feminist because she makes her leading heroines sacrifice their existence and identity for the sake of society, but within the paradigm of the final win-win ending, all is happy; the leading heroines move a step ahead in stressing their individuality while still observing the roles dedicated to them by society. *Sense and Sensibility* may be regarded as a hushed and dwarfed image of feminism but the subtle gains of acceptance in this novel pave way for the appearance of an eloquent giant and an all time favorite, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

Key words feminism; conservatism; Regency; female protypes.

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Introduction: The Austen Feminism in *Sense and Sensibility*

There is a common misconception in the minds of some readership that novels written by women writers should adopt the feminist stake and present their struggle for self-assertion in the face of an oppressive society. This generalization, however; does not apply to Jane Austen's novel *Sense and Sensibility* in which she portrays her two leading ladies, Elinor and Marianne as mercurial heroines who vacillate

between self-immolation and self-emulation and instead of furthering the feminist potentials these two females possess, Austen makes them yield to the turbulent waves of the biased, old-fashioned and patriarchal society. The intriguing question would be: why does she do that? Was she a woman against her own sex? Or does she succeed in reading the mindset of society at her time and thus evades the direct challenge favoring slow penetration into hostile grounds? In an age that only allowed conduct books for women, Austen has little space to maneuver but makes the best of it. Therefore, the first key aspect to understanding and appreciating Austen's feminism is appreciating the romantic context of womanhood. Austen presents a third option out of the typical angel-devil, silent-hysterical paradigm. Her heroines, are realistic, neither to be worshiped nor condemned, but everyday women in their struggle for self-definition.

Austen in this novel develops her own repertoire of feminist vocabulary which combines contradictory traits of feminism. Through Elinor and Marianne, the author sets up her own version of feminism and produces the qualities of her female characters as a miscellaneous mixture of feebleness and might, boldness and reserve, rudeness and civility. If we want to study *Sense and Sensibility* in view of feminist criticism, we might as well announce it a total failure and stamp it with the verdict: anti feminist in bold letters. But, if we take into account Eliane Showalter's time frame of feminist writing which starts with the feminine period 1840-1880 (Showalter 38), we will judge the novel as prefeminist and hence understand it as an attempt to test the waters and the reaction of society to new ideas and models. Austen's target according to Gard is the "unfeeling and unintelligent world in which the sisters have to live rather than the sisters themselves. The problem lies in those supposedly sacred institutions of order and property, marriage and family" (93). Austen lays the foundation in this novel, gains the acceptance and proceeds to present the leading shrew, Elizabeth Bennet who tames an all-time favorite hero, Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (Stubbs 498).

Austen, herself is uneasy to brand. She is ahead of her time practicing some form of professional authorship where no one can accuse her of taking extreme sides or clearly adopting a single point of view. "Austen has been portrayed as both a liberal and a moderate; she has been cast also as a feminist, an anti-feminist" (Weiss 89). This evasiveness proved clever at the time as argued by Giffin (2002) and Austen was one of the few authors to survive the censorship of conservatism, and even to remain popular. Still, in totality, her collection of novels tackled the same mentality, one shot at a time recording a breakthrough with each new heroine in terms of social acceptance.

Austen practiced some kind of Rousseauian philosophy believing that society has to grow to accept change and agree to its terms. Through subtle satire and laughter at its own follies, the wise authoress walked society into a state of subconscious approval.

> Austen's female bildungsroman is more nuanced than the title suggests at first glance, however, and readers themselves journey to deeper enlightenment as her heroines do…A great deal of critical attention has been paid to Austen's conversation with her readers below the surface of the text through the added philosophical depth to what began primarily as a sketch of two characters. We all know that the brilliantly satirical author communicates more to her readers than what is explicitly stated in the text, especially in evoking such seemingly straightforward conceptual terms as (Anderson&Kidd 65) "sense," "pride," or "persuasion".

Sketching a Feminist Prototype: Sailing with the Wind or against It?

Elinor, the first female heroine of Austen, emerges in the novel as a perfect angelical figure. She is giving, nurturing and always ready to extend a helping hand, wipe a tear or solve a problem because "she had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong, but she knew how to govern them" (Austen 4). She is portrayed as miss ideal, as a daughter, a lover and a member of society who "remains totally committed to the 'true code'. "The 'true code' or decorum includes prudence, judgment, good sense" (Paris 96). The reader can never accuse her of any violation in thought and manner. Her motto in life is that it does not cost much to make others happy and "upon Elinor, therefore, the whole task of telling lies when politeness required it, always fell" (Austen 29). One needs to read between the lines to see that Austen is not cheering for such an example of excessive idealism, so Suzan Morgan's interpretation of the novel as a triumph of politeness over sincerity is not accurate (Morgan 188). Austen's final character frame for Elinor is grafted with sensibility to balance her sense and wisdom. Elinor is offered the chance to spill out her heart without reservation, and thus her wax statue melts.

Marianne presents the other side of the coin; she is the recluse, the rebel who deliberately avoids society. She molds her own life and thoughts as she pleases and highly honors her convictions because she believes that at her time of life, "opinions are tolerably fixed. It is not likely that I should now see or hear anything to change

them" (Austen 57). Marianne is very moody even in her sentiments and while she is chosen to depict the model of extreme sensibility, she confesses her own failure in understanding and sharing the feeling of her closet relative, her guardian-angel, Elinor, in her distress "Oh Elinor," she cried, "you have made me hate myself forever. How barbarous have I been to you, you, who have been my only comfort…who have seemed to be only suffering for me" (Austen 193). Moreover, civility and courtesy are associated with sensibility, but Marianne applies this code of conduct to her selected set of people and beyond them, she does not give the slightest attention to anyone or anything. She is too opinionated and stubborn for her age and determined without experience. Being a flawed heroine, Austen blows up her romantic fantasies and makes her settle for a realistic and down-to-earth option. Marianne is not harnessed because she is a female, but because she is a representative of romantic individualism and Austen was preaching some degree of self-control and regulation in the novel (Brownstein 55).

Austen chooses Elinor and Marianne as a medium to convey the nature and status of women during her era. Each heroine presents her case, defends her position and leaves the final verdict to the audience, but sometimes, we can sense the authoress middling to subconsciously lead the reader to appreciate and value Elinor as a woman of sense unlike her sister, Marianne, her opponent of extreme sensibility. The reason for this assumption is that Elinor, despite the difficulties she encounters, is able to arrive to the shore of safety and fulfill her dreams by asserting herself as a woman willingly accepted by society and by choosing her life partner on equal footing of emotions and intellect. "Elinor does not wear her heart on her sleeves" (Hardy 73). But that does not mean that she is senseless or cold hearted; on the contrary, Elinor is very considerate as well as loving and this is obvious in her attitude when she knows that the only man she loves cannot marry her because of his commitment to another woman, but she always remains in full command of her feelings and gives an appealing image of a principled woman.

On the other hand, Marianne is a defective heroine. Her defect is exaggerated sensibility in feelings, thoughts and conduct. This blinds her from seeing beyond herself and tentative judgments. She does not believe in compromise because to her you either love a person or not. When in love, she is stripped of all means of self control; therefore, "when Willoughby enters the story, he sweeps Marianne off her feet" (Hardy 69), but if she does not approve of something, she bluntly states that without regard to decorum. Marianne openly criticizes the love of her sister, Edward Ferrars, and disapproves of him because he cannot recite poetry in a passionate manner. In social occasions, she does not show interest in the attendants and busies

herself with playing the piano.

Marianne abuses sensibility in times of happiness and sadness. We can hear her declare when she is jilted that "misery such as mine has no pride, I care not who knows I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me so may be open to all the world" (Austen 138).

Females as Emblems of the Social Code

The characters of Elinor and Marianne foreground a conflict that is long rooted and well hidden in society; that is, the conflict between individualism and collectivity, between character and characterlessness. Austen flatters society a great deal. She cares about the public opinion in her works and heroines because through this admiration, she stays in print and passes her thoughts of change and emancipation. In this writing strategy, Austen has disciples and followers and some years after the publication of her novel and on the other side of the Atlantic, Louisa May Alcott trimmed the wings of her *Little Women* upon the advice of her publisher so as not to defy social expectations and gender roles but still, she managed to present Jo March as a foremother of feminists. Understanding these impediments may make readers and critics more appreciating and less critical of writers such as Austen and her contemporaries.

Austen charges Marianne with the crime of individuality which is viewed as a conspiracy against the oneness of society. Society tailors the characters of its members according to certain appropriate measurements. Marianne does not want to fit in the social mold because she "cares nothing for social conventions. It was impossible for her to say what she does not feel, however trivial the occasion" (Morgan 200).

Austen presents Elinor in a "subtle manner" (Brann 131) in line and conformity with the accepted image and role of women. Elinor is cleverer than Marianne in approaching society because she "uses the social forms to keep her mind and heart while sparing her acquaintance the pain those free opinions must sometimes produce" (Morgan 201). A feminist, in Elinor's opinion, is not selfish or egocentric. She is an interactive person and a woman of society. It is clear that sense is the manner preferred by Austen because it stands for goodness of heart and mind and reliability of judgment while sensibility is weakness, carelessness and self-indulgence. This makes Elinor the nominee of the author to fit the position of a woman trying to affirm her feminist identity without putting her fist in the face of society.

A first glimpse into the novel will enable the reader to discover that Elinor and Marianne's personalities are strikingly divergent. One can list a number of qualities

related to Elinor and their opposite to Marianne but a thorough look reveals that the two sisters have many things in common and the difference is in how they show them. While Marianne is a human mass of emotions, 'Elinor is by no means deficient in sensibility; she shares all the tastes of her sister if with a lesser intensity but perhaps because she is older. She constantly tries to relate her imagination and her feelings to her judgment and to the moral and social tradition on which the order of society is based" (Watt 307).

Nevertheless, Elinor is very submissive when she sacrifices her only love and hope for a different and fulfilling life, just for the sake of duty and false expectations of society while the rebellious Marianne holds to her love until the end because she believes it is a part of her existence and free will. This raises the question: is Austen really taking sides or is she presenting both characters as complementary and her choice of an ideal feminist would neither be Elinor or Marianne but "Elimar" (my emphasis), a combination of Elinor and Marianne, who could eliminate their deficiencies and strengthen their feminist potentials?

On the other hand, there is a pattern of consistency in Austen's method of characterization throughout the novel where Elinor preserves a balanced sensible behavior, unchanging even in the most painful moments when she realizes that her love is doomed and will never see the light. She "seems resolved to go about her business without showing any undue emotion" (Hardy 75). Then in an unexpected twist, Elinor falls from her ivory tower and surrenders her fortified castle of sense leaving the waves of emotions to toss her back and forth when she hears that her beloved, Edward, is free to marry her. She "almost ran out of the room and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy" (Austen 266).

This shocking change in characterization extends to Marianne, the woman of extremes, who faces tremendous alternations in her personality. Her failure in love, which nearly causes her death, tames her sensibility and revolution. She confesses her guilt and seeks forgiveness because "everybody seemed injured by me… to every common acquaintance even, I had been insolent and unjust with a heart hardened against their merits and a temper irritated by their very attention" (Austen 175). This change in attitude proves that Austen's recipe for a model female is a blend of sense and sensibility because neither one of them can stand alone no matter how strong and dominant a woman appears to be, she will always have a feeble and fragile side of her.

Marianne's case is even worst. At the beginning of the novel, the reader suspects Marianne to be the feminist spokeswoman of Austen being highly revolutionary and rebellious. Marianne challenges society and produces her own view of free, sincere

and unreserved love in her relation with Willoughby. She detests double faced talk and treatment, what society calls decorum, and that is why she is punished. She develops suicidal thoughts and is devitalized through illness and cast off as a reward to the patient colonel Brandon. She changes from a wild shrew to a tame pet and accepts "Colonel Brandon's devotion, she did so whole heartedly. By the time she was nineteen, Marianne found herself placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family and the patroness of a village" (Powell 32). This code of defeating the heroine is a way of showing that society, led by the patriarchy, is the prime master and enactor of destinies. Still, through Marianne, Austen presents this new prototype of free-spirited women to the public eye and arena of discussion to unsettle their subtlety and familiarize them with women who choose to say no. This is why Watt believes that Marianne "is the life and the centre of the novel" (79). Austen gives her ample space to voice her opinion and question Elinor's sense: "always resignation and acceptance? Always prudence and honor and duty? Elinor, where is your heart?" (Austen 66) This makes us suspect Austen's intentions: does she really favor Elinor and sense over Marianne and sensibility? Does she use her to speak the unspeakable, question the sacred and breach the taboos? The answers may contradict but the final result proves that Austen opts for safety and the slow but sure method of change rather than supporting her heroine to the end.

Code of Defeat

One of the reasons which make us exclude *Sense and Sensibility* from the list of strong and assertive feminist novels is the Austen 'code of defeat' or indecision (my emphasis). Elinor is defeated by being obliged to succumb to the social norms on account of her nerves and individuality. Rarely is she able to perform things in her own way because she "always honors her social responsibility, however much it might sometimes cost her to be properly attentive" (Hardy 80). Despite all the sacrifices Elinor offers, society is hard to please and is determined to deprive her of everything, her character, her means of resistance, and only love. She bows to society's will and is ultimately rewarded with love. A counter argument maybe that Austen aims to immunize her heroines with injections of survival that would enable them to face other than a romantic life or a happily ever after ending. This ending can be interpreted as an indirect message by Austen that patience pays off at the end and going by the book has its advantages. The somewhat happy ending lessens the atmosphere of conflict of women vs. society or personal vs. public in the novel. This guarantees that all are happy with the end result: the writer passes her shy but critical message, stays in print without raising eyebrows, women move a

step forward in presenting their predicament to an unsympathetic and conservative society and society still feels secure that all is in order and the codes are observed.

Society is the one and only adversary standing against the assertion of the feminist identity. Society is a system of restrictions, a series of conceptions and misconceptions directed towards the distinctiveness and uniqueness of its members, especially women. There is no compromise in dealing with society; a woman has to surrender her personal freedom or she will be banned from society. Austen is clever in reading the social context and tries to achieve the best possible deal to advance the feminist case without risking the social acceptance and eventually her carrier as a writer.

Austen presents the concept of marriage in this novel in two ways according to the opinions of critics. The most obvious presentation is very degrading and demeaning to women because it pictures marriage as "the proper ambition of well-bred young ladies. It is their only safe refuge" (Calder 17). Society raises and teaches women so they can gain the approval of men and ensure promising and wealthy husbands. Beyond that, they have no dream, no ambition, "no reality except in terms of the marriages they are to make or fail to make…and if they were deprived of their belief that marriage was both a worthy ambition and their salvation, they would be deprived of life" (Calder 25). A married woman is simply a home maker, a nurturer of heart and hearth. Nevertheless, some critics support Austen's image of marriage and interpret it in a way that her heroine "comes to enjoy a distinctive relationship with the man she eventually marries…there is above all the need to acknowledge and respond to the other person" (Hardy 71).

It is permissible to claim that Austen has suffered from self censorship to achieve some sort of equilibrium between women's rights and society's demands, a society determined, by a so-called law, to deprive women of any hope of independence. By robbing women of the right to inherit their dead relatives, society wanted to keep women reliant and dependent on men as a means of guaranteeing their obedience and conformity. Working women are socially stigmatized and work is assigned to the peasantry. The only alternative for well bred women is to get married to wealthy men following the advice that says "Don't marry for money but marry where money is." A woman with no financial means has no prospects. Willoughby, the man whom Marianne fights society for jilts her because she has no property or fortune. This forces her to accept Colonel Brandon, the mediocre emotional compensation but the good future investment. Here, Austen was trying to console women and make them reach a sense of content by accepting the best possible outcome of the worst of conditions.

Throughout the novel, we can find Austen in a very sensitive position struggling for the right of freedom of expression but being silenced by the unapproachable taboos of society, especially in the case of defending women. However, Austen finds an outlet to express her muffled thoughts through Marianne who undermines society in every possible way but due to the sense of inhibition that Austen feels and her fear of being secluded by society, she labels the words and acts of Marianne with signs of invalidity and irrationality, so they can be easily overlooked by society. This self inhibition makes Austen place all kinds of restrictions on her choices. Her "artistic problem was always that of reconciling the moral intention which lay behind her fiction, her natural comic instinct and the taste of the public for which she wrote" (Bradbrook 101).

To the other stock female characters in the novel, Austen directs her ultimate criticism. Beyond the two leading characters, all the other women are occupied with a sense of 'empty-busyness'. They appear to be important by being "usually busy. They know how to find pleasure in passing the time in what seems to them useful activities; needle work, music and writing" (Calder 23). The feminist picture in this novel is very hazy but it is honest and detailed. *Sense and Sensibility* can be described as 'womenlla' (my emphasis), a story primarily about women, their plights and predicaments but one that does not take a firm stand in their favor. Austen plays the role of an acrobat walking on a tight rope aiming to achieve maximum audience appeal but without harming herself and her case. She does not face the patriarchal society which is the greatest victimizer of women through its male representatives and conventions which demand that women should be wealthy, well bred, classy and conforming. "Jane writes for the object of educating and pleasing the public reader" (Bradbrook 101). Although she introduces examples of social injustice, such as the law of entail which prevents women from enjoying a decent life, she never gives solutions and her stories always end happily no matter how many problems the heroines face at the beginning (Monaghan 156).

While the women of *Sense and Sensibility* go with the wind and allow society to define their characters and lives, is the situation of men any better? Edward Ferrars, the beloved of Elinor, description is no better than the women of the age. When his "natural shyness was overcome, his behavior gave every indication of an open affectionate heart" but according to Marianne "there is something wanting, his figure is not striking; it has none of that grace…his eyes want all that spirit, that fire" (Austen 17). Colonel Brandon, Marianne's compensatory choice is even worse. He is belittled into "a flannel waistcoat invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the

feeble" (Austen 38). This proves that it is society which determines the characters of gentlemen and ladies all the same.

Conclusion: The Feminist Compromise; Planting the Seeds of Change

While literature is supposed to be a medium that enables the writers to freely voice their opinions, this seems highly questionable in the case of writers such as Austen writing during the conservative Georgian era. An era during which writing is viewed as an instructive and conscious activity aimed at fostering the beliefs of society. The author is viewed as a member of society who should keep his/her creativity on leash; Austen understands that social change is not easily inaugurated; it needs time, tact and patience and this is the policy that Austen applies in *Sense and Sensibility*. She is not hasty to harvest the fruits but plants the roots deep in the ground with each new novel and set of new female heroines. Her novels maybe studied as a continuum endowed with internal dialogism with each work breaking new grounds and achieving a new success in a long-distance feminist marathon.

In this novel, Austen carves an incomplete frame for a strong and loving feminist and adds the final piece after a while in the character of Elizabeth Bennet in her later novel, *Pride and Prejudice. Sense and sensibility* is a transitional novel offering a reconciliatory form of feminism that cannot be appreciated until the reader comprehends its indirect messages in which Austen indirectly apologizes for her shortcomings and failure to provide a unique image of a strong female stating that "there is no freedom of thought in a self centered isolation or a code of sentimental maxims. Freedom is only to be found beyond the boundaries of the self" (Morgan 200).

The subject matter, sense and sensibility, is female oriented. Jane Austen is a pioneer female writer. The novel features female heroism so one would expect feminism to be written all over it. If the reader holds these pre-reading assumptions, s/he is going to be failed but if we approach it as text that traces the literary anthropology of feminism and the depiction of the foremothers of feminists, then it will prove invaluable both literary and historically. Austen is no 'hyena in a petticoat' as Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest feminist writers, is described; she still enjoys being a lady but believes that women deserve more. To appreciate this masterpiece, one must know the contextual conditions which affect the production of the textual; hence, the message will seem progressive and apt.

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Another Humanist Ideal: The Transhuman Future in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*

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Abstract *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Winterson's latest novel, shows the author's critical thinking on the transhuman technological issues. From making a study of three characters, this paper will demonstrate how the transhuman dream continually propels the enhancement of human properties with the help of constantly changing technologies, and their ultimate goal is to make human morphological freedom come true. This article will discuss from three aspects. Firstly, it will explore the transhuman theme embodied in Prometheus myth and its different understanding of human nature, which contributes to grasping the essence of Winterson's dual narration. Following this, we will examine the modern Promethean representative character, Victor Frankenstein, who realizes the purpose of creating being by transforming the human nature (its biology) through science and technology, which is the manifestation of Enlightenment Humanist ideal. Thirdly, it will be clarified that Victor Stein's disembodied posthumanist stance in the modern article is in fact a kind of transhumanist thought, and his radical goal is to achieve the ultimate ideal of transhumanism-the freedom of human nature-by completely getting rid of the fragile corporeal body. However, this ideal will lead to the dualist variant of mind and body-the opposition between information and matter.

Key Words Jeanette Winterson; *Frankissstein;* Prometheus; transhumanism; human nature

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Winterson published a new novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* in 2019 (hereinafter referred to as *Frankissstein*), which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2019. In this latest masterpiece, the author pushes the thinking of technological issues to

another depth. There are many new words related to current science and technology in the novel, such as cryonics, prosthetics and trans-gender, which are no less popular in the current society than the galvanism used in organisms in the 19th century, and these technologies used to and are now connected to another word, i.e. the transhuman. When it comes to the transhuman, there is another relevant concept, i.e. the posthuman, and these two concepts will be crucial points in this paper, here is therefore a brief overview of the relationship between them. There are mainly two viewpoints in the academic circles: first, the transhuman is a transitional stage between human being and the posthuman, which could be summed up by the name of the important transhuman organization, namely Humanity+; Second, in a broad sense, the transhuman belongs to the category of the posthuman, since both think about the interaction between human and technology. This intersection point also causes the ambiguity of the two concepts, and the concept of "the posthuman" is therefore used in both traditions. And still, there is an essential difference between them, that is, in a sense, the posthumanist posthuman can be analyzed as "a criticism of humanism," while the transhumanist posthuman can be regarded as "an intensification of humanism" (Robert and Stefan 17). In recent years, the western academic circles have turned to the posthuman study, scholars generally believe that "posthumanism comes out of postmodernism,"[1] while the transhumanist thought can be traced back to a much longer time, it "takes up the long and widely branched history of cultures and ideas" (Rockoff 256) , and among numerous mythologies of human enhancement, the myth of Prometheus has far-reaching implication.

In this novel, Winterson follows her consistent non-unitary narrative style, and compared with the previous novels there is a big change that the dual narrative is used throughout the novel, except that the plot of the lunatic asylum is narrated by the third male narrator Wakefield. One of the narrators is Mary Shelley, the narrator of adapted section from *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (hereinafter referred to as *Frankenstein*), while the modern one is narrated by Ry (abbreviation for Mary). The dual narrative is independent but integrated to form the complete structure of the novel. As the first science fiction in literary history and perhaps "the first literary work that explicated genuine transhumanist thinking" (Rockoff

1 In the historical and philosophical frame of postmodernism, the theories such as feminism and postcolonialism question the humanist concepts and values and the deep-rooted dualism existing in western traditional culture. Posthumanism also challenges these dominant concepts and values, but as the intervention of technology endangers the whole human race, it does not make a voice for some people, but rethinks the concept of the human for the whole human race. See Francesca Ferrando. "The Body." Ranisch Robert; Lorenz Sorgner Stefan (eds.). *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*[M]. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014, p. 221.

257), *Frankenstein* tells the story of man-made being, and its intertextual allusion to the Prometheus myth indicates correlation between them, which, as one of the main narrative lines, highlights the key intention of Winterson's novel, and its intermingled narrative with the other modern text also implies that they share some common ground. This article attempts to explain what this commonality is and what is the truth behind these men's crazy thoughts from the perspective of the two narrators. This article will discuss from three aspects. Firstly, it will analyze the transhuman theme embodied in Prometheus myth and its different understanding of human nature, which contributes to grasping the essence of Winterson's dual narration. Following this, we will examine the modern Promethean representative character, Victor Frankenstein, who realizes the purpose of creating life by transforming the human nature (its biology) through science and technology, which is the manifestation of Enlightenment Humanist ideal. Thirdly, it will be clarified that Victor Stein's disembodied posthumanist stance in the modern article is in fact a kind of transhumanist thought, and his radical goal is to achieve the ultimate ideal of transhumanism-the freedom of human nature - by completely getting rid of the fragile corporeal body. However, this ideal will lead to the dualist variant of mind and body-the opposition between the information and the matter.

Ariadne's Thread-Prometheus

The mythological story of Prometheus is a recurring motif in Winterson's novels. The transhumanists often resort to this story to trace back the origin of transhumanism and justify it. There are different versions of Prometheus's complete story, but they all end up being punished for stealing fire. In another novel, *Weight*, Winterson casts the image of Prometheus as a hero suffering for the well-being of human being, whereas in this new novel Byron connects Prometheus with the snake, giving a hint that Prometheus seduces human beings to improve themselves and manipulates their thoughts like serpent in the Garden of Eden, which echoes Trijsje Franssen's opinion that Prometheus embodies a kind of ambiguity, namely, "on the one hand, he is a hubristic trickster, a thief, on the other hand a hero, a savior. Moreover, by means of his cunning, courage and theft he helped to create the human being, and to transform him into a smarter, better, more civilized being" (Franssen 74). The duality reflected in Prometheus's image and his transcendence of duality have also made Prometheus a recurring theme in the posthuman discourse. However, in the structure of this article, referring to this image is obviously from the transhumanist standpoint, for "The most common reception of this myth highlights human creativity, craftsmanship and technical abilities. Until

today, Prometheus represents the symbol of human self-authorization to shape his environment and ultimately himself" (Rockoff 256), and fire as a metaphor of taboo but advanced knowledge that he does his best to acquire indicates human efforts to seek evolution by exercising his individual will to power. For the transhumanists, Prometheus's progress is a symbol of human being overcoming his own weaknesses and limitations by means of technology, and stands for "the will to evolve" and "the innate human drive to increase knowledge and abilities, even at the expense of present pains" (Young 39). In a manner of speaking, it aims at human enhancement, which is "ultimate liberation and emancipation from human nature — i.e. the biological boundaries — that obstruct human freedom, which for this position is the very essence of human being and therefore his true 'nature'" (Weiss 196). It is precisely based on this understanding that the transhumanists think it desirable for human beings to achieve the purpose of enhancement in scientific and technological way because human beings will not only eliminate diseases and aging, but control the future of our human species evolution in an enhanced manner. Furthermore, through the enhancement of our biological nature, we will achieve the ultimate nature of human freedom. When people view genetic technology to enhance human beings as a scourge, biophysicist Gregory Stock illustrates in his book *Redesign Human*, "Some imagine we will see the perils, come to our senses, and turn away from such possibilities. But when we imagine Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, we are not incredulous or shocked by his act. It is too characteristically human. To forgo the powerful technologies that genomics and molecular biology are bringing would be as out of character for humanity..." (Stock 2). He uses Prometheus's example to plead innocence for the transhumanist future on the grounds that "Prometheus is clearly being introduced here as the paradigmatic human, as an embodiment of the human essence. What is being said, on one level, is that biotechnological progress cannot be stopped, for being human we will always "steal fire from the Gods," that is, continue to find and take possession of new means to increase our power and control" (Hauskeller 12), until we reach the final stage of evolution, the moment when true freedom of our human nature comes true.

The analogy between the two has its rationality, which seems we should embrace the "technowonderland" (Young 19) advanced technology has created for us as the transhumanists say. Nevertheless, the deep-rooted essence of European humanism lies dormant in Prometheus myth: "the belief in the ongoing progress of the species through reason, science, and technology" (Young 39). It strengthens the dualism of humanism: subject/object, human/nature, science/nature, light (of scientific reason)/ darkness (of nature). Not only that, the transhumanist position is

self-contradictory: just as Prometheus conquers nature through fire, human beings conquer another nature, namely aging and death through technology, "Nature, for the transhumanists, is mostly a question of ignorance, weakness, and mortality... Nature is associated with inevitable decline and failure... 'life's natural ebb' as something we need to counter. Nature is what binds us, what sets limits to our aspirations. In short, nature is clearly the enemy" (Hauskeller 9-10). In Michael Hauskeller's analysis, it can be argued that the transhumanists show contempt for nature, i.e. nature and the natural decline process of life. For all that, as mentioned earlier, they regard "the evolutionary will to increase knowledge and ability" as the way to actualize "the inherent human nature," put differently, they presuppose a normative concept of human nature, which is a spiritual understanding of human nature and will drive us to continuously improve biological human nature. From the different understanding of human nature, we also perceive the familiar shadow of binary opposition, that is, the opposition between the spiritual and the material. Hauskeller wryly sums up, "It thus appears that nature, after it has been expelled from the transhumanist paradise with a great show of indignation, is immediately invited back in through the backdoor..." (10-11). It is not difficult to find the transhumanist basic assumption of human nature still follows the humanist concept, which sets the ultimate goal of human evolution in the future, and this presupposition simultaneously lays stress on the root of its free will. Max More makes his points clearly, "'Trans-humanism' emphasizes the philosophy's roots in Enlightenment humanism. From here comes the emphasis on progress ...on reason, technology, scientific method, and human creativity..." (More and Vita-More 4). Grafting the core concept of humanism onto it is exactly what we see in Prometheus mythology, and this grafting is the biggest difference between transhumanism and posthumanism as well. Prometheus myth, as the Ariadne's thread, is the key to understanding this novel for the reason that as described before, Modern Prometheus is the subtitle of *Frankenstein*, and its adapted version, as one of the plot lines of Winterson's *Frankissstein*, showing these three texts are intrinsically and closely related, and a clear positioning of this myth will be conducive to comprehension of the following text.

Frankenstein: The Torchbearer of Prometheus in 19th Century

Frankenstein is both a subtext and an integral part of the novel, which is retold by Mary Shelley about the process of writing her novel in Geneva, and Winterson's version supplements the story of Victor Frankenstein's return to England after being rescued by Captain Walton and Mary Shelley's encounter with Byron's daughter

Ada. In the narrative of Geneva section, we can see they have endless arguments on many issues, and the most prominent one is the debate on ghosts and the Undead. When Mary asks Shelley if he believes in ghosts? He replies, "I do, he said, for how can it be that the body is master of the spirit? Our courage, our heroism, yes, even our hatreds, all that we do that shapes the world—is that the body or the spirit? It is the spirit (Winterson 15). He even wants to cast his mind into a rock, a stream, a cloud or other non-human forms. His praise of the spirit and belittling of the corporeal body and Polidori's idea of supporting the Undead have ostensibly reproduced the dispute between the mind and the body in the history of western philosophy, whereas both the ghosts and the Undead reflect a more profound issue-the human desire to achieve freedom of eternal life.

Mary also explains this connotation through the story of scientist Victor Frankenstein creating being in the novel. Although Winterson's novel doesn't account for Frankenstein's background, we know about him from Mary Shelley's novel that Frankenstein studies at University of Ingolstadt, "which was associated with the Illuminati, a group formed in the late eighteenth century who believed in the supernatural. Crucially, they were also, in the main, supporters of the French Revolution, which means that Frankenstein, who attends university just after the Revolution..., is positioned at the centre of political and epistemological radicalism" (Smith 74). He was well educated and nurtured by the strong scientific atmosphere at that time, "as a true son of his time, a rational humanist, Victor trusts that science can play a decisive role in bringing about the perpetual progress of the human species"(Carretero-Gonzalez 54) , and he should therefore take the torch of Prometheus and make efforts for the progress of human beings. Mary describes her thinking process of choosing one name for her protagonist, "I will call my hero (is he a hero?) Victor—for he seeks victory over life and over death. He will strive to penetrate the recesses of Nature. He will not be an alchemist—I want no hocus-pocus here—he will be a doctor, like Polidori, like Doctor Lawrence. He will discern the course of the blood, know the knot of muscle, the density of bone, the delicacy of tissue, how the heart pumps. Airways, liquids, mass, jelly, the cauliflower mystery of the brain (Winterson 67). Readers familiar with Mary Shelley's original work all know the significance of Dr. Lawrence, namely William Lawrence, to her novel creation. Lawrence was Shelley's doctor and a well-known scientist at that time. In the preface to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, Marilyn Butler states that Mary Shelley's novel reproduced the scientific debate at that time, here referring to the much-watched scientific debate that took place from 1814 to 1819 between Lawrence and his teacher John Abernethy. Their views on

where life comes from are quite different: the former holds a materialist view of vitalism, while the latter with a spiritualized vitalist stance. The theory of vitalism was influential then, "which maintained that a life force ran through all living things including plants, animals and people" (Smith 72). For materialists like Lawrence, "life is the 'assemblage of all the functions' a living body can perform" (Butler xix), "life was merely the consequence of a healthily functioning organic unity which would cease once a vital organ had become terminally diseased. Life, for Lawrence, was therefore a matter of bodily function"; whereas, "Abernethy's position suggests the possible presence of a soul that animates the body and which departs it on death" (Smith 73). Winterson specifically quotes Lawrence's position in her novel: "There is no 'super-added' force such as the soul. Human beings are bone, muscle, tissue, blood, etc., and nothing more" (Winterson 56). This naive materialist view emphasizes the corporeality of the body, which is in contrast to Shelley's radical view of disembodied life. It can be said that Winterson here once again reproduces the debate on the origin of life in the 19th century, which will provide the background for the transhuman future of bio-cybernetics in her novel, since from below we will see the variant of the struggle between the spirit and the body in this future picture, i.e. the mind and the body or the information and the matter. Frankenstein juxtaposes himself with Dr. Lawrence and emphasizes his materialist standpoint of experiments, providing the basis for the structure of his creation. Besides, this detail also proves the feasibility of Victor's experiment and explains the scientific basis and purpose supporting his experiment. His ambition represents the Enlightenment ideal of scientific rationality at that time, and Lawrence's victory in that debate seemed to support this view. However, when we go deep into the creation process, the true nature of this ideal will be revealed.

Winterson's novel directly quotes some details from the original work and specifically mentions diary Wakefield finds in Victor's luggage. A pencil drawing of Leonardo da Vinci's "*Vitruvian Man*" is folded inside it, which is the template of his creation. The Vitruvian man as representatives of humanistic ideals, as a "emblem of humanism," presupposes the perfect concept of the body, "sets standards not only for individuals, but also for their cultures," and the resulting civilized mode in Western Europe has evolved into a "hegemonic cultural mode," and this "humanistic universalism" has been spread to uncivilized regions outside the European continent, bringing those so-called uncivilized people a lot of oppression and suffering (Braidotti 13-15). Frankenstein uses this painting as the template to show that the body structure of his creation also follows humanistic ideals. What makes the pores stand on end is that the components of his creation come from

Charnel houses, dissecting room and slaughterhouse, and even so, he still feels he plays the role of God, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent creatures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Winterson 193). Frankenstein covets the power to create life, and science endows him with the same position as God, which is not only the victory of science over religion, but also science over nature (human death). He even believes the light of scientific reason will dispel the darkness in the world, "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (Shelley 32). As a scientific product, his creation has apparently transgressed the boundaries of human beings, a creature with human properties but an enhanced human being, namely "Humanity+." Frankenstein "As one of literature's most notorious Promethean over-reachers, he exemplifies the posthuman in the human, or at least one kind of posthumanity, bent on surpassing himself," the posthuman mentioned here actually refers to the transhumanist posthuman, since the humanist concept is still playing a role, so to speak, "the human nature 'born again' in the figure of Frankenstein's creature is the product of an arrogant anthropocentrism primed with the sense that no or few obstacles stand in the way of the human will"(Smith 161-163).

In the dialogue between Mary and Shelley, they also talk about another sensational scientific phenomenon of vitalism: scientist Erasmus Darwin has animated a piece of vermicelli, which also proves the omnipotence of human will, and alludes to another implication in the meantime, that is, the ontological inequality between human and other species. When vermicelli is associated with life, there is "unexpected attribution across boundaries" ... for the reason that "The hierarchical relation of humans to the natural world, which is often an element of scientific, technological thinking, transfers easily to social relations, whether they involve race, gender, class, or other differentiating factors," when that kind of transference occurs, " the 'vermicelli' turn out, in a surprising reversal and transvaluation, to be the scientists and also people," as in Frankenstein's case, when he calls his creation the wretch or the monster, he ascribes the creature to the hierarchical order of social relations, and even those experimental objects that acquires life are merely "expendable subhuman creatures" (Goss and Riquelme 447-448). It can be seen that the boundary between man and his creation re-presents the hierarchical order of humanism and strengthens this concept as well.

Victor Stein: Humanist Performer or Reformer?

Although many theorists try to distinguish between the transhumanism and the posthumanism their different philosophical origins as well as their completely different foothold, their ambiguity also leads to the fact that the transhumanism as a mode of thinking is always entangled with the posthumanism in reality like a ghost, or even functions under the cover of the posthumanism. This transhumanist mode of thinking is permeating its destructive power in the posthuman turn, as Winterson suggests through the image of one scientist she created, i.e. Victor Stein, the Promethean character in her novel, who has the same first name as Victor Frankenstein. He is a scientist specializing in robot research and human enhancement, his scientific experiments combine P. B. Shelley's immortal dream without corporeal body with Frankenstein's technology to create life, which insinuates that Stein is clearly a combination of Shelley and Frankenstein. Stein's first appearance in the novel is to deliver a public speech, in which he describes three types of life forms: evolution-based, partially self-designing and fully self-designing, "Behind him on the screen tonight is Leonardo's drawing of *The Vitruvian Man*. As the audience sit in silence, Leonardo's image animates itself, takes an appearing trilby from an appearing peg and, placing it on the back of its head, turns and walks into an appearing sea. The sound of the waves can be heard clearly. The image of the man walks without pausing until the waters reach his head. All that is left behind is the hat floating calmly on the indifferent sea" (Winterson 73-74). Against this background, he calls his lecture "*The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World*" (Winterson 74). Stein portrays himself as an image of a humanist reformer, and Leonardo, the chief designer of the ideal humanist image, drowning himself stands for the death of humanist human image. This drowning image hints obliquely at the fact that Shelley drowned likewise, and the fragile corporeal body is one of the starting points that prompts him to thoroughly transform human nature. As previously mentioned, the Vitruvius man is the signified of European hegemonic culture, and many theorists have parodied this classic image, for example, Rosi Braidotti brings together a variety of images in her works, such as New Vitruvian Woman, Leonardo da Vinci's dog, Vitruvian cat and Robot in the style of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. For these theorists, these revised versions are served as argument or refutation or just for ironic effect, Stein here shows his decision to break away from the western humanist thought that causes all kinds of disasters. When the audience asks him "whose side are you on? He'd say there are no sides—that binaries belong to our carbon-based past. The future is not biology—

it's AI. (Winterson 72) Later, in the dialogue between Ry and him, he makes his point clear, "Race, faith, gender, sexuality, those things make me impatient, said Victor. We need to move forward, and faster. I want an end to it all, don't you see? An end to the human, I said. An end to human stupidity" (Winterson 199). He appears to be an anti-humanist reformer, but we will have a new knowledge of Stein's image if we link his Promethean rhetoric with the interpretation of a fully self-designing life form and the scene of Leonardo's death.

In his conservative explanation to the public, fully self-designing life is an upcoming world of artificial intelligence, a world where the physical limits of our bodies become irrelevant, "Robots will manage much of what humans manage today. Intelligence—perhaps even consciousness—will no longer be dependent on a body. We will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us. We will colonise space" (Winterson 73). The truth, however, is that he creates a future picture in which human beings are completely disembodied and reduced to pure data forms stored in computers. "humans can be understood as biological data-processing plants —if you believe the biologists. Computers are non-biological data-processing plants. If data is the input and the rest is processing, then humans aren't so special after all" *(*Winterson 78). If Hans Moravec is the theorist who proposes mind can be uploaded into a computer for storage, Stein is a practitioner of this theory. Nevertheless, his scientific dream is not to prolong life but to end death forever, the future is not we share the earth with non-biological forms, but we have all become non-biological forms, in other words, human beings will evolve into "things" without corporeal bodies. Leonardo's death therefore suggests that the designers of future life will evolve as well, and the evolution will be manipulated by crazy scientists through cybernetic technology. In the Guardian interview, Winterson makes her comments on this phenomenon, when Johanna Thomas-Corr asks her, "Would you upload your own mind to a computer if the opportunity arose" "Yes. I'd probably regret it! Who would you trust to do it? What would they do with you? We could be trapped in somebody's laptop for hundreds of years waiting to get out: "Let me out!" It keys back into all those wonderful fairy stories about trapped spirits in bottles. We've always dealt with disembodiment, it's right through folklore across the planet" (Thomas-Corr). To take a step back, even if the technology is successful as Stein says, the technology still needs a material carrier. N. Catherine Hayles is aware of this problem, she propounds that "Information, like humanity, cannot exist apart from the embodiment that brings it into being as a material entity in the world; and embodiment is always instantiated, local, and specific. Embodiment can be destroyed, but it cannot be replicated. Once the specific form constituting it is

gone, no amount of massaging data will bring it back. This observation is as true of the planet as it is of an individual life-form. As we rush to explore the new vistas that cyberspace has made available for colonization, let us remember the fragility of a material world that cannot be replaced" (Hayles 49). This can be understood from the breakdown occurring after the pending experiment, "the massive outage in Manchester was simultaneous with a city-wide IT meltdown. Millions of gigabytes of data wiped" (Winterson 338). The cloud storage of the network serves as a data storage terminal, if data is compared to human life, then the loss of data means that many people die forever in this sudden failure. At the same time, Ry questions another consequence of this operation, "Isn't content also context? I ask him. Your experiences, your circumstances, the time you live in? Consciousness isn't free-floating; it's enmeshed" (Winterson 110), she points out that the de-contextualization of mind uploading separates information from its meaning, and information will finally become meaningless floating signifiers. No matter in the part of Mary's story or the part of Ry's, Mary and Shelley, Ry and Victor are always accompanied by their sexual behaviors when they talk about the idea of decorporealization, this coincidence is in fact a response to their radical attitude with their physical pleasure. In these detailed descriptions, the narrators also use different sense organs to strengthen their feeling of the flesh-body, such as "The scent of him is what I like," "he smells of basil and lime," "I am holding his body in my left hand" (Winterson 153-154) , "I love his body...I rest on his narrow chest, listening to his heart" (Winterson 60).

Although everything behind Stein's crazy experiment is unknown, he still persists in conducting this ethically challenged experiment secretly in a hidden underground tunnel. Facing Ry's query, he retorts, "if you were certain that by disrupting everything you take for granted about the mind, about the body, about biology, about death, about life, if you were certain that such a disruption would bring about a personal, social, global utopia, would you risk it?"(Winterson 112) The implication here is that he takes risks for the well-being of all human beings and for their common utopian future as well. This very typical Promethean rhetoric is familiar and indisputable, however the veil of rhetoric discourse is further lifted through the perspective of narrator Ry. Stein is as important to this novel as Frankenstein is in Mary Shelley's novel, Winterson is not here to follow Mary Shelley's narrative technique-let the scientist tell his own story in the first person, but being told by Ry, which not only weakens his imposing manner, extremely inflated sense of superiority and control desire, but also makes Victor Stein's contradictory personal images stand out. Even our readers will unconsciously

associate it with the idea that whether his rebound inflated desire is the self-protective instinct motivated by the ethnic suffering of the Jewish nation or not. In the course of western modernization, the Jewish nation has suffered the most, and he wants to end human stupidity because humanist thoughts are still at work until now and we are still stuck in the mire of "race, faith gender and sexuality." His crazy experiments are devoted to transforming the biological human nature, for this is both the way to actualize eternal life, and the way to eliminate all kinds of discrimination codes inscribed on the flesh-body in the western humanistic tradition, and the way to make his global utopian vision come true as well. And still, his vision of realizing equality by eliminating the corporeality is apparently based on the total negation of the flesh-body, which instead reinforces a recognition that the flesh-body is the justification of the root of racial discrimination and gender discrimination. However, when he attempts to upload mind into a computer, "thereby obtaining through technological mastery the ultimate privilege of immortality, he is not abandoning the autonomous liberal (humanist) subject but is expanding its prerogatives into the realm of the posthuman" (Hayles 287). His radicalization, moreover, inevitably results in a more primitive binary opposition-the victory of mind over body, rather than a posthumanist stance that subverts binary opposition as he himself says in his speech. Thomas D. Philbeck, in his article, characterizes transhumanist position, "transhumanism does not actually attack or challenge the philosophical problems that emerge from dualist metaphysical foundations that presuppose a mind-body split as an acceptable ontological structure to begin with"; in a nutshell, it embraces this dualism, as in the case of mind uploading into computers, "The idea that the mind is a separable entity from the material brain is a presupposition required to perform such a theoretical operation" (178). In other words, the ontological framework of humanist dualism is reiterated in his transhumanist vision of mind uploading.

Whether Prometheus, Frankenstein or Stein, as transhumanists of different times, they stand for the efforts to seek science and technology to overcome the limitations of human beings. With the continuous conquering of science, human beings have occupied more and more bright territories, which is undoubtedly the well-being the arrogant human beings bring to ourselves. As mentioned earlier, the ultimate transhumanist aim is to realize the essence of human freedom, which is also the embodiment of the free will of the western liberal humanist subject, while "the human animal represents only a transitory stage in the evolutionary history of this species, which has not yet come to an end. The human animal is not yet what it has to be, but must achieve its very essence by enhancing its proper nature

(biology)" (Weiss 196-197). This suggests that human beings like us are only one stage in the evolutionary process, and we can draw from the pronoun "it" that it is a relatively lower stage, far from reaching the ultimate nature of human beings, that is, freedom from the constraints of biological boundaries. It is this desire for the essence of human freedom that is externalized into an evolutionary will, which drives human beings to continually break through their own biological boundaries through technology to actualize this ultimate goal. The will to evolve-the common ground they present-is essentially "a Promethean aspiration to remake nature, including human nature, to serve our purposes and satisfy our desires..." (Sandel 26-27). From the relevant analysis of these three characters, it can be seen that the transhuman dream of human beings is the ongoing process of propelling the enhancement of human properties by means of constantly changing technologies, and their ultimate goal will enable human beings to achieve morphological freedom, which predicts the future of humanity may be a completely disembodied state. We should be on guard against this, for the transhuman future, perhaps humans like us will be abnormal as we have seen in Winterson's another novel *The Stone God*s. And still, history has constantly witnessed that any technological invention may bite back at itself, Stein says, "If it does work it will temporarily shut down the UK's entire Cloud storage system, said Victor. And probably cause a power outage too" (Winterson 278). This is an invasive metaphor for this technology. At the end of the novel, with the loud noise of the underground laboratory, Manchester city is plunged into a large-scale power outage, and the power system has malfunctioned. We don't know whether the experiment is successful or not, but the ending words "The human dream" (Ibid 344) indicates the author's attitude towards all this: myriads of Steins will "seize the torch of Prometheus with both hands" (Young 22), and human beings will never rest on the road to their ultimate goal. In spite of this, we need to pay attention to the fact that when human being become post-embodiment state, whether they are genies in the bottles or the various chimeras of fairy tales, these mythic bodies are a "atavistic" phenomenon and a "biological reversion" according to Paul Sheehan, that is, human beings revert back to the mythological world through technological evolution, which will be the inevitable outcome of unchecked technology in the biocybernetics era, and is also the author's warning, for cybernetic technology "treating information as separable from material forms would lead to the 'erasure of embodiment'" (Maude and Hillman 251-254), and thus generates a new dualism-the information and the matter (body)-that describes humanity, which is rejected by Winterson's posthumanist standpoint. At the same time, the dual narration in the novel reflects the way of grafting liberal humanism

on transhumanism to varying degrees. On this point, Winterson agrees with posthumanist theorists Braidotti and Hayles who believe that this is really lethal, since this transhumanist posthuman stance will turn into a more horrible anti-human threat, and "Yet the posthuman need not be recuperated back into liberal humanism, nor need it be construed as anti-human... the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human" (Hayles 286-287). It is based on this, for Winterson, the body is not an equipment that can be changed at will, and it is not the life support system of the brain as Stein says. The mind and the body are an inseparable unity, which is the anchor point of the embodied and situational bodies, and this view of bodies is Winterson's most fundamental philosophical standpoint, which disturbs the attempt to essentialize the body and deconstructs the conspiracy to separate the mind from the bodies. As Mary responds to Shelley's radical disembodied thought, "How would I love you, ...if you had no body?" (Winterson 15). The body, as a container, as a place, and "as the physical seat of all experience" (Shilling 8), is the material foundation of human being, and it is also the starting point for us to talk about human nature. Otherwise, when we talk about freedom of human nature, we are probably talking about freedom of thingness.

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“The Spider” (“l’Araigne”) and Its Relationship with the Armenian Literary Praxis

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Abstract Armenian by birth, French writer Henri Troyat, who was honoured with worldwide acclaim, received a contradictory valuation, and for decades was accepted with stubborn reluctance in the literature world. Though in Armenia, there should have been a certain scientific fascination towards his literary works, his ignorance of Armenian roots and issues resulted in a boycott against his personality. Our nationalistic narrow-mindedness secluded him from our cultural life, not granting us an opportunity to acknowledge his real value.

This article touches upon “The Spider” (“L’Araigne”), a novel by Henri Troyat, its relationship with the Armenian literary praxis. Parallels are drawn between the novel under discussion and the novel “The Death” by Nar-Dos, a psychological realist Armenian writer of the classical period. The protagonists in both novels, namely, Gerard Fonseca and Levon Shahian delve down into death ideology: they write and translate books by European philosophers, but they both die as a result of their ambitious aspirations.

Key words death; philosophical thought; character; “The Spider”; “The Death”; Armenian literature.

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Introduction

Nowadays, one seldom hears the name of Henri Troyat (previously known as Lev Tarassov / Levon Torossian, 1911-2007)[1] within Armenian literary circles, irrespective of his extensive literary works of the last century, and his appointment, in 1959, as a member of the Academy of France, the first of Diaspora writers, a Russo-Armenian, to join the class of the "Greats".

His creative activity utilized both French and Russian. For Armenians, such as in the case of the distinguished writer Vazgen (nee Onnig) Shushanians' (1903-1941), the standing of Henri was a bone of contention, reminding us of another case, that of the writer in English, Michael Arlen the Senior (nee Dikran Kouyoumdjian, 1895-1956), and his detached disposition. Needless to say, such idiosyncrasies were at the base of the Armenian peoples' disaffection with these two famous writers, which was an expected source of embitterment towards the authors for their adopted regard of disdain to their national roots, particularly in foreign countries. These expressions of "offended dignity" had their negative effect on the stereotyped, narrow-mindedness within the literary circles of our country, meanwhile, in my opinion, did not affect the Diaspora writers, who are even today enjoying certain fame.

In this article, I show that French and Armenian two prominent literature personalities; Henri Troyat and Nar-Dos (nee Michael Hovhannisian, 1867-1933) pay close attention, in their inert and dummy philosophical manner, to heroes that, to some extent, would come to continue a Russian literary critic Dimitry Pisarev's (1840-1868) spotlight about superfluous individual's nature. This is significant because interdisciplinary approaches to global literature are an indicator of its interconnected and homogeneous development both in the twentieth century and nowadays.

The point is that in both French and Armenian literature circles such essential issues as the concept of the superfluous individual and his characteristic features are underestimated and often left out of scholarly attention. That is a major concern for such writers as Nar-Dos, Henri Troyat, Shahan Shanur (nee Shahnur Kerestedjian, 1903-1974), "new novel" writer and theorist Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922-2008) as well as Nathalie Sarraute (1900-1999). And the parallels are drawn only to enrich international literary recognition; make space for fascinating and needful discussions among literary disciplines. These can be viewed as obvious advantages of comparative analysis that become more remarkable in contemporary scientific world.

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1 Troyat's lineage is rather mixed, the various nationalities connected to his family comprise Georgian, Circassian, Russian, Armenian, even German.

Some Biographical and Writing Lines

Now let us look into a few details of Henri Troyat's biography. He was born in Moscow in 1911, but he lived his childhood in Armavir, Russia, and in addition to the Russian language he also heard Circassian. During the inversions of the Reds, his parents migrated to Istanbul and later to Venice, finally settling in Paris, where they became French citizens. In Paris, too, to a certain level, he was raised in an atmosphere of Russian traditions and language, but had his full education in French schools.

Henri Troyat is the author of over forty books. It appears his main interest in writing was to present the gender in a pure fiction novel and biographical stories. He had not dealt with any Armenian related subjects; perhaps his novel, "Tant que la terre durera" ("As long as the earth lasts", 1947-1950) may be considered an exception, wherein he deals with family details and educational trends. While progressing in his chosen field of the novel writer, he must have felt and considered himself a Frenchman which, at present, appears to be quite a natural attitude. He was adopting everything European, such as enlightenment, culture, languages, jurisprudence, in other words, Henri Troyat, the great writer and historian, was progressing in great strides towards his objective.

In my opinion, it is not right to accuse him of dissent or one who abhors his Armenian roots (When Henri Verneuil was arranging an appointment between Toros Toranian and Henri Troyat, his only condition was that Toros should never ask Troyat's nationality, which is understandable, since one does not ask a Frenchman or an Englishman whether he is French or English by birth (Toranian 361); he was just unwilling to be driven by sheer feelings. Perhaps, deep down in the unconscious, those feelings were present, which never became a directive to living, since for his mode of approach, in his works, nationality was superfluous. This lack of Armenian spirit, in the works of a Diaspora writer, would soon accrue reprobations. For instance, the Armenian writer of United States, Sarkis Vahaken (nee Phathaphutian, 1927) considers a similar extreme approach in the case of the French-Armenian writer Shahan Shahnur (this is about Armen Lubin, a person of super knowledge of the French literature) and at the very same time does not overlook V. Shushanian's extreme attitude towards Henri Troyat, whom he calls "a mediocrity with no connections with the Armenians" (Vahaken 34).

As mentioned above, Troyat's childhood recollections of Russia were vivid, which soon occupied his outlook, resulting in his cultural services to the Russian nation, which is laudable. He analysed with the latest European methods the history,

the subjective disposition and civil movements with an eye on relativity of the objectives and their reciprocity, such as the "Decemberist Movement" up to the struggle against serfdom, the popular political movement of Narodniks of the nineteenth century, the orientations of the monarchs and the premises of the decline of the tsarism, contrasting the principles of the Soviet historiography[1].

Now, let us consider some of his literary subjects. In the French writers' collective, Troyat secured a position initially by writing short stories and later voluminous novels. First of all, he followed the principles of French morality touch-stone, which had enlivened the devotees of that culture. He moved into an already effulgent environment as had Michael Arlen, of the practically same epoch, had moved into English writer's status. He was warmly received for his short stories, which some of the critics ascribed to Balzacian technique.

The philosophical guidelines, life in a domestic spider's web, and the enigmatic efforts to escape may have sounded rather strange to his contemporaries; these the author weaves in a simple psychological deep and idiomatic manner. His characters, in most cases, usually are not cognizant of their environs and their kin up to their decease. It is interesting the opinion about the author's moral and critical substratum and his idiomatic artistic methods of known West Armenian poet and translator Abraham Alikian (1928-2013), whose endeavours to adopt and follow pure French methodology and thought in fine art and his Tolstoy-like phraseology (it can also be paralleled with that of Honoré de Balzac), which are infused with natural, modernist and healthy elements while describing characters of penetrating and inciting psychology in the course of restrained and allegorical scenes of nature (Alikian 121).

Troyat's eclecticism of similar psychological circumstances and the phraseolo-

1 Troyat became famous with his historio-cultural and biographical works, all dedicated to the greats of Russia, such as Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584), Peter the Great (1672-1725), Queen Catharine (1684-1727), Alexander First (1777-1815), Gregory Rasputin (1864-1916). He defined in detail the French and Russian greats of literature, such as Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), Feodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910), Emile Zola (1840-1902), Paul Verlaine (1844-1996), Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941), Boris Pasternak (1890-1960) and other creative geniuses, whose splendour and lives have been the subject of biographical novels of the second half of the last century.

gy employed in all of his works is his personal mode of writing fictitious stories[1].

Considering the "Faux Jour" ("The False Light") novel and the various issues emanating from it, the writer and journalist Robert Hattedjian (1926) of Istanbul is quite right in expressing impartiality between the enticing idea of nationality and talent of writing. He says "This novel generated the feelings of admiration and esteem towards the author. The feeling of admiration was rather important for me since I had always felt indifference towards him because of his repulsive attitude to his roots. But now, I am of the opinion that the question of national identity and an enthralling literary work are two different things. His racial attitude would have offended me, but his literary work would only arouse respect for him" (Hattedjian 226).

For Troyat most of the heroes of his novels, be it figures of culture, civil or political leaning, live their lives in an effort to improve themselves; for most of these individuals, philosophical thought is a way to escape from a shabby means of comfort.

Perhaps, he is categorising his main heroes in a synopsis (ignoring the cases of Anton Chekhov, Rasputin and the Egletiers), whereby life remains the same within the confounded depths of his characters. Even when we note changes in conditions and environment, wherein instinct, passions and sentiments remain the same for life and death.

For Troyat, in his narrations, the family traditions are a kind of examination of the everyday non-contemplative tragic proceedings within families, which we note in his characters. In his extensive novel of "Anna Prédaille" (1973), wherein his female character of the same name as the novel, appears to drive her lover to destruction as also tormenting her own father and her female bookseller friend. This novel was written much later than the one titled "The Spider", but, again, the author is frolicking with the usual psychological states.

Comparison Analysis of Characters

The few books by Troyat that have been translated into Armenian[2], "The Spider" is worthy of mention, written around the thirties of last century – translation of 2009

1 That relates particularly to "Faux Jour" ("The False Light", 1935) and "L'Araigne" ("The Spider", 1938, which received the Goncourt Prize) novels; "La Fosse Commune" ("The Common Grave", 1939) collection of stories, "La Tête Sur les Épaules" ("Head on Shoulders", 1951) and "La Neige en Deuil" ("The Mourning Snow", 1952). Troyat had written novels of many volumes, such as "Les Semailles et Les Moissons" ("Sowing and Harvest", v. 1-5, 1953-1958), his work about the "Delabrisdian Movement", the "La Lumèire des Justes" ("Radiance to the Just", v.1-5, 1959-1963), "Les Eygletière" ("The Family of Egletiers", v.1-3, 1965-1976), "La Moscovite" ("The Moscowite", v.1-3, 1974-5), in which he discusses the periods relative to existing generations and their values under a critical light.

2 The last one is "Anna Prédaille" (Yerevan: Antares. 2020).

in Eastern Armenian by Pargev Shahbazian (1920-2019).

This is a novel relating to a family wherein the main character is Gerard Fonseca, an intellectual, a contemplative philosopher, who unable to improve his complicated life was suffering from boredom, a kind of self-inflicted sickness derived from an ineffectual life. He is the spider, weaving a web in his circle of relatives and friends, whom he is trying to steer with no success. He is condemned to solitude since none is prepared to follow his guidance. People are carrying on living in their own usual style in order to improve their position, or stumbling, blundering, being subjects of deceptions and betrayals… People are succeeding to circumvent the spider's web, which is life's directive, a result of abstract ideas, a mind-boggling co-ordination, which does not appear to require meaning and recognition.

In such a circumstance the hero, Gerard, is another Levon Shahian, the main character of Nar-Dos's (an Eastern Armenian well-known writer) novel "The Death" (1912), but, perhaps, much more intertwined with the Russian writer Ivan Goncharov's (1812-1891) creation ("Oblomov") of an illusory idleness, though, with a conviction of its irrefutable truth. Gerard considers the stagnant existence in France and makes judgements about the root of wickedness; he is carried away in his futile ordinations for the future, even the title the wicked and the good coupled with the pleasing and the unpleasant have already excited him, making him cogitate about the repercussions within his circle to no avail. The situation is the same in the case of the translation of the English novel about detective investigation, which might at least have satisfied the conceptual aspirations of the hero.

But in this case too he is dull-witted, and it appears, again, the similitude between Levon and Gerard is like that of two brothers, if one disregards their environments and chronology. Let us have in mind the fact that Nar-Dos's hero belongs to the past, at least a quarter century older than Gerard if one were to make such comparisons. In both cases, the different sophistic actions or interpretations of the two protagonists end up in a formidable Gordian Knot, followed by their deaths, in the case of one expected, while the other is unprepared for it.

Looking into Levon's predispositions, one notes that his fixations encompass death and the anticipation of the processes of the will, which are just as much indigestible, as they are in the case of Gerard. Levon is leaded by the principle and the knowledge of general absolute futility (Nar-Dos 279), from which he is unable to detach himself. Nar-Dos appears to be mocking his hero for his philosophical lumpish phraseology. The hero is scared from the reality of his environment and ignoring its potential actuality takes refuge in phlegmatic doctrines. "Levon forced himself to articulate those doctrines, which in his muddled lifestyle had derived from his

studies of the works of some pessimist philosophers, under whose influences such doctrines had become a pass time for an 'idiotic mind'" (Nar-Dos 275). This citation gives away the whole show. Even in his initial efforts of ideological engagement, he is not triumphant over the young females Ashkhen and Eva by denying the potency of life and the influences of daily occurrences. One must also have in mind that Levon is a despot in his relations with his mother and father, as the case is with Troyat's Gerard.

There is another similarity with Levon and Gerard; they reject the woman, the soul mate and the enticer of passion; in the case of Levon, perhaps, because he is a character from the Levant. Nar-Dos's focus is now on Eve and the Polish Mme Zdanevich, who, irrespective of their admiration and the enticed state, try hard to surmount and metamorphose the hero's psychological duality. Ultimately the hero resolves that "every male person is libidinous, some to a greater and others lesser degree, some perceptibly and others actively. And if this is a sickness, then every male is sick, and consequently, the whole population is sick and in need of healing, which must be done thoroughly, starting from the roots of the case – the demon! The demon! The demon must be annihilated" (Nar-Dos, 628).

Now let us focus our attention on another French-language writer, Vahé Katcha's (nee Gaŕnik Khatchadourian, 1928-2003), similar treatment of the demon in his novel of "Se Réveiller Démon" ("The Demon Roused", 1964), wherein the subject, the soul's arousal, is another solution of the predicament, which viewpoint contradicts Troyat's theme. The demon animated within the human, and the continuous fear of it, is the stirrer of reasoning, a continuous subject with philosophical foundations of fine art.

What appertains to Gerard, he, Vahé Katcha, without reflecting upon innate strife has adopted an unconditional hypothesis. It is understandable that life's most strenuous part is family life, wherein the spider converts all the best particles to poison, as it is indicated in the novel's excerpt, something which is conspicuous in Gerard's selfishness coloured by philosophical ideas, particularly that of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and his Super Man of indigestible principles, which relative to his environment and fraternity would lead him to the expectations of self-exaltation.

In his everyday state of affairs, it is the mother, the three sisters and his friend Julien Leken, about whom his hopes and affectations appear to have been harmonious since he was an agreeable debater infused with semi-philosophical leanings. It is rather difficult to pinpoint the actual bond with his mother; was it due to natural processes, which appears to be equally perceptible in their relative

fondness of each other. The mother is more yielding to his son's impulses; she even puts up for sale the family business, appears to reconcile with the idea of his son's self-isolation and endeavours in the role of a peace-maker between the son and her daughters. It is noteworthy that the mother is a mediator between her son and the rhythmic flow of life too. And when she dies, the degradation of Gerard's personality makes him dominant, a state of being "marked by providence as the main reason of descend" (Troyat 33), in which "state a man is free to decide on his life-journey as he, Gerard, understands it" (Troyat 34).

In novels the progression of life is rather fast; the potent psychological episodes involve, in the first place, Gerard's sisters and through them the lives of other related characters, as a consequence of which the various dispositions become evident in unexpected patterns. In a traditional manner Gerard loved his sisters Elizabeth and Marie-Claude, but had a particular fondness of his married sister Luce; his fondness of them decidedly meant to keep them away from worldly errors, to modify and when necessary to transform the course of their lives and their perceptions with an attractive inner vigour to link them with his daily vicissitudes, his intellectual whirligigs. The author writes that "Gerard was proud that he was able to master the worldly temptations. For him, the only important part of life was to master his inner feelings and enrich the 'I' through reading, study, and meditation. It was important for him to ascend the confused crowd, and resign from passions… his fortitude derived from his solitude" (Troyat 18). He believed that he could imbue his sisters and his friend with supernatural power in order to overcome their animal nature, and was trying to ascribe the idea to empirical tribulations in order to elevate it to the Über-ich, as he wanted to see himself in the first place.

However, the sisters would progress in their own way. When Luce, ignoring the advice of her brother, got married to Paul Okoki, he was annoyed and adopting a flimsy pretext declined to attend the wedding. But later, he changes his tactics by choosing to ameliorate the ethics of morality in the character of his sister. He, himself, knowing well his failure in intimate relationships and aware of the past equivocate flirtations towards Leken's sister, tries to push them together, but his well-planned plot is condemned to failure. In the summer-house of the Trambels the conversation between Leken and Luce is the last meeting of two crumbling hearts; Leken, Luce's friend, after that symbolic conversation next morning leaves the summer-house with the first available transport. How will Luce respond to the dilatory overflow of feelings, since she had already resigned herself to that destiny; as good as Julien may be, their course of life will not meet.

Through the example of Gerard and through a good knowledge of Russian

folklore the description of a redundant man, the wrathful adversary of life's natural expectations, who rejects the everyday minor problems and at the same time, also rejects love, passion, human discomfort and mastering of instincts. Troyat is plodding the existence of the redundant men and gradually, but without emphasis, is unfolding the wearisome environment of the first half of twentieth century France. The similarity of the novel to the Pushkinian drama on the soil of France after a century with new fragrances and solutions is remarkable. The Onegin-Lenski axis, like a structure, appears to have no closer relationship than the Gerard-Julien synthesis, except, in this case it is Julien that runs away from the snare of Gerard, which is rather obvious, if one is to consider his flight from Luce, since Luce is only a level, a signpost in Gerard's imagination.

Leken's escape to London is not only an escape from feelings. He had earlier planned that eventuality in order to escape from philosophers and their designs and snares, Gerard's mocking schemes and even the trials of pursuit.

Elizabeth is the eldest of Gerard's sisters. She is also able to set herself free from her brother's imposed requirements of love, irrespective the fact that her marriage was not successful. Joseph Telien is unable to detach himself from the libidinous operator of the Fonsecas African French saleswoman, but somehow succeeds to win over the love of the inaccessible Elizabeth and against the wishes of the family gets married. Gerard, ignorant of the details of Joseph's secretive and shady connections, somehow manages cruelly to expose them to his sister, who although debased prefers the family of Teliens, her infant and the fate of a disingenuous marriage, rather than return to her parental home, which was her brother's wish. The remarkable, however, is that the husband achieves full economic freedom and stops his dependence on Fonsecas, thanks to the efforts of his wife. Elizabeth is fully justified in preferring the motherly selfishness to the existential paltry machinations of the "I".

Obviously, the three sisters had different characters. However, the youngest Marie-Claude was more belligerent and was obsessed by Viniraln, who was similarly a slave of life's sensual gratifications. Marie-Claude was attending a course of studies at Louvre, and she kept on evading her brother's confrontations, hiding her exhilaration and living her life within a sensual atmosphere. The other two sisters were well disposed to family gatherings bar Marie-Claude, who was inclined to search her interests and values, her allurements and stimulus away from home. In her orientations, there was conspicuous diversion more commanding than her love for her brother or her love for Viniraln, with whom her marriage was postponed for a few months due to the death of her brother Gerard.

The amusements for the heroine were more important than the shallow philosophy of her brother. A salubrious life was the aim of being, which differentiated the brother and the sister. She was trying her best to expose her brother's morbidity, which, as mentioned previously, was a direct reference to the classical Russian episode of social semblance engendered by Ivan Goncharov. It appears Troyat was one of those few writers who had attempted to analyse and juxtapose the Nietzschean hypothesis of the impenetrable human characteristic of laziness under the light of the "will". That was the intellectual "false light", the "self beguiling" truth; a self-created "Morning Bugle" (Shahan Shahnur's tale), which becomes the subject of the author's mockery. The author's criticism is extensive, and he ignores the universal authorities, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Henri Louis Bergson (1859-1941) and many creative figures, who are both dear but unimportant for him.

In the novel of "The Spider", there is an unexpected oblique endorsement, which connects it with the Armenian literary development of the Diaspora. At least five years earlier than the publication of "The Spider", Shahan Shahnur had already published his "The Vampires Conspiracy" collection of stories, which included a tale entitled "Morning Bugle", wherein he investigates the relationship of life and philosophy in Constantinople (Istanbul) three years after the Armenian massacres in Turkey. Against the background of historical givens and tense national expectations, Shahnur in his artistic panorama compares the insolvency of formal reasoning with that of the natural tendency of subsistence.

Troyat's Gerard keeps himself away from love, since he considers love to be a narcotic, whereas Shahnur's heroine Ałavni indulges every day since she cannot live without it. In both cases, the result is the same ineptitude. Gerard is reasoning that "a carefully planned insensibility blunts others' sorrow, and he is the only one awake, clear-headed, corporally and spiritually lively… something that he lacked in order to make life desirous the precious narcotic… the narcotic of love" (Troyat 148).

Whereas, for Shahnur's heroine love was life itself, even if she was at the threshold of death, "she looks out through the window away from the curtain with her neck bent, and talks to herself and says, we do not appreciate the fearfulness of love, we do not know and cannot comprehend what it is the whole day on end to think about the same subject, to remember the very same thing and then be prevented by the same hindrances" (Shahnur 195); none of us knows and can imagine what kind of days Ałavni was having. Ałavni is attracted to love instinctively since that is the basis of existence, whereas Gerard is trying to hide best in order to liberate his intimates from the clutches of the same love since he

considers love an "artificial slumber in the centre of the world" (Troyat 148); a veritable narcotic. The logical solutions of the entanglement, which derive from the personifications of characters must not be overlooked, whereby Gerard dies, but Ałavni maintains life. Gerard dies in Paris near Vojery Square, where vivacity rages, but Ałavni perseveres, sets up a family at Constantinople, where, it appears, the life of the Armenians are now antagonized, and springtime has lost its vehemence. It is the year 1918 but for Armenians the continuation of 1915.

On the threshold is spring, the brisk season of the year, which was a source of disenchantment for Zenob Glak ("Morning Bugle"), a philosopher of the fifth century, and appears to be the same for contemplative Gerard ("The Spider"), in whose case cogitation is far more important than the enigma of living, something which could only terminate in self vexation. The rhythm of life is being substituted with meaningless abstractions and redundant schemes, which is to say that to establish the will's dominion is futile (Troyat 61). Because of which the tendency of the will to appear strong is no more than colourless and languid effect within such persons (Troyat 114).

Shahnur's description of life in Constantinople of the 1918-s is rather slack, and it is difficult to see therein any signs of national recovery. So is the case with some of the apathetic Armenian characters, such as Artaki Effendi, Ellpis Hanəm, Dr Pashaian, Avedis and others, who in a troublesome and tormented lifestyle are having a similar time as those of Troyat's characters in vivifying Paris.

In both fictions, the characters have amazing parallelism, which helps to solve the methodology, but in an antithetical manner. Shahnur's heroine with a mendacious suicide tries to rouse her lover. She takes a small dose of arsenic to cause anxiety and raise concern, as a safeguard against possible abandonment. This was an effective step, and she was sure her action was a favourable means of endurance and procreation. Ałavni represents the common collective force of those who are running after the receding happiness. Let us reflect on the hapless, miserable and intimidated life of the Armenians of Constantinople of the last century's first decade and onwards. From the dose of arsenic, Ałavni recovers, and she will continue her life after the flight of Avedis; she is a part of the people, she is the people, the animation of it. Her actions were the esoteric conflict of the "I", the fight for existence, the success of which is on her side.

Here ends the similarity of the lives of Ałavni and Gerard; from here, onwards starts the diversion of their lifestyles. Troyat's hero Gerard, like Ałavni, attempts at self-poisoning, takes eight tablets of colchicum thinking that the dosage is quite safe. His purpose is the same as that of Ałavni, to feign poisoning. The intention

is to terrify his sisters and bring them back to his sphere of influence rather in a penitent, awestruck and remorseful manner (Troyat 181). Gerard's idea of self-poisoning had derived from the pages of an incomplete translation of a meekly written book, which had a tiresome effect on him; the liquid prepared from the seeds of colchicum was not sufficient for the heroine's intention of bringing her husband to his senses. The attending doctor saves the patient and reprimands her. The poison, in the case of Gerard, had encouraged him, and in his opinion, it would have had a false effect, the achievement of his intention, which was to bring his sisters together. The threat of this mad diversion was the result of an unfertile imagination, the final flashes of an implorer mind.

Gerard, contaminated with idleness, had the eagerness to affect other people with the same baseless state of mind. His errant mind and the details of his fortuitous solutions had interested writers, such as Nar-Dos, Shahan Shahnur and Henri Troyat. Perhaps, it is possible to quote also the subjective diversions, as a novel tendency, of the French writers, according to which, the ideas of fine art and the experimental states, based on narcotics, might have been the influences derived from an English source, which is possible to confirm after research, provided, it is not another game, as a rule, seen in Troyat's writings.

Conclusion

I think the efficacy of the surrounding environment and its effect is rather deep in Troyat's writings since changing the characters or the environment the prevalent ideas and cases still remain the same, that is the "spider" is paramount and everywhere. That also tells us that the terrestrial, even in a gloomy or dismal morning, is brighter than the subjection to the mind. The recognition of the finer points of the framework of "The Spider" makes us realise that Troyat with some uncertainty is knocking at the door of the naturalists.

It is in the novel of "The Spider" that Troyat criticises the contemplative philosophy, which prior to him the authors, such as Eastern Armenian Nar-Dos and French-Armenian Shahan Shahnur, in their extensive artful works, had already dealt with; this also confirms that the latter authors had beforehand delved with the basic principles of universal literature, the polemics of the "futile", in other words, the tediousness of existence in an Armenian sub-physiographical panorama.

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The Ambivalence of Indianness in Ahmed Essop's *The Hajji and Other Stories*

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Abstract This article explores the ambivalence of Indianness in Ahmed Essop's debut collection of short stories, *The Hajji and Other Stories*, 1978, against the contested discourse of the nation. The article is underpinned by Bhabha's theory of nation and narration, specifically the authenticity and context of cultural location and representation. The image of cultural authority, like that of the Hajji, is ambivalent because it is caught in the act of trying to compose a powerful and religious figure, but stuck in the performativity of typical South African racial, class and religious prejudice. Essop's ambivalent narration evokes the margins of the South African space, the Indian minority; it is also a celebratory or self-marginalisation space. The ambivalence of the characters resonates across the collection—the insincerity of the Fordsburg community towards Moses and the two sisters; the deceitful Hajji Musa, the hypocrisy of Molvi Haroon seeking refuge with the perpetrator of blasphemy against the Prophet, Dr Kamal's pretence of having virtues and the charade of the yogi. In essence, the characters display virtues of Indianness and Muslim/Hindu piety that they do not actually possess.

Key words Ambivalence; Ahmed Essop; Indianness; The Hajji; South African Indian writings

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Introduction

South African writer, Ahmed Essop (1931-2019) is best known for his widely anthologised short story, "The Hajji." The collection from which the story comes and to which it lends its name, signalled a significant talent who was concerned

with figuring out life in Fordsburg, a suburb in Johannesburg where the descendants of Indian migrants lived (Fick). Essop's short stories were written during the interregnum between Sharpeville and Soweto and appeared in alternative journals that flourished during the 1970s: "Mr Moonreddy" was published in *New South African Writing*, "Ten Years" in *Classic*, "Gerty's Brother" and "In the train" in *Purple Renoster*, "The Hajji" in *Contrast*, "Hajji Musa and the Hindu Fire-Walker" and "Two sisters" in *Quarry,* and "Gladiators" and "Film" in *Staffrider.* The South African academe did not acknowledge the wealth of contemporary writings published by black writers during that decade and belies the commitment of universities to the dominant Anglo-colonial liberalism and hegemonic discourses. It is the current decolonial turn heralded by #Rhodesmustfall that will disrupt the canon and contest the power to devalue writings of the other and contest the notion of whose English forms the standard.

Essop's understanding of Indian culture and identity through its nuances and lived experience has a certain currency within forms of critique associated with cultural studies. This approach is valuable in drawing attention to those easily obscured, but highly significant, recesses of the national culture from which alternative constituencies of people and identity may emerge. His writings should be read against debates on the nature of aesthetics and "high culture," of the value of writings not conceived in elite forms and an unquestioning academe that privileged the western canon and marginalised black writing. The larger project of excavating black writings during the interregnum is for the margins of the nation to displace the centre, the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis.

Essop's ambivalent narration in his debut collection *The Hajji and other stories* evokes a marginal space, the Indian minority; it is also a celebratory or self-marginalisation space. Cultural boundaries of the nation are drawn not only by apartheid, but by the marginalised within the periphery as well. Essop acknowledges these boundaries by noting them, but he also crosses them, erases them and translates them in the process of cultural production. It resonates with Edward Said's (171) prescription of "analytical pluralism" as the form of critical attention to cultural studies. The ambivalent narration holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing and guiding (Said 171).

Fordsburg is neither a unified Indian space nor unitary in relation to Indianness, but simply seen as "other." Indianness is a perception or feeling of being an Indian socially, culturally and spiritually. The notion of "Indianness" in this article refers to

people of Indian descent who lived in Fordsburg at the time when Essop wrote the stories in the 1970s. Historically, the 1970s is recognised as the height of apartheid repression: intense segregation into homelands, townships and ghettos; the Soweto uprising; emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement and most ominously, the murder in detention of a large number of anti-apartheid activists including Steve Biko, Ahmed Timol and Neil Aggett.

Apartheid, Othering and Indian Identity

Racial identity controlled numerous aspects of daily life during apartheid, including where people were permitted to live. There was a distinct ambivalence in terms of the political identity of Indians - legally classified as a single race group, they were on the "inside" conscious of their cultural heritage, and on the "outside" they increasingly self-identified as African, South African and South African Indian. Indian identity forms a heterogeneity that is forever irreducible and difficult to grasp (Chetty). Bhabha notes that the ambivalence of identity as a problem of outside/ inside is a process of hybridity, incorporating new "people," producing new sites of political antagonism and representation (3). It is an in-between space where the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. The "other" is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously "between" ourselves (Bhabha 4). De Beauvoir , heavily influenced by Hegel's dialectic of identification and distantiation, introduced the notion of "the other" and the concepts "othering" and "otherness" as a construction opposing and thereby constructing "the self." Cultural geographer Crang (61) describes othering as a process through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship, a simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the in-group has and the other lacks. The desirable characteristic in the South African context of the 1970s was constructed as whiteness by the powerful Afrikaner regime concomitant with othering of the non-white populace.

South Africa has always struggled with the notion of a nation—colonial conquests, union, the apartheid state and contemporary rainbowism with its capitalist democracy, African nationalism and neo-apartheid tendencies (Matsinhe). The regime often exploited the Indian community as a prime showpiece of separate development. Indian culture, business, education and religions were portrayed as the success of enforced segregation. The paradox is that this community suffered the highest levels of forced removals (Gopalan). It remains a mystery why, at the advent of the nation state in 1994, Indians and coloureds voted overwhelmingly for their

oppressor (Habib and Naidu).

The ambivalence of the South African nation is complicated by its racial history and tyranny of place. It is a particular contradiction that haunts the very idea of a nation, the language of writers like Essop who write of it and the lives of those in Fordsburg, Fietas and Pageview who live it. Bhabha (1) notes accurately that in spite of the description of the nation by historians and politicians, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a more than transitional social reality. Tom Nairn names the nation "the modern Janus" and argues that nationalism is by nature ambivalent (348) as the uneven development of capitalism inscribes both progression and regression, political rationality and irrationality. The metaphor of "Janus-faced" also implies the idea of liminality and Bhabha's (1990) notion of the "third space." Bhabha describes it as a space where identity positions are negotiated and where socio-political initiatives can emerge. Rather than being derived from previous historical or essential categories, these identity positions radically undermine notions of cultural essence or hegemony (Bhabha and Rutherford 1990).

The notion of "Indianness" as a perceived collective cultural identity is a fluid and multi-layered discourse that is always "imagined" by ideological positions. Essop's fiction displays Indianness within the subjugation of space—Fordsburg is the place apartheid allocated for Indians in metropolitan Johannesburg (Tomlinson). Like Cato Manor in Durban or Brick Lane in London, Essop's Fordsburg is an absurdly self-centred Indian space with Indian names and languages, arranged marriages and Hindu-Muslim rivalry.

The uniqueness of Essop's stories lies in his jesting and how he turns the Islamic and Hindu communities with their double standards as the butt of his comedies. We note in Mbulelo Mzamane's humorous collection of Soweto stories, *Mzala*, how comedy and laughter have double significance not only as a gesture of defiance but also as a token of spirited survival. Barnard (285), in her analysis of Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*, observes Toloki's comic character and gay counter-theology of carnival: it is by means of laughter that the doors to a better world will be opened. Mda's tale of a very loud orator who tells a naughty joke at a graveyard where four funerals are held simultaneously is hilarious. The joke is infectious, with the result that the whole graveyard breaks into laughter and the collective hilarity is so irrepressible that by the time the four processions finally march off, any semblance of solemnity has evaporated. Toloki sums up the incident with a fitting piece of folk wisdom. "In our language," he reminds Noria, "there is a proverb which says the greatest death is laughter" (Mda 194).

Being Indian has acquired a particular set of meanings with its unique history,

place and literature that presents distinctive frames for densely constituting Indian subjectivity. For example, the focus on family values and relationship labelling and identification across the borders of biological and genetic kinship is a critical value Indians identify with very strongly (Laleman, Pereira and Malik 440). Imraan Coovadia portrays this notion of Indians as one big family in *The Wedding*:

> So please Ismet one word of advice that I can give for you. In this country you must not come with stories if you are this Bombay-Indian or that one Tamil, one what-what Gujarati-Indian…No, my friend, what is essential is that we must stand together united as one. (150)

This is further complicated by the space that Indians occupy within the racialised state as Vikram once again explains to Ismet in *The Wedding*:

> This a new world for Indians. We cannot imagine the opportunities. The next generation will all be professionals and whatnot. Doctors and solicitors! This country is literally made of gold and diamonds. Tell me if it is the law of the universe that Indians should not cash in also? If we stick together as Indians, then the sky is the limit. (Coovadia 188)

Racist stereotyping designated Indians as unscrupulous traders who posed a threat to white-owned business (Hiralal 100). This characterization is also evident in South African literature—Ezekiel Mphahlele painted a picture of the devious Indian traders of Marabastad in his memoir, *Down Second Avenue* and Nadine Gordimer portrayed the exploitative Indian store keeper in her Booker Prize winning novel, *The Conservationist*. These stereotypes were strengthened by the fact that the racial groups were hierarchically placed with white at the top, followed by Indian.

However, there is a major contradiction underlying Indianness as the community is far from homogenous. In the story, "Dolly," Essop offers one of the clearest examples of the complexity of Indian ancestry. Dolly, a character from indentured labourer stock, sugar cane plantation workers, assumes a South African consciousness that sets him apart from passenger Indians, the merchant class, who he defines as "Indians." Dolly reveals a contradiction underlying Indianness in South Africa, when he lambasts Mr. Darsot, a rich merchant, who he suspects of seducing his wife:

> You Indian dogs, there were not enough bitches in India so you came to South

> Africa. Now you look for our wives. You lock you wives up and want to joll ours? You Indian bastard? (27).

Dolly's outburst underscores the class differential in the Indian community that seems to separate the poor indentured labourers into South African nationals and rich traders or "passenger Indians" into diasporic subjects. While we note a strong sense of cultural and ethnic identity among the Indian community in Fordsburg, there is always the undercurrent of a distinctive differentiation along class, religious and educational lines. It should be acknowledged that Indians do create a self-contained mini-India in the colonies, a form of exclusiveness noticeable in Jackson Heights (New York) and Brick Lane (East End, London). Mishra (422) sees this as a coping mechanism among the displaced immigrants and the need to put down roots with their own people in a foreign colonial space concomitant with its racism, exclusion and negative constructions of the "other." Mahmood Mamdani (4) highlights how the Indian forms a buffer between European colonialists and Africans thus engendering homogenising tendencies. However, perceiving Indians as homogenous may result in us overlooking significant differences that Indianness embed. There is physical proximity to each other in Fordsburg, but little evidence of psychological unity or a closely-knit community. Essop registers this ambivalence—when the "sweet-time girls" in "Two Sisters" moves in, the neighbours observe, decide and comment. The entire community is aware of what goes on with the sisters—there are elements of conflict and jealousy among the women towards the two outcasts, yet amorous feelings stem from the men. The sisters provoke a range of reactions:

> Some residents felt sorry for the babies and wished to adopt them; others suggested that they be given to the carnivores in the zoo; others wanted to set fire to the apartment. (32)

When the Hindu fire-walker comes to town everyone is present to witness the drama. Essop recreates the modern urban ghetto of Fordsburg with authenticity, without plastering over the cracks and representing them as a community without conflict.

The two sisters continued residence is a threat to the moral fibre of the people living in the yard and a blot on the "fair name and fame of their religion and holy Prophet" (34). Although the community invokes Islam to justify their righteous indignation, there is a rebel consciousness in Molvi Haroon, the head of the Islamic

Academy, who recognises the injustice and informs Aziz Khan, the community's self-appointed representative, that "the punishment of the two women [rests] in the hands of Allah" (34). Unfortunately, the cultural institutions are insignificant against the hegemonic and financial power of the landlord, Mr Joosub, who evicts the sisters.

Janus-faced Indianness

Almost all the stories may be associated with the two-faced god of Roman mythology, Janus, who kept the gate of Heaven. Although Essop is a Muslim writer writing about Indians, it is interesting to note that the first edition printed by Ravan Press has the filigree archway on the cover, reminiscent of entrances seen in Pageview and Mayfair, and alluding to Janus, the god of gates. Characters like Hassen the Hajji, display a two-faced persona, containing contrasting characteristics of piety and vengefulness. The ambivalence of the characters resonates across the collection—the insincerity of the Fordsburg community towards Moses and the two sisters; the deceitful Hajji Musa; the hypocrisy of Molvi Haroon seeking refuge with the perpetrator of blasphemy against the Prophet; Dr Kamal's pretence of having virtues; Khrishnasiva's charade of a believer with yogic principles. In essence, the characters display virtues of Indianness and Muslim/Hindu piety that they do not actually possess:

> Your brother can't be allowed to die among the Christians.
> For ten years he has been among them.
> That means nothing. He is still a Muslim.
> But for ten years he has lived in sin in Hillbrow.
> If he has lived in sin that is not for you to judge.
> Hajji, what sort of a man are you? Have you no feeling for your brother? Mr Mia asked.
> Don't talk to me about feeling. What feeling had he for me when he went to live among the whites, when he turned his back on me?
> Hajji, can't you forgive him? You were recently in Mecca. (8)

Muslim society is generally known for the practice of solidarity and brotherhood, living by the principle: "No one can be a good believer until he loves for his human brother all that he loves for himself" (An-Nawawi's Forty Hadeeth: No. 13). This principle is portrayed in the behaviour of Mr. Mia and the priest at the Newtown mosque; both are seen in contrast to the Hajji's character. Hassen has great hatred

for Karim, his brother, who had rejected his Indianness by cohabiting with a white woman. Karim wishes to spend his dying days with his own people after having "cut himself off from his family and friends ten years ago" (2). Hassen remains unforgiving: "by going over to the white Herrenvolk, his brother had trampled on something that was vitally part of him, his dignity" (12). Hassen confuses self-respect with self-importance since it is the latter that continually overrides his better nature as viewed in his response to Catherine's plea to grant his dying brother's wish:

> Let the Christians bury him... His last wish means nothing to me ... Madam, it's impossible ... No ...Let him die... Brother? Pig! Pig! Bastard! (2)

It is in this title story of the book that one finds Essop's satire on the notion of Indianness the most significant. This is a community that celebrates its religiosity, bearers of non-violence with respected contenders of social justice with the likes of Ahmed Kathrada and Fatima Meer. Essop parodies Indian holy men and their tendencies towards injustice. The hajji is holy in name only and not in his deepest self or in the way he lives his life. The satire is extended to the Hindu Yogi as well, highlighting that the sham of religious leadership is a universal human weakness which applies to the followers of all religions. It is the cultural representation of this ambivalence that is central in Essop's writings. Bhabha's reminder of the ambivalence in narratives on the nation resonates eloquently with Essop's stories:

> (T)he comfort of social belonging, the hidden injuries of class; the customs of taste, the powers of political affiliation; the sense of social order, the sensibility of sexuality; the blindness of bureaucracy, the strait insight of institutions; the quality of justice, the common sense of injustice; the langue of the law and the parole of the people. (2)

It is significant that in spite of Essop's description of the Hajji as glib and hollow, the writer was not attacked by the Muslim community who resolutely defer to religious authority. Rather, it was the South African Hindu Maha Sabha that called for the removal of *The Hajji and other stories* as school set work and objected to the story of the Hindu fire-walker. The controversy is absurd. In the story, the character Hajji Musa, in a bid to demystify fire-walking at the expense of Hinduism, offers to perform the feat himself to the good humoured incredulity of onlookers. Gravely scalding the soles of his feet, and in order to save face, he uses his spiritual failure

to belittle Hinduism further, accusing its devotees of charlatanism. Essop's response to the Hindu organisation's interpretation of the story is poignant:

> It was taken out of context. Characters comment in texts; I deal with characters and realities and it is not Ahmed Essop saying that. I created a character who had a particular vision about certain things. The Maha Sabha felt that I had attacked the Hindu community. If the character makes positive or negative comments about something that is not my view, it is the character's view. I am dealing with the world of human beings and human beings have different views about different objects. And I had to create a comprehensive picture of life if it is going to be worth anything. (Chetty 277)

The satire was lost on the Maha Sabha; an intelligent reading of the book would have led to an appreciation of the complexity of Essop's artistry. The message in the story is ironically the essence of Hinduism according to the Sanatana Dharma which includes honesty, refraining from injuring living beings, patience, self-restraint and compassion. A similar fate befell Aziz Hassim with the release of *The revenge of Kali* when the same Hindu organisation took umbrage at the writer's reference to the goddess Kali.

Essop's writing displays the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life, and in particular Indianness. It is the human element that is dominant in his stories:

> I was exposed to the different aspects of life in the community. There were humour, joy, marriages, funerals, and so on. I felt that in my writings I should represent a comprehensive whole, rather than selecting one aspect, the apartheid aspect, the aspect of oppression. It was not to constitute our entire life. (Chetty 273)

Essop's comment on apartheid is noteworthy given the fact that most South African writers during the interregnum had a morbid fascination with politics, and opposition to apartheid motivated much of their writings. Essop skilfully navigates the tension between the social commitment to the freedom struggle and the aesthetics of arts. According to Jean Marquard (93), the source of Essop's inspiration is a vivid sense of the adventure of living with no trace of the morose pre-occupation with literature as a means of exposing and cleaning up a gloomy society, so prevalent in the fiction of the 1970s.

The ghetto style of English is used by writers like Essop and Bessie Head with instances of direct quotation where they display their affinity with working class English. Essop's use of the Fordsburg patois is deliberate and he adapts English to his own purposes with imagery and metaphors.

The Hajji and Other Stories forms a microcosm for the larger social issues of the country and the follies and tragedies of people generally. Essop engages with issues such as class prejudice, superstition, arranged marriages and religious fanaticism. He is disenchanted with his own community as with others—black, white and mixed-race. Lionel Abrahams claims:

> [I]t is hard to think of another South African writer, apart from Herman Charles Bosman, who is capable of bringing off, on the one hand, stories as lightheartedly funny as 'Hajji Musa and the Hindu fire-walker', as sweepingly satirical as 'Film' and, on the other, ones as astringently poignant as 'Gerty's brother', as mysteriously disturbing as 'Mr. Moonreddy' or as poetically sombre as 'The hajji'. (x)

Christopher Hope acknowledges that over all of them a kind of gentle ruefulness plays, and that is so rare in South African writing and so singular that he really can't think of anybody else who does it in quite this way (103).

Essop is unabashed by the fact that in the first place he is Indian. Unlike fellow South African Indian writer, Ronnie Govender, that refutes the label Indian: "Indian writer? I am not an Indian writer. For God's sake, I wasn't born in India. I am as South African as anyone else…" (Chetty 2). It is interesting that Lionel Abrahams (x) claims that the emotional richness and vivacious variety of Essop's stories are reminiscent of V.S. Naipaul. I feel, in contrast to Naipaul who had difficulty identifying with the atmosphere and geography of his surroundings, Essop relishes every scent, colour, plant and street about him. To Naipaul, the vision of Trinidad was alien, it diminished his own and did not give him the courage to do a simple thing like mentioning the name of a Port of Spain street. Essop has no inhibitions, he writes about the streets of Fordsburg and the people that he knew. Everything in the literary, artistic environment of Essop's world declaims authenticity and originality. He rebels against any cultural overbearance and impositions on his life:

> Aesthetics and reality, the human experience, have to be combined. The socio-political reality is just one part of my life that I wish to present. I refused to limit the scope of my art and I also resist the attempt to pigeonhole my

writings. (Chetty 274)

We witness the hypocrisy of the community in the story, "The Commandment." An elderly Black servant, Moses, who has lived among the Indians in Fordsburg's inner-city enclave for as long as all the others and without incident, is ordered to vacate the area and to move to the Transkei. He was a factotum in the community, much loved, spoke Gujarati and was a member of the Rehman family for whom he worked. Moses is hounded out of Fordsburg by the political system that determines that Xhosas belong in the Transkei. Unlike his biblical namesake who was the bearer of God's sanctified commandments to his people and who was brought close to them in this role, this latter-day Moses faces expulsion from the people he knows and loves, and the promised land he is offered is a slum.

The dreadful pass law is symbolic of the commandment made to Moses in the Bible story. The ironically named Moses reacts with emotional violence to the threat of removal, night after night disturbing the yard with his lamenting. Essop traces in the story, as a counterpoint to Moses's misery, the responses of the people in Fordsburg and the shift in their attitude to him. He illustrates how widespread and pernicious the effects of racial abuse can become. The community which Essop constantly describes as followers of the principles of Gandhi, a rich resistant culture with their red square orators and "coolie saboteurs," not only go silent on Moses's suffering, but turn against him:

> We began to hate him. Vague fears were aroused in us, as though he were exposing us to somebody or something, involving us in a conspiracy — he spoke our language — threatening our existence. Indefinable feelings began to trouble us. Of guilt? Of cowardice? We wanted to be rid of him as of some unclean thing. (71)

Moses becomes the victim of a Janus-faced community. Essop draws the story to an end by quoting Moses's mournful soliloquies about the Transkei:

> There are cities there! There are parks there! There are hospitals there! And there are no cemeteries! (72).

In a sad twist to the story, Essop quietly observes the suicide of Moses in the lavatory. He is unafraid to reflect the finer nuances of racism in Fordsburg. We also find racism towards white society, but more significantly, he provides insight into

the Indian community of Fordsburg by setting it in contrast to white society by revealing its qualities of humanism. He compares the sense of communal ethic in Fordsburg with the individuality in Sandown. It is a tactic by which Essop celebrates the Fordsburg community with its liveliness and hilarity against the seriousness of spaces that whites occupy:

> Henry's parents lived in Sandown. On several occasions I accompanied him to his home, but I found the atmosphere of the suburb with its avenues of trees and solitary mansions amid acres of gardens, chilling. It lacked the noise — the raucous voice of vendors, the eternal voices of children in streets and backyards — the variety of people, the spicy odours of Oriental foods, bonhomie of communal life in Fordsburg. (99)

Although Essop alludes to a binary between the black and white worlds, he hastens to contest the communal ethic of Fordsburg with intensity and acerbity, evident in the stories on race and religion. The inner conflict between charlatanism and racial resentment in the Hajji towards his dying brother is narrated within the ambivalent context of Fordsburg and like "Mr. Moonreddy," the inner conflict becomes progressively more nightmarish.

The critique of religious conviction is extended into "The Film" where Essop draws on the hypocrisy of cultural leaders. The members of the Action Committee of the Islamic Council attempt to stop the debut screening of "The Prophet" and view their opposition to the movie as a fight for freedom (80). In a twist of irony, Molvi Haroon and his entourage, shocked and bewildered by the commotion they have caused, view with relief the sudden appearance of Mr Winters, the manager of Hermes Films, who as part of the alleged anti-Islamic conspiracy, had earlier invited them to sit in the theatre and sin by seeing the film (77). Comically, Mr Winters emerges as the saviour of the holy men at the end of the story as he conducts them to a place of safety inside the theatre (84). In their "white robes with ferocious beards," Molvi Haroon and his group ditch all their earlier resistance and religious objection to the movie and take their seats in the cinema. Essop undermines the claim to religious leadership by this elite group.

There is an absurd aloofness in Mr. Moonreddy, "a waiter of distinction." He does not associate with other waiters and the customs of the "dirty Tamils" were kept out of his home. Similarly, Mr. Rijhumal Rajespery, the protagonist in "Gladiators" considered his fellow Indians to be the "filthiest and most uncouth denizens on the earth's crust" (61). Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967)

describes this self-hatred of blacks as a form of neurotic behaviour - the native is dehumanised and thus he is anxious, insecure, devalued, abandoned, hypersensitive, and feels worthless. This self-hatred in turn fosters intra-group rivalries among the blacks (51). Mr. Moonreddy's imitation of colonial mannerisms and Essop's parody of his behavior echoes Bhabha's theory of mimicry:

> It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. (127)

Bhabha (153) argues that a colonial identity is seen as a fluctuation between self-confident universalism on the one hand and anxiety of being imitated and mocked on the other. While Fanon (1967, 51) regarded this imitative behaviour as a sign of an inferiority complex, Bhabha in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" strips it of any identity or essence and sees it instead as mimicry which he understands as subversive, a form of metonymic resemblance, a repetition with a difference. Or, as he repeatedly states, "almost the same but not quite," which means that mimicry always tends to teeter on the brink of mockery, parody and menace (Bhabha 127).

Essop plays the irony of self-hatred interestingly: while Mr Moonreddy and Mr Rajespery preferred white woman to Indian women, the yogi and Karim were looked down upon because of relationships with white woman. But, for Mr. Rajespery, the pendulum swings:

> Are you suggesting that I terminate my single state of man by marrying an Indian Yahoo? The day I marry, I shall marry a white woman. (61)

The also exposes his contempt for his "inferior Indian neighbours":

> The words "Thank you," "Please" and "Pardon me" do not appear in the vocabulary of Indians. You are a mob of unruly Yahoos. I find your manners odious and crude. (61)

The aloofness and superiority complex as represented in Mr. Rajespery's comic condemnation of his fellow Indians is also evident in some of the other stories where the feeling of superiority is extended against black and white people.

Conclusion

Essop's collection of stories discussed in this essay may be perceived as a testimony to the interregnum and the everyday human condition experienced in apartheid racial ghettos like Fordsburg, not dissimilar to Richard Rive's "*Buckingham Palace," District Six* and Mphahlele's stories of Sophiatown in *Down Second Avenue* (1959). Van Zyl, in an interview with Essop, points to potentials and possibilities of the Fordsburg stories as an important contribution to the metamorphosis of society into a rational, humane and compassionate one.

Oliphant (59) observes that a body of short stories produced over a particular period provides the reader with a field of multiple perspectives on the divergent perceptions and experiences and a literary site inscribed with the marks of a particular historical moment. While the centrality of South Africa, given its racialised history, in shaping Indianness cannot be overemphasised, the leitmotif in Essop's collection of short stories is the hope and frustration of the characters. The particular Indian ethos of Fordsburg radiates through each of the stories in values that Essop opposes (specifically hypocrisy), the context within which the key protagonists like Hajji Hassen, Hajji Musa, Kamal, Mr Rajespery, Mr Moonreddy and Mr Khrishnashiva define themselves. The "scraps, patches and rags of everyday life" (Bhabha 297) from which Essop creates his characters, though consisting in practices and values that derive mostly from the notion of Indianness, define them implicitly as South African.

Finally, the ambivalence of the community of Fordsburg is portrayed in the irony of the "close-knit" community: when Essop was persecuted by the Hindu religious body, by the state (represented by the House of Delegates) and the Education Department because he revealed the ambivalence of Indianness and the hypocrisy of religious leaders, the community was silent. Essop has a history of being summoned because of his words, and like many South African writers, have been hounded by both the state and bigoted religious organisations.

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Performing the Self in Joseph Conrad's "Il Conde"

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Abstract Conrad's short story "Il Conde" portrays an elderly aristocrat whose preoccupation with conventions and rituals indicates that he has reduced his identity to performing a social role. The assault of a robber shatters his stance of dignified reserve and undermines his assumption that he has succeeded in constructing a stable, invulnerable persona of a sophisticated gentleman which cannot be challenged in the confrontation with others. Goffman's concept of the performed self elucidates the protagonist's response to the traumatic experience and his frantic attempts to sustain his idealized persona. Goffman construes the self as the product of interaction, a socially constructed image rather than a substantive immutable entity. This self-image relies on the coherence of personal front, i.e. appearance and manner as well as the presence of the audience who observe and interpret the performance that an individual gives while interacting with others. Hence, the tactics that the Count employs to cope with the shock can be viewed as an attempt to defend his self-image by restoring correspondence between appearance and manner that the robber's disrespectful act of violence has subverted.

Key words Goffman; performed self; interaction; self-image; personal front

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Introduction

Conrad published "Il Conde" in *A Set of Six* (1908), a collection of short stories which, as he declared in his letter of January 26, 1908 to Algernon Methuen, were nothing more than a diversion for the reading public: "They are just stories in which I've tried my best to be *simply entertaining*" (Conrad, *The Collected Letters* 30). Contrary to what Conrad implies, the skilful reworking of the political and moral themes central to his great masterpieces, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes,* proves the considerable literary potential of the volume. Hence, Conrad's wry comment betokens a somewhat self-defeating endeavour to advertise the collection as an undemanding pastime and to deny any deeper significance to be grasped in the tales. As Najder claims, this rather unfair commentary as well as the light tone that Conrad adopted suggest that he primarily aimed to disarm inevitable criticism (389). Likewise, Meyer contests Conrad's unfavourable opinion. Arguing that the writer underestimated *A Set of Six*, Meyer observes that it was not unusual of Conrad to offer a surprisingly erroneous assessment of his own output and "Il Conde," which has not ceased to intrigue the readers, is a case in point. Once again Conrad proves blind to the merits of his own text, especially the psychological intricacies that the story thrives on (Meyer 197). The titles, which feature the protagonist's name ("Gaspar Ruiz") or attributes and nicknames defining their position in society ("Il Conde," "An Anarchist," The Informer"),[1] indicate that these stories, in contrast to what Conrad wanted to impinge on the readers' and the critics' minds, cannot be reduced to "light holiday literature" (Conrad, *Lord Jim* 5), but most assuredly deserve to be read as incisive character studies. For quite a long time "Il Conde" did not enjoy much success with the critics who dismissed it as a "slight work" (Hagopian 35) and did not spare biting comments on the stereotypical depiction of the characters and the conventional plot (Graver 144). Still the story managed to provoke quite a variety of ingenious interpretations ranging from psychological insights into the protagonist's oversensitivity, shallowness and an

1 With the exception of "The Brute" bearing the title which refers to the murderous and supposedly haunted ship evincing a malicious personality and "The Duel." Interestingly, Ridley Scott, who chose to make his directorial debut with an adaptation of the latter story, modified "The Duel" into "The Duellists," thus shifting the focus of the title from the theme to the characters.

immature refusal to cope with humiliation (Graver 143; Billy 204, 207)[1] or the thematic analysis of existential insecurity intrinsic to human fate (Dolan 107) to the study of the underlying mythic scenarios[2] and the explication of the Count's puzzling response to the assault in terms of his covert homosexuality.[3] Despite the initially disparaging evaluation of "Il Conde" and the assertions that it fails to go beyond "a straightforward piece of work" (Graver 144), it gradually won appreciation as a "deceptively simple narrative" (Billy 203) and a "superb short story" (Monod 122) which offers an array of interpretive possibilities. Conrad in "Il Conde" undoubtedly succeeds in converting a trifle anecdote into a fine examination of the protagonist's attitude which is a faint echo of Jim's search to save his lofty vision of himself and to evade any disturbing self-scrutiny. The protagonist of the story, the Count, referred to as Il Conde, is an elderly aristocrat keen on observing social proprieties and cultivating his life in concordance with the principles of gentlemanly sophistication. There is no mention of his true name or the country of

1 Meyer identifies the key psychological motif of the story as the destruction of the paternal authority by the son. On these grounds he argues that the story warrants a comparison with *The Secret Agent*, its immediate predecessor, and, therefore, was conceived of as "its antidote" (Meyer 196). *In The Secret Agent* Verloc, who plays a paternal figure to Stevie, is responsible for his death in a blow-up, whereas in "Il Conde" it is a young brutish man who assaults an elderly aristocrat so that ensuing humiliation prompts the latter's death (Meyer 196–197).

2 Wills detects what he calls two central allegories which organize the imagery and symbolism of the story, i.e. "the Fall or Expulsion from Eden allegory" and "the Ivory Tower myth of the *fin de siecle*" (22, 25).

3 Trying to grasp the ambivalence of the Count's portrayal and account for his dramatically exaggerated reaction to the assault critics postulate his covert homosexuality which he is apparently desperate to keep secret. The critics who initiated this line of interpretation were Douglas Hughes and Theo Steinmann. Keith Carabine reinforces their claims arguing that what gives credence to the interpretation of the protagonist as homosexual are Conrad's letters to Count Zygmunt Szembek, allegedly Il Conde's prototype (57). Conrad made acquaintance with Szembek on Capri and found one of his anecdotes intriguing enough to use it as the fabric of the new tale. In his analysis of the letters Carabine deciphers the clues which indicate that Conrad was most probably aware of Szembek's homosexuality (59–61). Jeremy Hawthorn concurs with this interpretation of the story and points out that only the assumption of the Count's homosexuality shows the seemingly innocent details in a new light and renders them meaningful (28). Hawthorn distinguishes between the insightful reading from a "knowing" perspective and the traditional innocent reading that most critics and readers of Conrad have practised so far taking the story at its face value and overlooking the homosexual plot since it seemed at odds with the writer's reputation (17, 25–28). In turn, Sylvère Monod challenges the exegesis that foregrounds the homosexual theme as the central one and argues that much illuminating as it is, it still does not offer "the whole truth" about the text which is so unequivocal and rich in ambiguities (118).

origin, except for a hint of his affiliation with one of the renowned noble families in central Europe. He spends most of his time in Italy whose propitious climate relieves his rheumatism and prevents an irreparable health deterioration but without any guarantee of a full recovery. The central incident of the story involves the Count being robbed in the Villa Nazionale park in Naples with the musical concert taking place in the background.

"Il Conde" offers a study, on a smaller scale, of a character whose identity relies solely on the role that he performs in society and any disruption or gesture contesting this position is tantamount to the loss of self. In this respect Goffman's concept of the performed self, also referred to as "the character one performs," "self-as-character" or "a performed character" (Goffman 252), might illuminate the strategies that the protagonist uses to handle social exchange and to construct his image of an honourable gentleman, especially his careful self-presentation before others as well as a retreat from self-inspection in favour of a rigorous obedience to conventions. In his analysis of how individuals function in society and position themselves in relation to others, Goffman delineates the project of defining the self not in terms of an autonomous substance but as an image which is a result of individuals' interaction and their efforts to create an impression on the observers (Smith 101, 108). He construes the self as "a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue […] is whether it will be credited or discredited" (Goffman 253). Thus, Goffman comes up with the model which relies on interaction and performance as key factors for the constitution of the self. Within this model, interaction amounts to a theatrical performance whose participants are preoccupied with re-enacting their roles in front of the audience so as to produce an appropriate impression (xi, 4, 15–16). Goffman makes an important reservation which renders his conception of the self in terms of performance free from any critical claim that cynicism and manipulation are intrinsic to role-playing, namely he contends that in fact two contrasting attitudes among those involved are equally plausible – the ones who whole-heartedly identify themselves with their role and the ones who cynically engage in role-playing to mislead others (19). According to Goffman the performed self is „some kind of image, usually creditable, which the individual on stage and in character effectively attempts to induce others to hold in regard to him" (252). Goffman also specifies that an individual exercises the function both of the performed self, "a product of a scene" (252), and a performer, "a harried fabricator of impressions" (253), who initiates interaction and tries to control the whole procedure of staging one's self as a character. Among the factors contributing to the identification of the self with the performed character, the

principal ones are personal front including appearance and manner[1] as well as the audience who interpret the way the individuals present themselves in the interaction (Goffman 253).

The Protagonist's Idealized Self-presentation

As Goffman argues, correspondence between appearance and manner is crucial for rendering self-presentation convincing to the observers (24–25). The Count takes great care to project an idealized image of a sophisticated gentleman and his insistence on being "correct, well ordered and conventional" ("Il Conde" 270) establishes him as a monolithic character whose performance in the interaction is entirely reliable. The description of the Count's attire which is "just as these things should be" (270) or the comment that he was "very correct in his dress" (270) betray a concern about the impression that he makes on others and a desire to comply with standards of appropriate dress. The Count's visit at the National Museum confirms both his aspiration to show himself as a man of great refinement and his tendency to withdraw from the hustle and bustle of life. The museum houses the artefacts of cultural significance excavated in Herculaneum and Pompeii which transform the flux of life into consummate works of art and efface the vestiges of the cataclysmic volcano eruption, a show of nature's power to destroy, by encouraging the contemplation of the ancient legacy. Surrounded by beautiful bronzes the Count admires the statue of Resting Hermes which embodies his ideal of harmony and instils a nostalgia for a contemplative leisurely life. The Count also ensures the coherence of his personal front by keeping his comments within the bounds of the dominant discourse. Hence, he never ventures any original interpretation that might evoke controversy and refrains from exploring what lies hidden beneath the surface. His meditation on the sculpture of Resting Hermes prompts enunciations which do not go beyond clichés, "the right things" and "[n]othing profound" ("Il Conde" 269). Likewise, he can boast no particularly comprehensive knowledge of the Roman history or art. As the narrator remarks, "the only personal opinion" (271) that he articulated refers to the Romans' predisposition to rheumatism, which is rather a trite and uninventive statement of some obvious fact and which could hardly provoke any objections. What is more, the language that the Count uses is not marred by any stylistic idiosyncrasies that might set him apart as an outsider; he speaks "no jargon of a dilettante or the connoisseur" (269). The bland meaningless adjective "nice" (274), which the narrator uses to describe the Count, encapsulates

1 Goffman uses the term "personal front" to refer to appearance which indicates one's social status and manner which informs about the role the individual assumes in the interaction (24).

his attitude of shunning any controversy and critical judgements.[1]

Moreover, the Count keeps the material aspect of his life in proportion with his restrained behaviour and unobtrusive activities. He avoids exceeding the limits not to risk ruining his fragile health and enjoys living in "a small villa" ("Il Conde" 271) or in the hotel which is "good, but not extravagantly up to date" (269); he also confines himself to possessing no more than "a few books" and pursues "moderate delights" which involve "mak[ing] a little music" or "a little amusement" (271). At the same time, he disapproves of being "extremely rich" which "would have appeared to him improper, *outré* – too blatant altogether" (272). Thus, in order to maintain coherence among the elements of personal front, such as appearance and manner (Goffman 23–24) that make up the image he wishes to project, he abstains from parading the signs of his status and indulging in luxuries, which might raise deprecatory comments. The narrator juxtaposes peacefulness and idyllic serenity that the Count enjoys in Naples against "movement, animation, opera" ("Il Conde" 271), hallmarks of the town renowned for its beauty which he seems to ignore. The discourse interspersed with these markers of his moderation portrays the Count as a man whose "nature was too kindly for strife" (272) and who is unwilling to face "startling events" (270) or to change the role that he has identified himself with. The phrase describing his family life as an alternation of "joys and sorrows" (272), an inevitable accompaniment of "marriages, births, deaths" which are "regulated by the course of Nature" and belong to "the prescribed usages of good society," demonstrates his distance to unsettling experience and an intention to counteract a possibly disruptive effect of these emotions by turning them into fossilized rituals. Likewise, Il Conde is gripped with a fear of extreme emotional impact while admiring the ancient "collection of bronzes" (269) in the museum. Overwhelmed by the visual expressiveness of the busts which represent Roman emperors, he confesses that "their faces were too vigorous, too pronounced for him" (270) implying that the countenance of these sculptures marked by the drive towards power and conquest clashes with his personal ideal of moderation and refinement.

Making Self-presentation Coherent

The anonymous first-person narrator, who meets the Count in Naples, fulfils the function of the audience interpreting his self-presentation and testifying to its

1 Dolan views the Count as a representation of childlike innocence which is, however, shattered by ugly reality (108).

sincerity. Assuming the role of a witness and a listener[1] he conveys Il Conde's story as an attempt to soften the blow to his self-image of an elite member who, by definition, should command respect and remain invulnerable to offence or to humiliating challenges of his status. By enlisting the narrator's support and sympathy for the victim as well as his condemnation of the oppressor, the Count hopes to recover recognition and re-establish his image of a polite yet reserved aristocrat whose sanctity of the self cannot be undermined. On seeing the Count soon after the incident, the narrator whose comments were saturated with signals of unflinching admiration for the Count, notices that the elderly aristocrat is not fully capable of sustaining the impression of refinement that he has made so far. He goes on to enumerate the signs of Il Conde's breakdown such as a drooping posture, haggard appearance and the use of the expression "abominable adventure" (274) which refers to the incident and which the narrator finds "sufficiently startling in that man of moderate feelings and toned-down vocabulary" (274–275). Nevertheless, the narrator disregards the dissonant impressions that subvert his lofty interpretation of Il Conde. He demonstrates his loyalty by qualifying the vocabulary that he employs to describe the aristocratic acquaintance and reflecting on the impropriety of using "a strong word" such as "wildly" which implies coarseness or disrespect and which, as he admits, seems at odds with the Count's "correct appearance" (274). Finally, the narrator declares that noticeable incongruities in the Count's demeanour and appearance cannot detract from the reputation which he has established on their previous encounters and which he equates with some immutable inner essence: "I confess I eyed him stealthily, wondering what he had been up to. In a moment, however, my unworthy suspicions vanished. There was a fundamental refinement of nature about the man which made me dismiss all idea of some more or less disreputable scrape" (275). This declaration of trust proves that the Count

1 In the critical debate the role of the narrator and his attitude towards the Count gives rise to contradictory interpretations. Schwarz denounces the narrator as "another of Conrad's imperceptive speakers," "narrow and limited" (188) who admires the Count and "fears having his world punctured by unknown terrors" (189–190). See also Hughes and Monod who fully concur with Schwarz on the narrator's lack of insight (Hughes 17, 19; Monod 123) as well as Steinmann who analyses how both the narrator and the Count suppress the embarrassing truth and distort the presentation of the incident (83). However, other critics refute the assumption that the narrator idolizes the Count and accepts his perspective without any reservations. Billy maintains that the narrator does not altogether refrain from pointing out the Count's faults (209). Hagopian insists that the narrator's irony "undercut[s] the tragic seriousness of the Count's […] adventure" (33). Hawthorn questions the narrator's innocence and suggests that he is more perceptive about the Count's homosexual identity than meets the eye (32–33).

has succeeded in winning the narrator over to his vision of what happened and to his reconstruction of the incident which he perceives as a subversion of his self-image and which disrupts the consistency of how he presents himself to others. The narrator's use of the religiously tinged word "desecrate" to describe the impact of the assault indicates that he shares the Count's perspective as well as understands how much the Count has invested in his self-image: "His tranquillity had been wantonly desecrated. His lifelong, kindly nicety of outlook had been defaced" (284). Positioning "deface" and "desecrate" in close proximity reinforces the impression that the robbery undermines the very foundation of the Count's life, i.e. his identification with the mask which he is parading in front of others in order to avert the dismal prospect of confronting inner void behind the elegant appearances.

Although the account of the robbery incident is not free from inconsistencies that mark the protagonist's carefully constructed self-presentation, the narrator seeks to sustain Il Conde's coherent image of a sophisticated nobleman by downplaying his failure to stand up to the test of courage and to assert the status that he claims. Therefore, he endorses the Count's reluctance to confront the assailant[1] and takes at face value his preposterous excuse that in case he cried for help, the man might have perfidiously accused him of the attack. The Count justifies his submissive comportment claiming that as a foreigner he would stand no chance of extricating himself from legal charges. In his commentary the narrator endeavours to restore a continuity between the Count's image of a refined aristocrat and his reactions during the robbery which might raise doubts about his declared commitment to the virtues of honour and dignity. Hence, he treats what seems an unmanly timidity as evidence of the Count's laudable tendency "to shrink from scandal, much more than from mere death" ("Il Conde" 281) and the virtue of self-control: "the reason why he refrained gave me a good opinion of his mental self-possession" (281). The narrator also discerns a streak of willpower in the protagonist's punctilious concern with the accuracy of his account which enables him to put a rein on his emotions and makes him "systematically minute in his narrative, simply in order […] not to let his excitement get the better of him" (275). The Count takes care to ensure

1 A question arises to what extent the blame for the assault lies with the Count who recklessly ignored the risk and whether it is legitimate to claim that he brought his own downfall on himself. Dolan describes Il Conde as an innocent victim shocked by an unexpected disruption of his serene vision (111). However, other critics are much more suspicious and detect flaws in this idealized picture. Graver believes that the Count himself authors his own undoing „driven to self-destruction by excessive delicacy" (142). Billy attributes the responsibility for the assault to the Count whose imprudence and a „willful entry into the world of hazard" provoked the danger (208).

that the narrator who has lent a favourable ear to his initial plea for understanding, accepts the tale without any reservations. In order to make his story logical and persuasive Il Conde insists on including "[e]very small fact and event of that evening" (276) and thus on creating a meaningful whole out of many puzzle pieces. He is said to attribute almost "mystic significance" (276) to all the details, which blackmails the listener into the state of reverent, uncritical reception and turns the story into a revelation of unquestionable truth. The expression introducing the story, "He enlarged upon" (281), illuminates the Count's narrative strategy of giving his listener the vivid picture of what happened. He also merges his contradictory impressions into unity so as to conceal any aporias or lacunas that might render the account of the incident not entirely reliable. Therefore, even though he continues to harbour some doubts, Il Conde hastens to identify the attacker in the park with the man whom he joined at a restaurant table a short while before the incident and finally with the *Cavaliere* in the café Umberto.[1] Throughout the whole narrative the Count drops hesitant comments wondering whether his identification of the young men who caught his attention on a few different occasions was correct: "I seemed even to recognize him. […] But I could not tell" ("Il Conde" 280). Confused by the ubiquity of the common type that these men represent, he seems unable to pinpoint the exact identity of the robber: "but there were so many there of that type that he could not be certain" (278). Safely ensconced at the café table, the Count realizes that the sanctuary where he expected to rally after the trauma of the robbery is full of other guests who bear a striking resemblance to the assailant and whose presence once again inspires "the fear […] of being everlastingly haunted by the vision of that young man" (286). Having voiced his anxiety, the Count immediately sheds his irresolute manner in a curt declaration: "it was he, no doubt at all" (286) which stands in stark contrast to his previous evasive statements and which seems a deliberate act of fortifying himself against any uncertainty rather than a genuine belief. Thus, by convincing himself that there is none but one shadow figure accountable for all the acts of violence and persecution, the protagonist can weave possibly distinct incidents and disparate plot strands into a text which is free of gaps and which by virtue of its simplicity and coherence easily makes its way to the audience.

Dramatizing the Story of the Self

As Goffman remarks, in front of the audience the individual tries to dramatize his experience so as to capture the listeners' attention (19, 20). To make the story

1 Hughes argues that the Count is mistaken about identifying the robber with the Cavaliere (23).

more vivid to the narrator and thus to increase its dramaturgical effect, the Count combines the verbal and the non-verbal modes and resorts to gesturing in order to re-enact the incident: "[he] acted the whole thing in pantomime" ("Il Conde" 282). In this way he manages to turn the narrative situation into a kind of spectacle in which he assumes the central role of both a storyteller and a performer in front of the narrator and who controls the self-image that he wishes to project. Moreover, to heighten the dramaturgy of the story the Count constructs a radical dichotomy of a noble, innocent victim and a fierce, vile criminal. In his account reported by the narrator, Il Conde builds up a contrast between his gentility and self-mastery and the robber who not only violates the rules of decorum but also embodies the unknown and the incomprehensible. The Count stumbles upon the robber in the empty, dark periphery of the Villa Nazionale park which stands in opposition to the illuminated centre with crowds of concert-goers circling around. Thus, the robber is associated with the realm where light fades away into darkness and where a dense wall of trees demarcate the space of unbridled nature. In this place a rational design that underlies the elegant configuration of the centre and accounts for confining nature to geometrically regular "grass plots" and "flower-beds" loses its power to integrate and structure in favour of disorderly abundance. Undifferentiated blackness and chaotic arabesques of interlacing twigs covered with "masses of inky foliage" (276) anticipate the Count's experience of stepping beyond the safe enclosure of civilised forms. Il Conde portrays the attacker's appearance in a highly exaggerated, almost grotesque way and draws attention to "the abominably savage way in which that young man rolled his glistening eyes and gnashed his white teeth" (281). This description produces the effect of defamiliarization and foregrounds the *Cavaliere*[1] as a figure of the Other who cannot be integrated into the Count's idyllic vision. The opposition of the Count and the robber is enhanced by the use of "abominable" which signals that the latter embodies negation and destructiveness whose incomprehensible nature cannot be rendered but in terms of extremely strong emotions such as repulsion. Comparisons to an animal further contribute to defamiliarizing the *Cavaliere*: the Count discerns his animal-like gestures and the manner of speaking which involves hissing "with the greatest ferocity" ("Il Conde" 280). References to madness implicit in the phrases "very ferocious" (280) and "an infuriated lunatic" (281) locate the assailant outside the domain of conventions and moderation that the Count cherishes so much. The menace that the *Cavaliere* exudes is conveyed by an implicit comparison of his eyes and teeth to a knife which

1 Billy calls the *Cavaliere* „an exponent of life and death" suggesting that he represents puzzling yet inevitable oppositions that make up the totality of human experience (204–205).

accentuates his destructive bent: "A long narrow blade. It gleamed. And his eyes gleamed. His white teeth, too" (280). In his tale, the Count tends to depersonalize the attacker by referring to him as "that creature" (280), which renders him nonhuman. Yet, the *Cavaliere*'s dog-like snarl is immediately followed by "an ordinary voice" (282). This non-sequitur which disrupts the smooth transition from the implication of the youth's savagery to an objective and neutral assessment of his conduct affords a momentary glimpse into the Count's strategy of manipulating his discourse so as to turn his experience into an archetypical clash of good and evil and to use the dramatic potential of this formula in order to elicit his listener's interest and sympathy.[1]

By interspersing his account of the robbery with the interludes which describe the musical performance, Il Conde sets the stage for the hyperbolized representation of the incident in a highly compelling story and, hence, adds to the dramatic potential of his experience. He succeeds in giving his account an aesthetically pleasing structure which captivates the listeners with its contrasts and parallels making up an intricate pattern and resolving in the grand finale.[2] In the Count's narrative, the robbery runs parallel to the successive movements of the music piece which punctuate the key moments of the assault. Thus, he associates the robber's brutality with loud music and violent sounds connoting destruction such as "crash" ("Il Conde" 280) and the "repeated bangs of the big drum" (282) which accompany the young man's display of grotesquely terrifying facial grimaces. Accordingly, the contrasting moment of release from danger when the Count realizes that the knife is no longer pressed against his body correlates with music that, in an instance of good timing, mellows into "[g]reat waves of harmony" (283). Music also provides a closure in the form of "the complicated finale" whose definitive character is underlined by "a tremendous crash" (283) signalling the disappearance

1 The question whether there is any affinity between the Count and the *Cavaliere* haunts critics and remains unresolved. Gillon classifies the Count among those Conradian characters who, like Jim, are sensitive to some implicit kinship with villains, to „hidden plague spots" that they share (130). Billy also notices the similarity between the Count and the *Cavaliere* who both represent oppositions underlying the Roman world, i.e. aggressive and greedy imperialism of Rome (the *Cavaliere*) and its decadence (the Count) (206). However, Hagopian dismisses the idea that the *Cavaliere*, a member of the Camorra, represents the Count's "secret sharer," his "black alter ego" (34).

2 Commenting on the parallel description of music and the robbery Hughes compares Il Conde to a film director who tries to integrate the musical score with the film. It gives the scene the flavour of operatic extravagance and, thus, questions Il Conde's veracity (Hughes 21). According to Hagopian, music enhances irony underlying the depiction of the incident and effaces any hint of its tragic overtone (33).

of the robber. The appeal of the musical fabric arises from combining contradictory aural elements, delicate and pacifying "sweet sounds" with deafening, distressing, explosive sounds such as "bursts of brassy roar, sudden clashes of metal, and grave, vibrating thuds" (277). Even the metallic tones produced by the brass instruments which foreshadow the robber's use of the knife to terrorize his victim eventually give rise to "a piece of elaborate music" whose "harmonious phrases" (277) enhance the dramatic contrast between an alarming outbreak of savagery which seems to hold sway in the midst of civilisation and the aesthetically refined backdrop that music provides.

In the Café Umberto where the Count tries to recover from the shock, he catches a glimpse of a man strikingly similar to the robber in the park. Intrigued by the similarity, he beckons Pasquale, an old cigar peddler, to make inquiries. Pasquale identifies the man as the *Cavaliere*, a university student who comes from a wealthy family and reputedly works for a Camorra, which, far from exposing him to social ostracism, earns him widespread respect even from the professors. Noticing that the Count pays a gold coin, which supposedly escaped his attention during the robbery, the *Cavaliere,* indignant at being cheated, looks in the mirror to adjust his tie and at the same time whispers insults and threats. Shocked by this unexpected attack and humiliation, the Count decides to leave Italy forever, although he realizes that the return to his homeland to suffer its unfavourable climate condemns him to a complete, irreversible loss of health and its most likely outcome—death.

Once again Il Conde is trying to sustain the drama of his encounter with the assailant by reiterating the story of radical dichotomy, a clash of innocence and ignominy, fine sentiments and ruthlessness. Hence, he draws attention to the *Cavaliere*'s will to spite which emanates from his "vicious glance out of the corners of the […] eyes" ("Il Conde" 287) and discerns "the most insulting venom of contempt" (287–288) in his voice. The reference to the *Cavaliere*'s "peculiar expression of cruel discontent to be seen only in the busts of some Roman emperors" (286) echoes his earlier commentary on the sculptures in the museum and offers the context for reading the young man's violence through the prism of the Roman imperial tradition. Pasquale's information seems to tie in with the Count's vision of the *Cavaliere* as the embodiment of savagery that belongs to the centuries-long legacy of violence eroding civilization from within. However, the neat demarcation between the civilized and the uncivilized which enables the Count to continue his strategy of defining and presenting himself, breaks down when the narrator dismantles this coherent construal of the *Cavaliere* and claims that the old cigar seller is "of course, an accomplished liar" (287). Pasquale's creditability

is undermined by a series of unflattering, degrading epithets, "the shabby old fellow," "an engaging scoundrel," the "unshaven ruffian," "[t]he old pedlar" (286), "the old vagabond" (287), which emphasize his dubious and low status of a petty, harmless cheat who knows how to please his customers by demonstrating servility and "deferential recognition combining oddly with the cynical […] expression of his eyes" (286). Similarly, the *Cavaliere*'s metamorphosis the moment he leaves the café questions the Count's attempt to consign his antagonist to the realm of the diabolical: "The fiendishness of his expression vanished like lightning, and he lounged out of the cafe with a moody, impassive face" (288). A surprisingly rapid change from fiendishness to melancholy subverts the representation of the *Cavaliere* as an epitome of terrifying menace and shows how the Count constructs his version so as to establish himself as an object of victimization in front of his listener.

At the same time, the Count does not give the slightest impression that the *Cavaliere*'s virulent abuse and a manifestation of contemptuous irreverence cancelling all the constants in his life have motivated him to seek self-knowledge. He seems unwilling to revise his assumptions about who he is and what has become of him in the new context which has derailed his stable and sheltered life. On the contrary the Count does not show any signs of realizing his propensity for hedonistic lifestyle or any determination to renounce his ostensibly shallow existence which before the incident amounted to taking care of his health and ensuring "freedom from physical pain" ("Il Conde" 273) to "make the waiting as easy as possible" (273). His refusal to pursue self-knowledge is suggested by the interior of the Café Umberto with its pillars which are "set all round with long looking-glasses" (285). The mirrors, which provide the foil for the confrontation with the *Cavaliere*, reinforce the symbolism of self-consciousness and set the scene for consolidating identity through self-knowledge. Yet the Count, seated beneath the looking-glass, does not take heed of it, while the *Cavaliere* feigns a glance at his reflection merely to camouflage his verbal attack. Under these circumstances the mirror becomes a source of distraction and generates impressions which distort the observers' perception. The Count surrounded by the looking-glasses whose multiplicity produces counter reflections and proliferates intersecting perspectives omits to look at himself from a different angle. Instead, he does his utmost to restore coherence to the self-image that he has developed and recoils from redefining it in any way.

Conclusion

In the final act of his idealized self-presentation, the Count stages his departure

as a ritual suicide and, thus, skilfully turns his decision to escape out of sheer apprehension into a tragic dilemma and a heroic feat of repudiating savagery at the cost of his life. The narrator contributes to this dramatization by emphasizing that the protagonist runs the grave risk of ruining his health and facing death in the unfavourable climate of his homeland. To fend off the suspicion that the Count leaves Naples out of "timidity" and to maintain his idealizing tone the narrator invokes the concept of honourable suicide, comparing him to a "Japanese gentleman, outraged in his exaggerated sense of honour" and his departure to the "preparations for Hara-kiri" ("Il Conde" 288). Moreover, as if intent to disperse the atmosphere of desolation, the narrator unexpectedly breaks into a slightly jocular tone suggesting that the departure is not a spontaneous move of a desperate man but a deliberate effort to consolidate his image of a gentleman. With an undeniable touch of irony the narrator inscribes the Count's decision to leave Italy within the scenario outlined in the famous saying "*Vedi Napoli e poi mori*" (289) whose stereotypical message effaces the expectations of tragedy that the fateful departure might entail. It also encodes the protagonist's experience in the universally comprehensible terms of the proverbial wisdom which enable the narrator to construe him as a sophisticated representative of Western culture rather than a vanquished and ineffectual member of declining nobility. The triple repetition of the adage in one short paragraph indicates how much the narrator seeks to divert any suspicion of a cowardly escape and to overshadow it with a gesture of appreciating the widely acclaimed symbol of beauty and culture. In the concluding lines of the story, the narrator recalls the last glimpse of Il Conde and his "stony immobility, behind the lighted pane of glass" (289) which evokes the image of a dead man exposed in a glassy coffin (Billy 207) and anticipates the protagonist's inevitable demise. Yet, this is also the last opportunity for the Count to make his appearance before the audience and present himself as eventually invulnerable to any offence. While most of the Conradian characters struggle to attain self-knowledge, even if they hardly ever succeed, the Count weaves a complex web of misleading details or preposterous self-excuses to live up to the persona of a cultured, dignified gentleman who enjoys projecting the stance of benign reserve. Accordingly, he adamantly resists an uncomfortable conclusion that there is no stable identification beyond an image that he has created in the course of interaction and refrains from a confrontation with inner vacuity. In this context the subtitle of the story, "A Pathetic Tale," seems double-edged raising the question of what establishes Il Conde as an object of pity: the shock that he has suffered or his inability to abandon illusions about who he is and to admit that he has reduced his identity to the performed self. In "Il Conde" Conrad, who

excels in addressing the issues of fragmented identity, this time turns his attention to examining the ego who maintains a coherent personal front at the expense of renouncing any self-redefinition even when faced with experience which subverts his mode of envisaging himself.

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“Do We Have More Yesterdays or More Tomorrows?”: (M/Tr)agical Realities and Postcolonial Utopian Prospects in Mia Couto’s *Sleepwalking Land*

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Abstract This paper examines Mia Couto’s idiosyncratic appropriation of magical realism as a discourse of ‘postcolonial utopianism’ in his *Sleepwalking Land* (1992). It argues that this literary gesture emanates from the very complex realities of post-independence Mozambique on one hand, and the ability of magical realism to render them and articulate future aspirations concurrently on another. Despite being a robust condemnation of this depressive atmosphere, the novel draws on a postcolonial discourse which coalesces the magical, the historical and the utopian to critically ‘re-read’ and ‘re-write’ the neocolonial formations of the day in an attempt to envisage a better future. In the light of Bill Ashcroft’s recent contribution to the field of postcolonial studies, i.e. his formulation of postcolonial utopianism, the paper scrutinizes the impact the Mozambican past, through memory in particular, has in framing utopian thinking and futuristic visions as opposed to the western versions of utopia/nism. Extrapolating Couto’s novel as a form of utopianism can open prospects to step beyond the traditional binarisms emblematic of postcolonialism generally and postcolonial literary criticism particularly. It sets the debate of what constitutes more an African dream in post (-) colonial Africa—past, present, or future musings—and the role of the African in this debate.

Keywords Couto; magical realism; postcolonial utopianism; history; memory

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"[H]ope may be disappointed but it can never be destroyed"[1]
"Utopias die; utopianism does not die."[2]

Introduction

The African version of the postcolonial novel has been always categorized as the right hand of the grand project of writing back to the empire. With the ebb of the twentieth century, however, the majority of African countries got their independence, and the African novel has started to be more context-reflexive in the sense that writers have centered their eyes on the emerging issues of this complex, transitional period. On one side, the colonial legacies have been overwhelmingly still felt, and the future of the continent has been bleak on another side. The novel has grown into a major catalyst to critically interrogate the postcolonial condition and, at the same time, to investigate the future possibilities of becoming lying beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, thus setting new trajectories of hope.

António Emílio Leite Couto, renowned as Mia Couto, is such a white Mozambican writer in Portuguese who unremittingly presents his readers with narratives imbued with fresh, kaleidoscopic visions of their mother country. Against the pamphleteering tradition of the 1970's, he carves out "a literary space" informed by his poetic language and "poetic vision of things" (Deandrea 221) that attributes him with a paradoxical position among the writers of his generation. Couto perceives of storytelling as a way of life above anything else:

> We are made of stories, as much as we are made of cells and organs. […] The narrative capacity of human being, more than any other skill or language, is a way in which we may recognize ourselves as forming part of the patrimony of life. It begins in our childhoods, when we invent and listen to fables. In this imaginative process, we are part of something that extends beyond the notion that we later create of our own humanity. ("Interview"16)

The overseas readership he has enjoyed, contrary to his contemporaries, because of the opportunity of publishing in the former colonial metropolis of his country,

1 Bill Ashcroft, *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures*, Routledge, 2017, p. 207.

2 Lyman Tower Sargent, "Theorizing Utopia / Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century," *Spectres of Utopia: Theory, Practice, Conventions*, Peter Lang, 2012, p. 16.

Lisbon, at the end of the 1980's and 1990's has not produced much criticism on him in English. It was until the first decade of the twenty-first century that the body of scholarly studies in English on Lusophone African literature and Couto precisely has been enriched with a number of insightful readings along with translations of his works into English. Widening the scope of storytelling, he accesses the realm of novel writing through *Sleepwalking Land*, originally published as *Terra sonâmbula* in Portuguese in 1992, which has been selected as one of the best twelve African novels of the twentieth century. Since then, he has published other ten novels. His fiction, with the local context as the basic site of action, indicts profoundly the devastation caused by the Portuguese colonizer and equally the cynicism of the political entities of post-independence that had given rise to a severely fought civil war. More recently, Couto's strong attentiveness to the neocolonial mindset, globalization, so dominant in contemporary Mozambique is observed. He underlines, in Phillip Rothwell's words, "Mozambique's recent loss of sovereignty as it becomes integrated into the power structures of global capitalism" which "assured the neocolonization of the young nation" (*Postmodern Nationalist* 20).

In light of these points, Couto's literary project seamlessly crosses the national boundaries and attains a human, universal hue especially when considering his characters constant search for truth beyond the precincts of realities imposed by the western caliber of thought. A "mediator of his nation's culture to the outside world" (19), Couto inculcates aesthetically figures and experiences that pertain to the human condition of three quarters of the entire world though with a Mozambican touch. In addition, he depicts a web of multi-cultural relationships relevant to any society with a special focus on the colonizer-colonized relationship. About this, Rothwell states that "Couto has repeatedly sought to think beyond the limit, to think into the space of the Other as a means of asserting the common experience of humanity" ("Between Politics and Truth" 455). The universality of his literary output is further asserted through the innovative, regenerative ways he devises to view the future through the current world. The combination of his idiosyncratic language with the magic of the local culture sparks utopian visions of future Mozambique. By this, his fiction assumes a didactic function in terms of communicating the quest for hope and betterment common to all human beings. Patrick Chabal regards these unusual ways of approaching reality as "an attempt to rekindle the pleasure of the dream" against "the death of imagination brought about by the violence of life of contemporary Mozambique" (81). In the same way, Rothwell deems this recourse to and the valorization of the primordial aspects of the Mozambican cultural imaginary as an attack on the residues of colonialism with an

eye to "imagining a different future" and "projecting a better reality into the future" (*Postmodern Nationalist* 131).

Despite gainsaying Couto's writing style as magical realist, Bill Ashcroft's pronouncements on the existence of hope and its resilience in his fiction are much clearer compared to other critics. To him, in performing the orthodox function of envisaging a better world, Couto's literature is no exception. However, the "layering of multiple worlds" ("The Multiple Worlds" 109)— human and spirit, living and dead, modern and traditional, present and future …— and the "uncomfortable" task of "[t]he crossing of borders" to reflect "the spiral of African reality" constitute the inventiveness of "Couto the storywriter" (111). Such a daring literary venture not only imparts new promising visions of the future, but also concrete platforms of hope with temporal and spatial dimensions like the sea and the land. "*Vorschein*," or the "anticipatory illumination," makes the utopian verve of Couto's text more robust because it works "at an intensified level" as it "lies deeply embedded in [his] linguistic imagination" (121). There is a general critical consensus that his language "give[s] access to the underground world, the world of dream, of vision" (108).

Taking the Canadian critic Stephen Slemon's re-conceptualization of magical realism as a postcolonial literary discourse at its basis, this paper then penetrates the future horizons, the spirit of dreaming and imagining of other avenues arising from the current realities, that Couto's magical realist discourse in *Sleepwalking Land*[1] (*SL*) fascinatingly incarnates. It reads this "venturing beyond"[2] which stems from this discourse as a manifestation of 'postcolonial utopianism.' As such, the paper attempts an answer to the main following questions: in what way does Couto's magical realist discourse gesture towards utopian thinking? What are the specificities of the utopianism of this text? And how do both, magical realism and postcolonial utopianism, contribute to offer new possibilities of being and becoming?

Answering these questions necessitates pondering the factors relating to the political climate of the 1990's Mozambique. The euphoria that the independence from the Portuguese colonial powers brought on June 25th, 1975 under the leadership of FRELIMO, acronym in Portuguese of Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, had not lasted for long as the new conflicts broke out again just after two years. The RENAMO, Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, emerged as a counter-militant organization to FRELIMO. The "tight political control … [of] Frelimo to implement its socialist transformation" (Collier and Sambanis 161)

1 The paper reads Couto's English version of the novel, *Sleepwalking Land* (*SL*).

2 Ashcroft, *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures*, p.7.

was met with the violent character of RENAMO to involve the country in a civil war (1977-1992) "which provided horrific incidents of systematically orchestrated terror" (Newitt 185). It was estimated that Mozambique lost about one million of its citizens while four millions were displaced from their homes to live as refugees in camps within Mozambique or its neighboring countries (Vines 11). Added to this are the destruction of the economic infrastructure and the obstruction of international aid initiatives to reach those in need especially during the natural disasters that hit the country (Karl DeRouen and Heo 509). Foreign intervention, on another side, worsened the nature of the conflict and lengthened it as the power race of the Cold War era was strongly felt. To secure its position, USA along with South Africa sided RENAMO against the Marxist ideology of FRELIMO and its main external patron the Soviet Union.

This conflict was moreover riddled with the use of the ritual powers central to the local cultures. The twenty-eight-year old Manuel Antonio formed a group of warriors called themselves naparamas, a traditional name of warriors, to combat the injustices of RENAMO relying on traditional ways. Concerning this last point, Alice Dinerman says:

> Initially, the Naparamas spurned the use of firearms in favor of "traditional" weapons, such as spears, knives, machetes and bows and arrows. For protection, they relied on religious rituals and a secret "vaccine" (*parama*) derived from wild plants to render them invulnerable to enemy bullets. (1, original emphasis)

In a similar way, Couto's narrative presents the naparamas as:

> traditional warriors, blessed by the witch-doctors, who fought against the warmongers. They had brought peace to the lands up in the North. They fought with spears, lances and bows. Guns didn't bother them for they were shielded, protected from bullets. (*SL* 20)

Both naparamas and RENAMO depended on local rituals in the war. That being said, the naparamas were by far the most successful on account of their ability to abate the influence of RENAMO especially in the northern regions of Mozambique through keeping peace and allowing thousands of people to return to their homelands (Dinerman 2). Finally, after many rounds of talks under the auspices of Italy, the General Peace Agreement (GPA) between the two sides was signed on

October 4th, 1992.

Thematically speaking, Mia Couto's *Sleepwalking Land* is a straight depiction of the above facts. It features the rise of the tormenting 15-year civil war in post-independence Mozambique and tellingly captures the emergence of a parasitic class which survives on the blood of the poor masses. In a conspicuous way, it portrays how this class reenacts the practices of the ex-colonizer. Couto delves more deeply to unveil the defects of both sides of the struggle despite being himself an adherent of FRELIMO (Hamilton and Huddart 3). Contestations over political, historical, economic and future issues characterize this novel's discourse. As a multi-layered postcolonial discourse, magical realism is adeptly used to address the paradoxical and complex realities of post-independence Mozambique.

Sleepwalking Land, as a two-parallel-story novel, lays out two versions of the Mozambican history in each of its eleven chapters. The first section of each chapter panoramically showcases the experience of Tuahir and Mwidinga upon escaping the hell of the Civil War and the refugee camp. In their way, they stumble on a burnt-out bus with many bodies. A suitcase full of notebooks is found with one of the victims who, unlike the rest, is shot. The old man Tuahir resembles the oral storytelling tradition which is more concerned with the colonial period. Against his will, Mwidinga, the boy companion in this pursuit of better living possibilities, insists on preserving the notebooks as a source of amusement. So, every chapter becomes a story within another story whenever the boy reads the notebooks written by Kindzu, the catalyst of change in the novel who heads towards northern Mozambique in search of the naparamas. Kindzu's narrative covers mostly the intricacies of independence. His pen, however, unfolds also, through the memories of the characters he encounters in his journey, more complex issues of the colonial era. By setting them side by side, Couto stresses from the very beginning the importance of contemplating both versions of history to construct a true history of his country.

Utopian Trajectories through Magical Lanterns:

Postcolonial literature is often believed to be a resilient vehicle for postcolonial discourse. Stephen Slemon identifies its magical realism as a postcolonial literary discourse in his contentious essay "Magic Realism as Post-colonial Discourse" (1988). This step is challenging to all previous exegeses which abridge the scope of the concept to being either a mode or a genre. To explain the essence of his theory, Slemon leans on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogic discourse, thus seeing magical realism as a two-coded discourse which "recapitulates a dialectical struggle within the culture's language" (12). This makes the language of the magical realist

text a site of differing tensions. Though they represent two adversarial systems, none of the 'magical' or the 'real' manages to lay its supremacy over the other. Another kind of dialectic takes place not between the nature of codes but at the level of the meaning intended. It is a dialectic between the "codes of recognition" and "those imagined codes" of a particular language in a particular culture (12). Simply put, the battle herein includes the 'signifiers' and 'signifieds' of this language. The interaction between the two discursive systems allows the magical realist work to echo "in its language of narration real conditions of speech and cognition within the actual social relations of a post-colonial culture" (12). This double-fold reflection which enables an 'inward' and 'outward' reference to common features governing postcolonial cultures altogether is dubbed as the 'speaking mirror.' The ensuing dialogic tension in the text unveils "gaps, absences, and silences produced by the colonial encounter" (13). This literary discourse, then, is an emancipatory machinery to all discarded and silenced voices in the hegemonic discourses, be they colonial or neocolonial, pre-colonial or post-colonial.

In consideration of this insight, such a discourse, which stands on reconciling the controversies of its two-system nature, has an inveterate disposition towards renovation. Brenda Cooper certifies this saying that it "thrives on transition [and] on the process of change" (15). She perceives holding these characteristics as an existence in 'a third space' which entails seeing with a 'third eye.' Seeing with a third eye is not an escape from reality, but a return to it to acknowledge "that systems of oppression continue to determine history and also that life is complex and paradoxical" (3). Yet, this way of looking differentiates itself by having a prospective orientation, "a dream of a better life" that "embrace[s] art and literature" (14). Slemon recognizes this new way of looking provided through the magical realist lens by highlighting not only its effectiveness to reflect on the shared conditions of all postcolonial cultures, but by acknowledging its potential to bridge slots within the same culture also. It fingers continuities through relating today's magical realist texts with their ancient precursors. In the last section of his essay, he insists on "revisioning […] tyrannical units of the past" to establish this trope of continuities between the past, present and future (Slemon 21). Like Cooper, Slemon's new ways of seeing and being do not depart the reality. They rather take it as a genesis to visualize alternatives. Magical realism, in view of this, becomes a third-eye postcolonial discourse.

At another level, utopianism, as an anticipatory consciousness that flames the present, gains more currency in postcolonial cultures and literatures as the new century has brought new contours of hope. In spite of all the efforts to settle the

contradictions between utopia and utopianism, the relation remains ambiguous but innermost to postcolonial thinking. Bill Ashcroft sees postcolonial utopianism as a "utopianism in which past, present and future are laminated" ("Revolution" 17). The interconnectedness between past, present and future remains the dynamism of this philosophy. To locate its essence, Ashcroft pertinently muses:

> The development of postcolonial utopianism […] occurs against the backdrop of *imperial expansion*. But the defining difference is the persistence of *utopianism* over *utopia* in the postcolonial consciousness, the dominance of *utopian function* over *utopian form*, an expansion of the *imagination* rather than an expansion of territory. In this pursuit the function of art and *literature is central* […] while actual utopias by definition exist in the future, utopianism demands the prophetic *engagement with memory* in its critique of the present […] All of these paradoxes are resolved in particular ways by postcolonial literatures. (*Utopianism* 14-5, emphasis added)

Postcolonial utopianism venerates social dreaming seeking 'Heimat,' Ernst Bloch's word for home that Ashcroft borrows to refer to the home all colonized people dreamt of, which is almost situated in the future. Heimat is an abstract, spiritual concept that supersedes physical boundaries; it is neither home nor nation. It is "a sacred *form*" rather ("Future Thinking" 59; original emphasis). The above passage encloses a labyrinth of standards that frame this variation. It is tremendously difficult to ponder one element in isolation from the others. As all utopianisms, the postcolonial strand thrives on the dreaming and imagining of a better life. This sense of hope, or "Daydreams" of the "In-Front-Of-Us", constitutes a "mature desire" to transcend the current conditions ("The Ambiguous Necessity" 9). However, 'Dreaming' here is not a simple mechanism which goes one direction like it is the case in the other philosophies. It is "perhaps the archetypal demonstration of the infusion of the present and future with the hope of a mythic past, a fusion of time and place, because the Dreaming is never simply a memory of the past, but the focusing energy of the present" ("Spaces of Utopia" 6). Paradoxically enough, then, a basic criterion of the postcolonial utopian dream is its emergence from a mythic past. Dreaming derives from the act of remembering the past to energize the present in quest of the future. Therefore, another key feature of postcolonial utopianism is the perplexing connection between the past, usually the workings of memory, and the future. Memory is not a negative operation since it has not a nostalgic fervor here, but a well-intended recourse seeking revival and transformation. Postcolonial

memory exhibits its influence fundamentally through the 'Myth of Return' which can weave several shapes. The return re-envisions the present relying on a glorified, cultural past in "a cyclic 'return' to the future" ("African Futures" 99). In this process, time also becomes cyclic refuting the dominant notions of linearity. Dreaming of new prospects to renovate the present in light of the past makes this philosophy transformative, subversive, transgressive and critical.

Slemon maintains that the magic realist work reiterates a sort of contention between the "'codes of recognition' inherent within the inherited language and those imagined codes — perhaps utopian or future-oriented" (12). This statement implies that magical realism as a postcolonial discourse forges a fertile ground for the desire of betterment, the In-Front-Of-Us, so remarkable in utopianism to flourish. Furthermore, it strongly asserts that the imagined code, the utopian or the magical in this case, cannot exist without the real code or the postcolonial context itself. This literary gesture then is clearly profoundly invested in the present as a conduit of social dreaming. Future thinking subsists within it as a result of canvassing the African imaginaire that it revalues the postcolonial cultures and signals the cyclic view of time and the spirit of regeneration and resistance to fixity entrenched in postcolonial utopianism. Naturally enough, human consciousness is ushered into the future. The postcolonial magical realist narrative is a compelling fountain of this. It improvises a whole world and imbues it with utopian thinking to subvert the dominant visions and assumptions. It mobilizes a world of possibility in the midst of the dystopian post-colonial vibrations. In regard of all this, this paper considers magical realism as a discourse of postcolonial utopianism.

New Trajectories of Hope: Re-reading/writing Present and Future in *Sleepwalking Land*

Sleepwalking Land adopts some of the plot aspects of critical dystopia by entertaining the possibility of hope within the text, as opposed to the canonical dystopia, in the reader and the protagonist together and by escaping classical endings with its open ending. This narrative's literary discourse exuberantly fuses magic, myth, dream, and memory in the local, natural landscape in sight of its dystopian projections of Mozambique. These elements are defined by Humberto Núñez-Faraco as the basic thematic features that distinguish the magical realist text (115-16). Strongly allied to these is what Stephen Slemon calls the "foreshortening of history" to mirror "the long process of colonization and its aftermath" (12-13). Couto's text accordingly is not "a stylistic aesthetic emptied of political content" (Hart 12). In an explicit maneuver, Couto imbricates also 'the oral' within the textual fabric of his novel to strengthen the 'geographical stylistics,' Faris's term,

of the variety of magical realism he adopts. It is orality that gives the uniqueness of the African narrative. So, it is no exaggeration when Ato Quayson contends that "all of the African magical realist texts draw on the polysemy of oral discourse to establish the essential porousness of what might be taken as reality" (175). Understanding such a variety of realism entails the engagement with "a full range of oral discourses" (175). This paper will turn to the discussion of these elements in the main argument with further details while valuing 'writing' and 'reading' as two magical utopian processes that can lend change.

a. Re-historicizing (Possibilities in) Post-independence Mozambique

This section will highlight the utility of the act of re/writing in the utopian project of evaluating and reconciling the atrocities of the Civil War era against the backdrop of the failure of the utopia of independence. Mia Couto's novel wryly manifests this through the diary, notebooks, of its protagonist Kindzu which recapitulates the momentum of his daring journey to find justice. By acknowledging the weight of memory in shaping the present and the future at the very onset of his notebooks, kindzu asserts lucidly Couto's postcolonial utopian vision of Africa which pivots on its sublime past with its tricky relation with the notion of time. Kindzu writes:

> I want to place time in its unruffled order, with all its pauses and pliancy. But my memories are disobedient, uncertain of their desire to be nothing and their fondness for stealing me away from the present. I light the fire of a story and I douse my own self. (*SL* 7)

In these lines, Kindzu takes the initiative to institute the genesis of a new story, a story which demands deep involvement. This story, denoting the project of re-historicizing Mozambique in order to open up new utopian spaces for counter voices and narratives against the prevailing accounts, is seemingly difficult to lay out but not impossible. Unlike conventional utopias, the focus herein is unconventionally not on a fixed output, but on the flame or the mechanism underlying this project. Stated otherwise, Couto's perception champions the spirit of utopianism over utopia because it proffers primacy to the process at the expense of the end product.

Kindzu starts the re-examination of his country's history by dramatizing the evanescence of the independence ideals that once brought the Mozambican people under the umbrella of the War of Independence (1964-1975) through the disappearance of the last child of his family June 25th who was born on and named after the formal Independence Day. This birth metaphorically suggests the emergence of a new Mozambique vacillating between a long colonial legacy and

the demands of a newly independent nation. And, it foreshortens the time scheme of the whole process as Slemon assumes. These people are divided against themselves while a group of bandits takes charge of the political issues of the country instead of the educated class. With the rise of the Civil War, June 25th is hidden with the hens to be protected from the gangs of the day because a "hen wasn't a creature that inspired acts of brutality and cruelty" (11). Unfortunately, the boy masquerades into a chicken and disappears leaving ambiguous questions about the real reasons. This is the first irreducible element the novel presents the readers with. The violation of the collective Marxist beliefs that motivate resistance against the Portuguese is indirectly referred to in the first magical incident in Kindzu's notebooks following the day of his father's death. Golden-fruitful trees replace sea waters, and people rush to pick the fruits, but Taimo's voice interrupts "begging [them] to pause and ponder: these were very sacred fruits" (13). Since these fruits guarantee the stability of the country, the sea "filled the void once more in great gushes, swallowing up everything and everyone" once the first fruit is cut (13). The scene in Civil-War Mozambique is made more complicated with the assassination of the intelligentsia, seen through the case of Kindzu's teacher, that oppose what is happening. The analogy Kindzu draws between the situation of the country at this point and the whales that come to die on the shore best summarizes all the wounds: "[d]eath hadn't even occurred and knives were already stealing chunks of it, each trying to get a bigger piece for himself. As if it were the very last animal, the last chance to gain a share" (16).

A nuanced reading of Kindzu's first dream unveils Couo's distinction of those who celebrate independence as a utopian-end dream which culminates in failure, represented by the father, from the young generation that is fuelled with social dreaming to alter this degenerative dream into possibilities. In this dream scene, the dead father cautions his son against leaving his home village; otherwise, he will be cursed with apparitions that will haunt his trip. Being caught amidst the impasse of indecision, to live in peace or to be a fighter, certifies Kindzu as a realistic character. However, among many other incidents, his encounter with the mythical naparama while preventing the thievery of the Indian Surendra's shop is the most momentous to spark his last choice. The magical and spiritual powers of the naparamas became a deep-seated myth quickly in Mozambique. It was so because it appropriates its utopian rhetoric of justice from the local culture. Owing to this latter, Couto's tact of crossing the boundaries of differing realms to create a "vision of multiple worlds" ("The Multiple Worlds" 114) becomes so observable. The character of June, for instance, is an intersection of the human and animal realms that inveighs against

some independence related issues, and the naparamas blend the traditional and modern, the human and spirit worlds to invoke the utopian possibilities of healing the psychological wounds of the nation.

In *Sleepwalking Land*, the naparama represents the 'Myth of Return' which ignites its utopianism. This myth stands for the "collective memory", and "it is in writing that the myth of return is projected into the future" as Bill Ashcroft believes ("The Ambiguous Necessity" 13). The return is a "prophetic vision of the past" ("Critical Utopias" 423) through which the present is ruminated at all levels to conjure up a continual process of change that is premised on valuing the past. It sets itself apart from nostalgia which is inimical taking into consideration it locks people in the memories of the past. Kindzu, as a future naparama, is reminiscent of Ngugi's patriot Matigari who is endowed with magical abilities in his journey of freedom. Whereas Matigari is armed with guns, Kindzu is gifted with a strong dream-based action to change the reality. Perceiving the myth of return in the novel is associated with the myth of the unborn child which is, to Ashcroft, the unsurpassed "figure of a future inspired by memory" ("The Ambiguous Necessity" 10). Upon leaving, Kindzu goes to salute his mother who, to his surprise, claims she is pregnant at this age "bearing this child for years. [She doesn't] even want it to be born in these times" (*SL* 27). So, at the beginning of his text, Couto ascertains the interplay of magic, myth, dream and memory as the vigor of the novel's postcolonial discourse in its attempt to re-write the present.

As "an avenger of [his] people's sadness" (26), Kindzu embarks on a six-step magical journey which is plainly solidly grounded in reality in hopes of finding the naparamas to join them. He does not realize he becomes one until the last episode. This endeavor is a revolution which "is not simply a revolt but a revolving, a spiral into the future" (*Utopianism* 105) to come across the sacred heimat. In his notebooks, Kindzu re/writes his country after independence rigorously providing a new historiography, on many fronts, in defiance of the dominant versions of the tyrants of the novel, and gives voices to many silences by combining a series of magical and real events. In rendering the political complexities, Mia Couto, "whose political statement is implicit, but whose vision of the negative legacy of colonialism is nevertheless plain to see" (Venâncio 6), allegorically paints all the political powers and figures that thwart the country in Kindzu's dreams in the first episode of his journey while travelling by the shore of Tandissico as ghosts and mythical creatures. One of the xipocos, "ghosts that take joy from our suffering" (*SL* 37), throws him in a hole he digs in the sand in one dream, and his dead father warns that he will send the nampfana, " the bird that kills journeys" (40), after

him one day in another. Despite thinking of this as the onus of not adhering to his father's ideas of independence, he becomes more geared up for pursuing his dream of being a naparama. Depending on mythical epistemologies, Couto's utopianism, hence, induces change by transfiguring dystopian instances, nightmares, into a utopian desire following moments of a tense psychological confusion leading to self-introspection.

This utopian paradigm extends to many instances especially in the episodes of Matimati where the protagonist is startled with the sight of the huge number of refugees and their tragic conditions given the prerogatives the war unleashes through corrupt ways, politically and economically, to some figures who were one day in favor of the masses like the former secretary Assane. These people betray the principles they fought for. Symbolically, this is seen in the statue installed in the middle of the village to celebrate "the heroes of the independence struggle" to substitute the older one "which glorified the colonial warriors" (121). Perhaps, the most striking irreducible element punctuating the political and economic corruption in the novel is the resurrection of the main colonial figure Romão Pinto after a ten-year death while still thinking of himself as the boss. Romão meets the administrator and comrade-in-chief Estêvão Jonas, and he offers ridiculously his bloody coffin "as a present to the people" ! (173). Both cut a deal to exploit the economic sources in updated ways with the administrator as the "native face fronting the enterprise" (174). Couto upholds a mocking tone to comment on this neocolonial drama in which the public have no hand in in many magical realistic happenings which criticize the deterioration of economy and standards of life. This includes the case of the ships carrying aid to the locals and mysteriously sink because of the rocks that suddenly appear to destroy them to enable poor people to steal food which is "enough to save children, mothers and a whole Africa of relatives" (53). As long as "people were not behaving in a civil fashion in the presence of hunger [!]", the authorities issue "firm orders" to legalize the use of those goods and the ceremonies of dancing, for this alleged ritual may damage upcoming ships (53-4). Neocolonial economic practices are further literalized in the inauguration of Assane's bar bearing the ex-colonizer's name, 'Pinto's Bar.' Translating and revisiting these injustices common to all African countries qualify this text as a metonymy or "a "speaking mirror" of post-colonial culture" (Slemon 15).

The blight of neocolonialism, along with the psychological pressures it inflicts, seems to instill a feeling of unbelongingness in Kindzu to his nation complicating by that his sense of 'beingness' and 'becomeness.' This state summons up Kindzu's father's "ever-bitter" words to his mind: ""Now we're a nation of beggars, and we

have nowhere to park ourselves" […] "But you, son, don't start trying to change people's destinies"" (*SL* 108). Albeit he does not comply with his father's advice, Kindzu reflects:

> Who knows? May be I was performing what had been my role from the beginning: a dreamer of memories, an inventor of truths. A sleepwalker strolling through fire. A sleepwalker like the land where I was born. Or those fires among which I forged my path through the sands. (108)

Through these words, there exists a utopian flame to not stop dreaming and an insistence on persistence as a key to "forge" one's "path" as an agent of transformation. By generating a utopian space of action which is based on dreaming, the discourse of the novel exposes another mode of resistance through which Kindzu acquires historical and political consciousness that requires him to be politically active against the status quo of his country. He thereby joins the people of Matimati in their provocative ritual of dancing to honor their ancestors for the sake of drowning more ships. On this premise, the magical historicity of this text comprises also of the act of Dreaming to heal one's self from these wounds.

One of the significant episodes of Kindzu's journey of becoming that deserves attention is the sea adventure introduced by a little magical creature, another irreducible element, which descends from the sky; it is "a *tchoti*, one of those dwarfs who drop from the heavens" (56). The tchoti escorts him to a shipwreck where the half-spirit, beautiful Farida resides temporarily after escaping the superstitions of her society, Makwa[1] people, against the twins. Literally and figuratively, Mozambique's (hi)story is encoded in this woman's story, and her personal memories get intertwined with Kindzu's. The only possible way to liberate himself from her captivating story and spirituality is to listen to her. To speak her magical sway, she admits to Kindzu:

> I had already seen you from that other side [world of the living], but your contours were aqueous, your face was morning mist. It was I who brought you here, it was I who summoned you. When we want you people from the light to come to us, we plant a seed in the world's ceiling. You were the one we sowed, you were born from our desire. I knew you were coming. I was waiting for you, Kindzu. (83)

1 One of the largest ethnic groups in Mozambique which settles mostly in the northern region.

By confessing this, Farida entrusts the mission of the society's bearer of utopian expectations and potential to Kindzu. Her love endows him with a new fervor of life and magical powers; thereupon, this experience enables him to see a lighthouse, Farida's sign of hope, in a remote island which he could not see at the beginning. Connoting one of the forms of heimat in the novel, the lighthouse exists symbolically in the "Not-Yet" future, yet it inflames the present of both Farida and Kindzu by keeping alive the concept of hope, "Dreaming" of the "In-Front-Of-Us" despite all the hardships. In this respect, "[t]he space of utopia" unlike the traditional utopias as Sargent points, "has become the space of social dreaming" in the present ("Utopian Traditions" 8). Couto elucidates the potency this anticipatory consciousness, a basic attribute of the main characters in their dreaming of a better future, has as a liberating machine from the exigencies of the country's unrest, whether it be psychological, political, historical or patriarchal, in the same way Bill Ashcroft theorizes the philosophy of postcolonial utopianism.

Substantively, Farida's oral narrative fortifies Kindzu's new written historiography (notebooks) inasmuch as it "involves the thematic foregrounding of those gaps, absences, and silences produced by the colonial encounter and reflected in the text's disjunctive language of narration" (Slemon 13). Farida's body and personal story thematize the importance of the feminist concerns in the utopian vision of Couto's magical realist discourse, and simultaneously the muting of the female voices and sufferings in the mainstream history of Mozambique. Like many children, Farida's son, resulted from her rape by the colonizer Pinto during the colonial period, is abandoned and left to suffer identity problems throughout independence: neither he belongs to the colonizers nor to the natives. A further gap that kindzu's version fills in pertains to the role of the white people of conscience through the character of Virginia, Pinto's wife, who adopts Farida as a daughter and teaches her reading and writing. The issue of the non-white ethnic minorities, or the acceptance of the 'Other,' in Mozambique is as serious as the former ones in Couto's utopian agenda. By denominating Kindzu as a man of "no race" (*SL* 22) in opposition with the rampant, local mindset which considers him as "a traitor to the race, a black who had fled from African traditions" (21-2), he stresses this. If realized successfully**,** racial harmony would establish a space in postcolonial societies for multi-cultural cooperation on a human basis for the good of all the cultures to rightly control some of their distressing tremors.

Within Couto's novel, postcolonial utopianism proves tobe a multifaceted paradigm which unearths itself variably. Markedly, Kindzu's journey helps to reinforce this and to carve out new understandings of the political scene, past and

present, to willingly construct new realities. Ashcroft writes that "[t]he idea that 'the journey is the goal' may not be strikingly original but it has a particular resonance in the context of African utopianism. The 'memory of the future' that characterizes so much literature of the myth of return is geared to energize the present, whether the goal is reached or not" ("Remembering the Future" 718). Farida's individual memory enlightens the collective memory of the naparama myth by lumping past, present and future through this journey which makes out of Kindzu an active agent. Partially or completely, the "goal is reached" when the protagonist induces rebellion and the spirit of dreaming in the refugees of the camp and the people he meets. Symbolically, he ingrains a regenerative seed of hope by impregnating Jotinha the lady of the visions there. The journey to nature, as the section on reading will unequivocally show, in itself is a return to the pure, primordial life of the past, a return to the origins which constitutes a counter action resulting in Kindzu's counter narrative. Most importantly, thus, the agency of Kindzu is linked to his pen whereby he integrates a series of sub-discourses within the magical realist discourse of the novel crossing borders to enter history and to avoid invisibility. Having history is a utopian project which warrants the emergence of other utopian horizons.

In the last but one dream of the novel, Couto stresses beautifully the significance of the act of writing in postcolonial Africa. The spirit of the father comes forth to inquire about the utility of Kindzu's journey:

> What are you doing with a notebook? What is it that you are writing?
> I don't know, Father. What I write depends on what I'm dreaming.
> And is anyone going to read it?
> May be.
> That would be good: to teach someone to dream. (*SL* 190)

This passage is a direct verbalization of the ability of writing to spark dreaming. To teach someone to dream is to teach him to live. In writing, there is a challenge to the current political regimes; there is hope to change this political tragedy into opportunities of living. Conjoining writing and "hope in *Heimat*", in Ashcroft's eyes, "may serve to reconstitute our understanding of resistance, to think of resistance as transformation" ("Revolution" 5; original emphasis). Writing in *Sleepwalking Land* becomes Kindzu's heimat which converts the utopian fixed form of hope, heimat of form, in African utopianism into function owing to its engagement with potentially-productive, future-oriented ways of looking.

Nearing the open conclusion, Kindzu expresses his gratefulness that he records

his journey and hurries to write his last dream, the most complicated of all, which fits into hallucinatory magical realism with its "difficulties in ascertaining which events have happened, which are imagined, and which are dreamed" (Faris 100). The dream robustly epitomizes the previously-described, general and postcolonial/ post-independence aura in Mozambique. Out of the tragical realities, lights of a new morning fill the dream "like the world's first dawn" (*SL* 209). Not surprisingly, Kindzu transforms into a real naparama, for the first time in the novel, whose presence stamps all the neocolonial powers out and saves his brother June. His description of the dream interestingly runs:

> As I [Kindzu] sang, he [Juney] gradually turned into a person, one hundred per cent Juney. By his side […] my mother appeared, holding a child to her breast. I called them […]. Juney placed his open hand on his chest and then cupped both his hands together. He was thanking me. I waved goodbye, while he, holding my mother's arm, disappeared among the infinite vegetation. (213)

Standing on two worlds, the magical and the real, Kindzu is totally aware that he is in a dream: "[s]omething was telling me that I should hurry before that dream was extinguished" (213). Assuredly, then, the novel, as it is the case of African literature, does not eschew reality to communicate this fresh spirit of utopianism, the turmoil notwithstanding.

Sleepwalking Land evinces how hope gains its gist from the outlined struggles. Likewise, Ashcroft asserts that "[i]t is in the struggle with power that the trajectory of hope […] becomes most relevant" (*Utopianism* 204). The peculiarity of utopianism comes from the politics of location wherein it emerges, and accordingly deeply rooted in its African version is a regenerative, corrective and mythic Knowledge of the continent. Mia Couto's idiosyncratic style translates all this cleverly into "a dream which weighs more than reality" (Iweala 5). This is done by means of his embodiment of magical realism as a discourse and of dreams as its vehicle to convey facts, known or hidden, in which the reader fails sometimes to distinguish the real from the unreal. Dreams here, whether positive or negative, do not gesture towards the future without resorting first to the past from which it derives its identity. "To enter the world of dream and vision," in Renato Oliva's opinion, "is also to draw near to the ancestral world of tradition, a world which must be rediscovered, revisited, and re-dreamed" (187). In this sense if in no other, dreams piece together the past and the future. Read in this light, with their ancestral teachings, dreams become didactic about the past and the future jointly

since they prompt the will to act in the world. Dreaming and imagining the future is the first initiative "to build it, to bring into being a "new unblinded mythology" (189). This is at the core of Mia Couto's view of the utility of the utopian thought in postcolonial Africa and its artifact.

Dreams in this novel, dreams in a bigger dream, are thus magical lanterns that lead a spirit of change. When woven with the postcolonial utopian motif of the myth of return, they configure a new weapon to set fire to the odds by sustaining a critical platform to debate the nature of postcolonial resistance which is not always confined to direct confrontation. Utopian explorations contingent on the dialogic relationship between the individual and the antagonistic powers of the text form the pivot of the protagonist's agency and resistance. Problematic issues in postcolonial literature, hope ultimately here, according to Ashcroft are resolved dialogically; thus, Couto's text becomes an open conversation of the issues raised in it rather than a straight-to-the-point answer. His enigmatic ending scene, or rather dream, gives no exact statement of the protagonist's journey end result and visions of future Mozambique. All he is sure about is that his writings will carry on the same mission he embarks on: "the letters turn into grains of sand, and little by little, all my writings [Kindzu's] are transformed into pages of earth" (*SL* 213).

b. Re-reading the Present, Dreaming the Future

Mia Couto's novel commences subtly where it ends. So doing, Couto intends to establish a solid relationship between the two main sections that compose his text on the one hand and to metaphorically accentuate the cyclic nature of the events' time scope on the other. At the center of this novel hence is its engagement with the concept of African time. The cyclicity of time serves many functions. It is a stark allusion to the resurgence of the old forms of economic exploitation and dehumanization of the natives. But, most weightily, it is a reference to the integrity of postcolonial African utopian vision whose essence is the flexibility of time and its continuity. Time is purely cyclic in postcolonial utopianism, and it is both cyclic and linear in magical realism. A combination of both strands blurs the boundaries between past, present and future and dispels the strangeness of the idea that future in this case emerges basically from of the past. In this African narrative, circular time is the best option to express the different layers of time embedded in its magical episodes. Bill Ashcroft conceives this category of time as peculiar to the "forms of oral story-telling, in which 'then' and 'now' are in constant dialogue" ("African Futures" 101). This happens by way of exalting memory, the recurrence of the cultural and historical past in the present, and the dialogic bonding between the future and the past in the present. The novel's plot, however different techniques

it may amalgamate, accomplishes this literally by recasting the last scene, dream, in which kindzu on the threshold of two realms notices a boy approaching his shot body to collect the scattered notebooks. This is Mwidinga, at the beginning of the novel who discovers the burnt bus Kindzu uses to leave Matimati. This way, the whole novel becomes one circular piece which assumes its utopian soul from the two acts of writing and reading evenly.

Tightly related to this first point is the novel's incorporation of a splendid description of the cyclic vision of place as well when Tuahir and Mwidinga roams throughout Mozambique in the fixed wrecked bus, their shelter, which transports Kindzu at the end of the novel. In resorting to the stunning natural landscape of Mozambique before and after being decimated by the colonizer and the Civil War, the writer neatly clarifies the interface between the cyclic vision of place and time. Postcolonial utopianism engages not just with the concept of circular time which facilitates the extrapolation of history, but it is also an endeavor "to reconceive a place in the present, a place transformed by the infusion of this past, a place in process" ("Critical Utopias" 424).

Besides being commonly known with their utopian stance, 'reading' and 'writing' here execute magical roles. Interestingly, the cyclic vision of place and time is reinforced via the sturdy relation between the two acts, for the existence of writing allows the possibility(ies) of reading. Symbolically though, it is the act of reading, conducted by the boy Mwidinga, which gives prominence to the writings of Kindzu. Their content after firing Kindzu would have never been divulged without the boy's eagerness which makes the new historical version/vision embedded in them accessible to all the readers. One of the strong instances in the novel to demonstrate the utopian impulse of its magical realist discourse is the ability of reading the 'written' to transform the somber landscapes around the bus, Tuahir and the boy. Trees appearing and disappearing, surroundings changing suddenly into a cave, a road moving steadily are among the magical incidents that eventuate only "every time he [Mwidinga] reads Kindzu's notebooks" (*SL* 100).These magical shifts are filiatively attributable to Couto's judicious use of mythical and ritual epistemologies appertaining to the Makwa culture to spur the boy's, representative of the new/post-independence generation, faculties of apprehension and dreaming. The incident of the maker of the rivers, Nhamataca, who "is fulfilling the same destiny as his father" (86) is an outstanding example of this reversion to the origins. Nhamataca digs a river named 'Mother River' to pave the way for "hopes and unfulfilled dreams [to] travel […] it would give birth to the soil, to the place where men would once more be guardians of their own lives" (86) and to bind "together

the destinies of the living" (88). Mwidinga doubts the sanity of the man and the utility of his project as it takes place in a stony land; yet when it rains heavily, "Nhamataca celebrates the birth [of his river] as if it were the fruit of his flesh" (89).

In this vein, rivers are usually reckoned as symbols of hope and life in African literature and Couto's oeuvre in particular. The noticeable growth of the boy's consciousness and Tuahir's as well towards securing a new insight into the meaning of existence/ 'Beingness' and 'Becomness' in this period, the "Not-Yet" in Ashcroft's philosophy, is immensely a product of mingling the magical and the natural. This relation testifies to the germane role nature plays in African postcolonial utopianism. Hope, personified multifariously in the text, springs amazingly from the rich nature. This genre of utopianism which advocates the role of the environment and "does not look to an ideal situated solely in the future but to one that might already be possessed by others, by those seen to have superior cultural virtue" is labeled 'primeval' or 'primordial' utopianism by Ronald Niezen (723). It avers that "those who live close to the land feel an intimate sense of belonging with the surroundings of their birth; all the simple pleasures and occupations of ways of life that are instilled from childhood, even the very composition of their bodies, are based upon a connection with the soil" (723-4). To put it clearer, this primitivism, i.e. the tight and harmonious relation with the natural world, bestows special competencies on the characters like the sharp senses central to their contemplation.

Bearing in mind the above, *Sleepwalking Land* is thus a convenient frame of reference of how the natural invokes the utopian. Couto's magical realist style sanctifies nature by according it with some human-like qualities. Nature nurtures the fears and hopes of Kindzu, Mwidinga and Tuahir. Like Kindzu's journey, reading casts Mwidinga in the midst of diverse landscapes. The natural images are numerous, but certainly water images — the river and the sea —remain the most etched in the readers' minds in both sections: Kindzu's and Mwidinga's. The vividness of these images emanates from their sacred value in the mother culture. The river safeguards dreams in Mwidinga's section, and the open ocean typifies possibilities of peace and stability in the whole novel. In his quest, Kindzu travels by the sea, and in it he learns to think and dream farsightedly. Reading Farida's story inspirits the boy to get "some relief" with the sight of the ocean (*SL*182). Additionally, the ocean is the last scenery that reading drives the characters to because Tuahir insists to die in it after his disease. So, the boy puts him in an old abandoned boat which ironically bears the name of kindzu's father 'Taimo' to, like him, begin a "journey out into a sea full of infinite imaginings" (205). To the death myth, the dead man's soul connects with the sea to plunge into an afterlife. Melting

the past and the future in the sea makes out of it a 'eutopian enclave,' Sargent's term, and correspondingly a 'heimat,' Ashcroft's term.

In Couto's return to the African nature lies a radical step against the fake modernity imported by the colonizer, and a challenge to the realistic notions of temporality and spatiality. It is an attempt to recreate those highly valued pasts and to literarily carry them to the present to shore up its reconstruction while contemplating the future at the same time. In better words, it is a penetration of the possible to distill the impossible, and the dystopian to extricate the utopian. This is what reading in the midst of the pure world resolutely does in the boy who starts ruminating his life mindful of the Civil War antagonisms. To Sargent, this is a utopian enterprise which unites all the indigenous cultures whose depiction of "their ideal pasts […] stresses closeness to nature, including flora, fauna and physical features like mountains and rivers" ("Colonial and Postcolonial Utopias" 213). Therefore, alongside its utopian rhetoric, the novel harbors an ecological rhetoric which impels an ecological consciousness. Commenting on all the magical and mythical episodes they pass through, Tuahir sums up the whole process saying: "[i]t was the country which was parading past like a sleepwalker" (*SL* 141). He understands that the bus serves nothing more than a utopian machine moving backward and forward in time to achieve the above with the help of the cyclic movement of the road. As described, nature is also a sacred nexus between the different realms that make up the novel's world.

Amongst the vexing issues reading provokes is identity politics as already mentioned in the previous section. Kindzu's venture to rectify the historical fallacies through his notebooks instigates Mwidinga to reclaim his real identity before his illness instead of the false one ascribed by his savior. Under his insistence, the true story is revealed. Tuahir, for the sake of satisfying the missing fatherly side in him, proffers to Mwidinga the name of his eldest son "who had gone to die in the mines of the Rand" (50) after rescuing him from burial because of his miserable health condition. Mwidinga suffers from 'mantakassa', a disease which results from eating the poisonous fruit of Mandioca shrub. "The grip of hunger was too powerful", Tuahir laments (50). When viewed from Slemon's standpoint, Mwidinga's hi/story is deemed as a consummation of the vacuums that Kindzu's narrative skips.

Mwidinga's identity problem is inexorably aligned with his amnesia, memory loss. To cure his disease, the witch doctor cleanses "the content of [his] head" (129). Still, this rite could not supersede the paramountcy and the boy's mastery of writing and reading. Justifying his intention, Tuahir states:

> I [Tuahir] asked him [witch doctor] to do this on account of it being better that you should have no memory of that time. What's more, you were lucky with your illness. You could have forgotten everything. Whereas with me it's different, I have to carry this burden. (129)

To the old man's mind, the boy's amnesia is his freedom, a positive escapism and a second chance for rebirth as, his words indicate, memory is not always a blessing for those who endure war agony. This short quote stirs up Ashcroft's belief that "forgetfulness and memory—are equally necessary to the health of an individual" ("Remembering the Future" 708). The magicalilty of Kindzu's writings, however, would not leave the boy without a memory. The more he reads, the more he restores some of his early childhood recollections especially school days. Over time, Tuahir understands that "Kindzu's writings had given the youngster a borrowed memory of those impossible days" (*SL* 129). The psychic liberation he seeks for the boy through forgetfulness seems to exist paradoxically within the writings of Kindzu and the possibilities of living, remembering and imagining.

Foremost among the assets of reading also is the faculty of imagination and its ability to broaden the boy's horizons of both living and becoming. Reconciliation with one's own past and reality is one of the outcomes of reading and imagination. Out of solitude, the boy proposes a weird game of imagination in which he impersonates Kindzu's character while Tuahir does so with his father's character though it is risky to disturb the world of the dead. The reenactment of this father-son bond uncovers the confusion surrounding the real one in times of war, Kindzu and his father on the one hand and Mwidinga and the unknown father on the other, where survival issues overwhelm the very intimate human affairs like love and friendship. Understanding this, Mwidinga starts to look more deeply for ways to rejuvenate his self. It is in dreaming and acting that heimat exits, he also ascertains. Dreams are messages to the future, "letters we send to our other, remaining lives" (62). They are the typing machine of Kindzu's notebooks which "were surely not written by a hand of flesh and bones" (62). Imagination and Daydreaming can be viable utopian mind machines of survival during conflicts firstly and of anticipation of a superior future secondly. Accordingly, the novel evidences that the state of "Not-Yet-Becomness" is as important and equal as that of "Beingness", for none can outshine the other in the theorization of postcolonial utopianism ("The Ambiguous Necessity" 9).

Couto's magical discourse consists not only of poignant magical episodes, but also of the 'magic of the word.' The magic of natural images and the magic of

language, through the heavy use of figures of speech, equally form the kernel of the intricate concept of 'magic' in this novel. The poetic dimension of Couto's writing style resounds, through what Stephen Slemon terms as the speaking mirror, more nuanced issues. Carmen Concilio says: "one of the modalities of magical realist literature is to be found in a language's managing to articulate the unspeakable" (32). The following quotes are some of the instances of the novel's magic language:

> Take care, my boy, only the sea lives upon the sea. (*SL* 26) [witch doctor to Kindzu]
>
> I peered into the pitch blackness of night, there where the sea touches the feet of God. (37) [Kindzu]
>
> It was because of this child that she wept only tears of milk. They tickled, white over her dark skin, and when she touched them, they turned into tiny round suns, glistening in her fingers. (82) [Kindzu describing Farida]

Apart from the aesthetic pleasure they trigger and the well-thought issues they pinpoint, these examples and the like familiarize the readers with the concept of magic though the novel's magical language is in many cases cryptic and hard to decipher even to the characters of the text, like Kindzu, to whom magic is an ordinary constituent of their lives and culture. Thus, the core aim behind this is to urge the readers, while enjoying reading, to adopt a questioning attitude so as to be involved in the utopian project of the novel. Stephen Slemon hereof clarifies that the magical realist narrative "demand[s] a kind of reading process in which the imagination becomes stimulated into summoning into being new and liberating "codes of recognition" " (20). In yet other words, this type of texts is never complete without piercing its abundant strata of meaning to engender new understandings and prospects of the reality being lived.

To conclude this section, it is noteworthy illuminating the concepts of continuity and collaboration central to the utopian vision of Kindzu's writings and the novel in its entirety. Even though the writings implant the spirit of life once more in the boy, Couto uses deftly his rootedness in Makwa culture to hint at the factors incarcerating this project. The maker of the rivers episode likens the project to the process of constructing (digging) a river "that was the work of one man, it was a river that didn't last for long" (*SL* 89). Therefore, it is easily inferred that the absence of a consistent cooperation between people of the same experience—cultural, political, historical …—within the same generation and from one generation to another causes the fading of the utopian flame. In many ways, the

writer stresses the point indirectly like allowing Mwidinga, someone from a younger generation, to be the reader of the notebooks of Kindzu. The motif of the burnt bus also stitches the two sections of the novel as a crucible of hopes and a bridge between the prospects of the two generations. Mwidinga's section divulges different forms of heimat: better future, the bus, the natural world, the notebooks and the act of reading. But the project of re/writing history, re-historicization, is the most important and sacred form that heimat can take in Couto's vision. Besides recording events and critiquing them, writing molds imagination and provides conduits for becoming.

Conclusion: Mia Couto's Postcolonial Utopian Politics/ Poetics

After all, a blind man's torch is his hand. (37)

When I'm at peace, I'm blind; when I'm in a fight, I can see. (23)

By juxtaposing the dystopian reality with the utopian possibilities it releases, *Sleepwalking Land* succeeds to communicate many nagging issues conveniently. Herein exceptionally, Mia Couto's embodiment of magical realism as a discourse of postcolonial utopianism summons such future possibilities and visions. One of the forms of heimat his discourse targets persists within the majestic project of re-historicizing his country at many levels. In fact, this project, which involves the recuperation of the long discarded past/identity for the sake of reworking the present disappointing reality, relies heavily on the dynamics of memory—individual and collective—which is seemingly "the only recuperative strategy available to the oppressed" according to Ashcroft ("Remembering the Future" 708). In view of this, the postcolonial utopianism envisioned in the novel retrieves its soundness from the ontological African worldview and its assertiveness of the insurmountable bond between the individual and: (a) his community and (b) nature. This intentional recourse has a didactic propensity so as to avoid the political drama Mozambique endured for long because of the conflicting interests of those who brought the degenerate utopian dream of independence. Away from the superfluous celebrations of this latter, the novel's utopianism glorifies a continuing process, rather than an end-product, based on the individual's willingness to achieve change through his self-reliance and deep involvement in all the campaigns against corruption. This is superbly stressed in many occasions by dint of Couto's inciting magical language, among which the above two quotes. The African as an agent has a functional role in the debate of 'what constitutes future in Africa?', for it is at his hands to write, like Kindzu, his possibilities/ "tomorrows" and to fight for them. Though he counts on a magical realist discourse, Couto does not fabricate an alternative reality, but

he ushers the reader into deducing that heimat exists in the threshold of possibility which stems basically from the transformation of the present reality in light of, of course, a firm adherence to the rich 'Mother' culture.

Through the motif of the noble journey to stumble upon the utopian concept of justice and the naparamas justice makers, demonstrative of the myth of return, the abovementioned points are properly delineated. Couto's novel suggests the pen as a significant magical engine of resistance. The nascent, oppressed-based historiography destabilizes the borders of master narratives to attain the possibility of being at the center of 'History' i.e. to be visible. Read in this sense, then, this step, as an outcome of the questioning attitude of utopianism, represents a mode of epistemological resistance and liberation from the master narratives, be they the colonizer's or neo-colonizer's, through 'writing' and 'reading' which are skillfully literarily converted into two utopian and magical acts. Journeying, writing and reading is Couto's mechanism at the heart of his philosophy of postcolonial utopianism due to its reinforcement of consciousness rising, recording and criticizing, psychic liberation, nurturing imagination and dreaming within a magical realist context . Championing the 'Not-Yet-Becomness' as much as the 'Beingness' of the individual, accordingly, *Sleepwalking Land* brings into play the basics of Bill Ashcroft's thought.

The sacred form of 'heimat' which escapes categorizations and fixity singles postcolonial utopianism out from postcolonial utopia and the concept of utopia in general. This spiritual, resilient concept of home that all people dream of lies usually in the future, but the novel conveys the possibility of enjoying this feeling in the present under many shapes. Attention then should be paid to the attempts of postcolonial African authors to rejuvenate hope in their writings to remind the world of the other face of Africa.

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Zain's *Steamer Point*: Between Celebrating Colonialism and Anti-Colonial Voice

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Abstract This paper develops a postcolonial reading of Yemeni Ahmad Zain's recent novel entitled *Steamer Point* (2015). The foundational claim of the paper is that the story is a powerful attack on the hegemonic nature of the cosmopolitans, and that Aden history has been used as an allegory to comment on the current situation in Yemen. The findings show that the story is caught up between two dominant voices: one that exalts the cosmopolitans and their lifestyle, and the voice of resistance that views the cosmopolitans as oppressors who have marginalized the indigenous people and treated them as subalterns. In Zain's novel, Sameer appears to represent the former who is fascinated by the English lifestyle while Nagib is introduced as an anti-colonial voice that promotes violence as a means of resistance against them. The story is twofold, on one hand, it bitterly criticizes the cosmopolitans for having persecuted the indigenous people, considering them as their inferior 'Other'. On the other hand, it strongly attacks the colonized subjects for having embroiled themselves in infighting, thereby failing to reconstruct their own society. This in-betweenness situation of the author is embodied in the character of Sameer who admires English lifestyle, however, he admits later on, that inside, he is on the same boat as Nagib and Saud. Thus, Sameer's ambivalence symbolizes the author's attitude towards the current situation of Yemen, while he advocates radical social change, he is so skeptical about the means of it.

Key words Aden; marginalization; multi-voice; postcolonial; resistance; subalterns

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Inroduction

Ahmad Zain is a contemporary Yemeni novelist who recently emerged on the literary scene along with other novelists such as Ali al-Muqri, Nadia al-Kowkabani, Wagdi al-Ahdal and Ramzia Al-Eryani, to name but a few. The common ground among these voices is that they share the same concern, being more worried about al-Watan (Yemen as a nation). Most of al-Muqri's novels, for instance, are concerned with the meaning of the nation, where he suggests that the human being is more important than the homeland (Alkodimi 2020). Similarly, Nadia al-kowkabani's *My Sana'a* (*Sana'ai*) delivers a powerful political message to the current regime that neglects the city of Sana'a and the country at large. In this novel, al-Kowkabani appears as a powerful feminist voice advocating women rights in the country and at the same time, calling for a radical social change in the country (Alkodimi 2021). According to Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi, Yemeni literature in general, and the novel, in particular, "has used allegory to instruct the reader", adding that the writers of these texts share the sense of responsibility to enlighten the public to resolve "Yemen's existential crisis" in their own style. The existential crisis, according to al-Rubaidi, refers to the "suffering that has accompanied successive Yemeni regimes" since the 1960s. Those regimes "have not only failed to govern, but have brought the country to war and the threat of death … through armed conflict, unemployment, malnutrition and widespread disease" (al-Rubaidi 2017). In this sense, I would like to refer to another important study by al-Rubaidi, in which he presents the central findings of an analytical study of the construction of identities in six contemporary Yemeni novels. In his project, al-Rubaidi concludes that these novels engage "with some of the most heated issues of contemporary society in Yemen in order to present an enlightening vision for the existential dilemma of a failed state and an underdeveloped society burdened with high rates of violence and corruption" (2018 21).

Zain is one of those writers who show strong commitments to Yemen's existential crisis, referred to above. His work includes *Status Correction* (2004),

American Coffee (2007), *War Under the Skin* (2010) and *Steamer Point* (2015). His first novel, *Status Correction*, highlights the lives of Yemeni migrants in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, after they were expelled from work due to the Yemeni government's attitudes toward Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in 1990. The novel depicts the fate of Yemeni migrants who have not left for Yemen and have lived in very difficult living conditions. Under extremely harsh conditions, they were forced to sell their property at low prices. In the novel, these people live their lives like any outlaw, and they move from one place to another by smuggling. Always threatened with arrest and deportation, they cannot claim any rights because they are not in a position to do so. Nor can they return to Yemen because the living conditions there cannot be tolerated. The novel raises the questions of identity and the concept of the homeland for a generation of Yemeni immigrants, a generation that did not know its homeland, and at the same time did not find a homeland, as they dreamed, in the diaspora in which they were born and grew up (Zain, personal communication, 15 March 2020).

American Coffee presents an image of Sanaa in which reality outperforms surrealism and irrationality, where weapons are spread more than loaves of bread and more than people's dreams of stability and reassurance. The thud of bombs and the sound of bullets become an essential part of the rhythm and order of the city, even if the sound of the bombs stops for a while, it is possible to feel a defect in the system of people and the city. The voice of the arms becomes necessary in Sanaa to know that everything is going well! In the novel, the city of Sanaa, where foreign tourists are frequently kidnapped, looks like a scrap forest, or a museum with everything old. Tribesmen dominate the city, armed with heavy weapons, their preferred method of dialogue. The novel examines the desire for a personal history, explores the illusions of ideology and revolutions, and highlights issues from the lives of foreigners in Yemen (Zain, personal communication, 15 March 2020).

His latest novel, *Steamer Point,* however, revisits the theme of colonization and resistance that has been investigated by Ali al-Muqri. Interestingly, both Zain and al-Muqri are mainly journalists and both are expatriates living currently outside Yemen. Both of them, however, have become well-known novelists who devote their fiction to portray the current social atmosphere of Yemen. Apparently, both Zain and al-Muqri's greatest works are *Steamer Point* and *Bakhur Adani* (2014), respectively. These two works tackled the British colonization of Aden and the forms of resistance that led to the independence of the southern part of Yemen in the 1960s. al-Muqri's *Bakhur Adani*, for instance, appears to celebrate the multicultural city of Aden and the hybrid culture that characterizes the life of all races in the city.

However, deep down, the story criticizes the fake hybrid society established and manipulated by the cosmopolitans that ultimately failed (Alkodimi 2020). Similarly, Zain's *Steamer Point* focuses on Aden city during the colonization era. Like al-Muqri's *Bakhur Adani* (*Adani Incense*), the novel appears to celebrate the incredible changes achieved in Aden by the colonizers, which turns it into a beautiful landmark in the region. However, this paper claims that Zain's *Steamer Point* is twofold: it powerfully criticizes colonial hegemony, and, at the same time, attacks the colonized people who view violence as the only means of resistance.

The paper draws on Edward W. Said and other prominent postcolonial critics and thinkers to read Zain's *Steamer Point*. Arguably, the novel is caught up between two dominant voices; the first is the celebration of the cosmopolitans and the second is the voice of resistance that views English as mere oppressors and exploiters who have exploited and marginalized the indigenous people. Postcolonial theory often "deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies". The "term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization" (Ashcroft 186). It concentrates on "writings from colonized or formerly colonized" places that "were once dominated" by the European man (Bressler 1990). Further, the theory is "based around concepts of otherness and resistance" ("Introduction to Post-colonialism" 1). To put it in a broader sense, postcolonial theory "has emerged from an interdisciplinary area of study which is concerned with the historical, political, philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of colonial domination and resistance …" (Low 463).

Zain's *Steamer Point* depicts the story of the Chap, Sameer, who works as a teacher, and at the same time takes care of an old French merchant, who lives in Aden where the events of the story take place, just one day before the end of colonization of the southern part of Yemen in 1967. A mirror is set between the two, where each one sees the reflection of the other, as well as his own face. The mirror itself turns into a third character which gives them an opportunity to see and comment on each other. The mirror ultimately reveals the real anxiety of the French man who is thoroughly afraid of the rebels on his last night in Aden. It also reflects the concerns of the guy, who looks at the departure of the English colonizer with great concern. The mirror then appears to be a meeting place for a long conversation, which reveals the worries and anxieties of both where the guy becomes acquainted with his desires, and the old man turns to his memories.

Zain's *Steamer Point*: The Multiple Voices

In contrast to Zain's previous novels, *Steamer Point* creates a unique city, a

modern and beautiful one that is completely different from other cities in Yemen. Aden during the colonization era (1839-1967), which was modernized by the cosmopolitans (Darraj 2015). A city that is full of life where all races, Indian, English, Persians, Somalis, and Jews coexist on the same soil (*Steamer Point* 2015). Like al-Muqri's *Adani Incense*, Zain's *Steamer Point* is engaged in the impact of colonization on Aden city and its ramifications. However, while al-Muqri's novel focuses on the hybrid culture of the city, Zain's novel focuses on the marginalization of the indigenous people of the city. Nonetheless, both texts are grounded in the impact of colonization on Aden. Helen Tiffin, in an 'Introduction' to a collection of essays she edited with Ian Adam, *Past the Last Post*, describes post-colonialism as both a body of writing and a set of discursive practices grounded in the experience of colonial domination (qtd. in Madsen 5).

Zain argues, in an interview, that "nobody can imagine that a city like Aden today was once like an unattainable dream. It was one of those cities that would enlighten the places around it, but Aden's light has vanished, one can only find it in books". He adds, Aden, under colonization, was "open for all, much more advanced than other cities and countries. It was the only torch in the dark surroundings. … temples, churches and peoples that belong to different races and religions" (Reuters 2015). Such comments highlight Zain's attitude toward the British occupation of Aden. It seems that he is lamenting the uniqueness of Aden city which had once been mythical.

Apparently, *Steamer Point* appears to celebrate the above-mentioned attitude where Aden is presented as a city that has no parallel in the entire region, a civilized multicultural city with different races as one of its many characteristics. The title of the novel itself is symbolic, as it refers to the very important part of the city, al-Tawahi, the European neighborhood as it is called "Steamer Point" by the English, which occupies the city center (63). This part of Aden appears like a part of a European city crowded with "modern coffee shops and cinema halls" (8). Sameer who arrives in Aden from Hodeidah of the northern part of Yemen, and who appears to be fascinated by the city, succinctly summarizes Aden's situation when he describes it as "a piece from heaven", "a city that has no alike" (19).

However, in spite of Zain's claim, it is obvious that the story is caught up between two dominant voices: the first is a voice of celebration of the cosmopolitans that looks at the city as a miracle that has been developed considerably, and the second is the voice of resistance that views colonizers as exploiters. The former is embodied in the character of Sameer, whose attitude toward the English and their lifestyle is manifested in his views and behavior. The latter is represented in Nagib,

who believes that colonization is accompanied by domination and exploitation where Adanis turned to be mere servants for the cosmopolitans. Hence, superficially, the story appears like a cry over the ruins. However, the story seems to blame all parties concerned, particularly the cosmopolitans.

Sameer appears to fully embrace western lifestyles and the changes they have made to the city. He struggles hard in order to persuade others of the rightfulness of his attitude. He openly defends the British position, "I have tried to hate them, I could not. I like their way of life", he said (81). In her argument with him, Suad accused him of supporting the English people, "you have made Aden no more than a ruin, dead land revived by Haines", she said (79). Nonetheless, the play that Sameer tries to develop with Suad is used by the author as a vehicle to expose the characters and their attitudes. Sameer, for instance, claims that when English arrived in Aden in "January 1839" it was almost "a desert" (78). This argument over the content of the play becomes a controversial subject that stir the endless discussions as Suad feels that Sameer "adopts the English Story" that Aden was a "dead land" (79). She even accuses him of being "bias" in his play as he considers "Aden's current revival" a "miracle made by English" (68). However, Sameer goes further and admits that he "finds himself" whenever he experiences life in the city (81). Suad, on the other hand, appears to have a totally different attitude. She attacks him severely "*you grope for a different way to view English*, as if your eyes are not like ours. Who are you! Stop repeating the miracle of the English. At a particular moment, we will make our own" (81). She adds, "your only aspiration that Aden remains open to all" (161). Obviously, Sameer and Suad's argument clearly show the different attitudes of both toward colonization.

Indeed, Sameer's stance is portrayed in such a way as to embody a realistic vision that looks at the situation from different perspectives. He declares that he is more and more "impressed by what English has made in the city", adding that they did it "not only for themselves", "isn't it possible to have our share of it" he said (81). His voice represents a reasonable man who advocates peace and accepts differences. Unlike Nagib, Sameer is totally against violence or the deployment of force to settle disputes. Sameer hints at such difference when he criticizes the group "but we don't listen to ourselves, we only pay attention to other voices with more noise and din" (81). Surprisingly, Sameer appears very confident of his stand, thus he works hard on his play which "embodies all the miracles that have been established by English" people in Aden (81).

Nagib, on the other hand, was introduced as the anti-colonial voice. His anti-imperial spirit "emphasizes the need to reject colonial power and restore local

control" (Ashcroft 14). Unlike Sameer, he believes that Aden belongs to Adanis only. According to Boehemer, this "early moment of anti-imperialist nationalist—or more accurately, nativist—resistance was in many cases a relatively sedate preliminary to the more overt political liberationism which followed" (96). Edward Said further notes that the "common goal of the assertions of nationalist identities, and …the creation of associations and parties was self-determination and national independence (*Culture and Imperialism* xii). In his comments on Zain's *Steamer Point*, Faisal Darraj observes that the author, in his multi-voices narration, "approaches a confusion that he did not want, that the good thing brought by the arrival of a stranger is accompanied by domination (Yemeni serves the English) so does urbanization, whatever its price is, better than independent recession stagnation" (al-Hayat Newspaper 2015). Obviously, Nagib has a different perspective from that of Sameer. Unlike Sameer, he is very enthusiastic about promoting violence as a possible means to expel English outside Aden and Yemen, in general. Perhaps, this is what leads Suad to remark, "You fit to be a leader of a battlefield" (125). His physical appearance matches his rough attitude as he was described as a man with "dry face and complexions that turns to be hostile, whenever the argument …delves towards what English do" (126).

Nagib's attitude reflects the leftist views widely spread during the 1960s which led the national liberation movements in different parts of the world. "These forms of opposition become articulated as a resistance to the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institutions" (Ashcroft 14). As Edward Said notes, "anti-colonialism sweeps and indeed unifies the entire Oriental world, the Orientalist damns the whole business not only as a nuisance but as an insult to the Western democracies" (*Orientalism* 110-111). Nagib's characterization is projected in such a way as to reflect the rough and stubborn mind of those whom Nagib is a member of. "It was only his hair that is soft in him" (126). His physical appearance is a sign of his hostile nature (129). Such hostility and zeal for freedom, according to the author, might have led to fatal consequences. Nagib, who is driven by his leftist ideologies and the desire to avenge from the colonizers, for example, does not provide clear alternatives for the city after independence. Instead, those factions start fighting with each other, which adds insult to injury. Instead of playing a role in sustaining the position of the city, they participated in letting the city fall apart. These factions, according Boehemer, have their "messianism drew support from other utopian and/or millenarian ideologies of the time {...}. The message they communicated was distinguished" by hard struggle to sustain the "virtues of native culture, characterized as rich, pure, and authentic" (96). Boehemer further notes that

"nationalism in the twentieth century became the platform for mobilizing against the occupying power in the name of a common culture, language, or history; or, in many cases, by appeal to the experience of colonial occupation itself" (101).

The Relationship between the Colonizer and the Colonized: Sameer's Ambivalence

The relationship between the colonizers and the colonized captures the central core aspect of Zain's novel. He seems to mock the real mission of the cosmopolitans who hide their ugly face under the slogan of the "civilizing mission" (Bhabha 1994). In his criticism of western discourse, Homi Bhabha (1994) points out that "the objective of the colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). Similarly, Edward Said observes, "Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort" (*Orientalism* 10). According to Said, however, all these are mere false claims used to hide the real mission, "to subordinate or underplay military power in order to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the Orient" (*Orientalism* 90). Drawing on Bhabha and Said's views, one can easily notice an implicit third voice in Zain's story that accuses and criticizes the cosmopolitans of marginalizing the indigenous inhabitants of the city. This voice was carefully functioned to unpack the ugly face of the colonizers who violated their declared mission and mistreat the natives. In other words, *Steamer Point* bitterly criticizes the colonizers who worked hard to change the demographic status of the city. More importantly, they have dominated the lives of the natives, turning them into mere servants or simple workers to serve the cosmopolitans who consider them as their inferior others. As Said explains it,

> Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization. Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being. (*Orientalism* 111)

Indeed, *Steamer Point* in Boehemer's words, is "underscoring the contradictions of the 'civilizing' mission" of the colonizers (59). According to Boehemer, "the

European realized himself by imposing his rule on another culture" (59). However, as Said remarks, "humanism is centered upon the agency of human individuality and subjective intuition, rather than on received ideas and approved authority" (*Orientalism* 15).

The old French man, who is described as the "emperor of mercantile," for instance, uses a local guy, referred to as (al-Shaab-the guy) as mere servant to attend to his needs (222). "You have given me a job at your house, not to help me but to {use me} as a spy" (66). Interestingly, the old man symbolizes the colonizer whereas the guy symbolizes the victimized colonized people. The French man, in other words, is used as a vehicle to portray the ugly face of western colonizers who have fully dominated the lives of the natives. The man appears almost like an octopus who holds the threads of the game and whose companies invaded everywhere as he "owns the see, the land and the air" (167). His power is summed up by the guy who points out that "Aden's future cannot be decided without considering the old man" (157). "What influence the Persian merchant got", the old man said, feeling jealousy towards his competitor who was honored by the queen (212). This shows that only non-native individuals are given the privilege of handling the trade business in this part of the world. "The British used to *have* everything, while we are surrendered, completely surrendered", said Qasim (48). Even when the French man quits the business of fabrics, he leaves the area of trade for non-native merchants like Parma Mandlal Gee, Pago Andes Deaf Gee and Hearkened Sunderji (64). His power increases day by day until he becomes the biggest merchant who imports from everywhere and exports to every corner of the world (64-65). Indeed, even jobs are restricted to non-native citizens. Qasim, for example, is ambitious to work for the government, "but that is impossible for none Indians, Persians and Somalians" (50).

Indeed, marginalization of the natives (the other) is an important issue that informs Zain's novel. Bressler notes that the "assumption that western Europeans, and in particular, the British people, were biologically superior to any other "race" … distinctions that was unquestioned at the time" (200). This belief, according to Bressler, "directly affected the ways in which the colonizers treated the colonized" (200). Bressler further explains, "for many westerners subscribed to the colonialist ideology that all races other than the white were inferior or subhuman. The subhuman or 'savages' quickly became the inferior and equally 'evil' Others" (200). Liang Low further notes that Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is "a polemical and critical study of the ways in which the Occident has sought to objectify the Orient through the discourses of the arts and the human and social sciences" (qtd. in Wolfreys 464). In one of the warm discussions frequently held, Suad, for instance,

expresses her disappointment as she says, "it is too hard for me at this critical moment to claim that Aden is ours". Another one, a poet, adds: "since when it was ours. Surely it is for English only". In a humorous manner, Omar comments, "for English and Adanis", adding "for Adanis, I mean Indians, Somalians, Persians and the rest of Europeans. So, who are we?" Asked Faezah (144). Such argument depicts the sense of alienation and marginalization that the indigenous people suffer from, being looked at as the 'Others'. Simply, they do not belong to the city. Even though they are the "majority, they have no influence. The majority, but most of them are mere workers" (144). Nagib, however, seems to have the answer. "It is them who control us, and locate us in the place they think we deserve. They isolate us even when we are among them. They will not let us infiltrate in their life. We live on the peripheries only" (144-5). Zain's irony reaches the beak when Omar further comments:

> I can understand how Indians, Somalian, Persians and whomsoever else behave, they live on their own soil, whereas we always have the feeling of a stranger. We are really strangers in this city since we are unable to get along. (145)

As an officer comments, "there is an inconceivable separation between 'us few English' and those Asiatics" (Boehemer 64). Boehemer further notes, in a different context, "in the white colonies … a system of internal colonization rigidly separated settler society from the native population" (107).

Zain seems to direct his sharp razor to the colonizers holding them accountable for the consequences as they have stripped the indigenous people of their basic human rights and possessions. Their hegemonic domination and exploitation over the natives ultimately lead to resistant movements against them. However, as Said observes, the "domination and inequities of power and wealth are perennial facts" of colonized societies (*Culture and Imperialism* 19). Sameer himself eventually addresses the French merchant and blames him:

> I was standing upon your heads to attend to your requests immediately … the reasons that they hate you is that you have become an emperor within their emperor. You are not much different from them. Perhaps you are the gist of all this, the English, French, Portuguese, Normand, Persian and all colonizers who passed by this city". At the end of the day, you are one of many of their pictures. (148)

Hence, he ultimately musters up his courage, and looks at the French man and talks to him, a thing that he could not do in the past. He is no longer embarrassed (148). This shows that deep inside, he was not happy with colonization as his character had been vanished or was dominated by the French merchant. Boehemer notes,

> British rule was accepted as part of the order of things: the natives were governed as they should be; the Queen Empress was on her throne; there was no question that her people occupied a central place in history. In this world, it almost goes without saying, British meanings and values were paramount… Regardless of geographic location, everyday life unfolded as a long procession of middle-class English social rituals. Stories are laden with tea-times, club life, sports, 'Gardens or bands or amusements, and their associated etiquette and patterns of behavior. (63)

Western superiority is further stressed through the character of Eris, an English lady who was "shocked by the hostile behavior of her nation" but feels sympathy with the natives (65). She feels disappointed as she witnesses her nation depriving the indigenous people from equally enjoying the resources. Unfortunately, she herself got despised by English people when they notice her sympathetic attitude towards the 'Others'. However, she has never surrendered but continues to "arouse their wrath against her. Sometimes she ignores their parties, and sometimes she exposes their real motives whenever she gets a chance" (65-66).

The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is further exposed through the technique of the mirror, which is functioned by the author to reflect the attitudes of both, the French man and the guy, as it offers a chance to see and speak to each other. This mirror is "transferred into a third person able to push them to speech areas" (147). This person that "the mirror gets into and appeared to involve cunning and malice that irritates their feelings, extracts from their bottom what they believed, particularly the old man, it is the secret of their secrets" (147). Indeed, it has been carefully utilized not only to reveal the attitude of each one of them but also to expose the hegemonic power of the colonizers. Surprisingly, it is only through the mirror that the guy could look at the French man who appears too ugly. That ugliness symbolizes the reality of the colonizers that the guy ultimately realizes. "He gazed in the mirror and saw that the guy was staring at him, as if he did not know him for the past few years when he joined on the list of his servants" (217).

The French man also "likes to observe the guy through it and see his reactions" (67). The guy also searches for himself in the mirror and when he finds it, he is not shocked to see the changes taking place on his face every now and then. At this moment, he is able to talk to the French merchant and say:

> I will not say I did not see English hitting with … and the back of their guns some persons who did nothing but say 'get out of our city'. They then pull them almost naked on the concrete on a day its sun is a piece of hell to the extent I imagine myself smelling the roasting of a human flesh. (71)

It is only at this moment that the guy dares to look and speak to the French man, on the last night before his permanent departure. Strikingly, it is at this move that the readers realize that the guy is nobody but Sameer himself, when another voice comments and says "if the guy realizes what is happening right now, he will not be able to understand many other things, including the play that occupied his mind in which he tries to introduce the *essence* of Aden (67-8). Addressing him as 'the guy' again shows the French man's superiority, who is not even willing to call him by his name.

Thus, the author simply suggests that it is the hegemonic nature of the colonizers that provoked violence in the city. This message becomes clearer at the end of the novel as the French man becomes very frightened from facing death. The guy succinctly sums up the situation that "the rebels are motivated by hunger first, the appetite for revenge, as the jealousy that you forced them to raise for decades, will explode soon" (208). He carries on, "those who were mere porters in his ships, or workers in his stores or servants in his houses, will attack in a moment …" (218). Obviously, these rebels are driven by their desire to take revenge as they are humiliated and treated as inferior or subordinate human beings. As Said points out,

> a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition "it" is not quite as human as "we" are. There is no purer example than this of dehumanized thought. …". (*Orientalism* 111)

Furthermore, Boehemer (2005) notes that western discourse described "colonized people as secondary, abject, weak, feminine, and other to Europe, and in particular to England, was standard in British colonialist writing" (77).

Perhaps, this is why Sameer ultimately feels ashamed of himself and admits

that he is in the same boat as Nagib and Suad, however, they do not understand him (209). Indeed, Sameer is presented as a reasonable man who accepts differences and advocates peace to settle disputes. Unlike Nagib, he is against violence. More importantly, he appears to be able to predict the destructive consequences or the heavy cost of the armed struggle. This is obvious as he bitterly criticized those people, including Nagib and Saud. For him,

> They have appeared naked in front of themselves, Suad and Nagib, as well as others, not that bodily nakedness, but the nakedness of the soul … hence, appeared the distortions and the hidden tendency for violence, not for difference but for preying. Where could they have hidden all that? (211)

Sameer's attitude toward Nagib and Saud is based on the fact that these people tend to be violent. They have lost their sense of reason and have no desire to accept differences or other voices. Instead, they advocate violence against each other. Sameer's description of the brutality of the rebels further illustrates this point as he continues, "but on the other side, I so the brothers turned into ferocious animals, wolves full of hunger for the flesh of each other and I so how the factions of the armed struggle to jump on each other …" (71). As Robert Blanton notes, "one of the most profound legacies of the colonial period has been ethnic conflict" (2001 473). Obviously, Sameer's vision is that those factions should accept their differences and work peacefully together to solve disputes.

Indeed, Sameer appears to be the author's mouthpiece through whom he delivers his views on the current situation of Yemen. Sameer's ambivalence lies in his view that while he is not totally against the revolution, he is afraid of its fatal consequences. His skepticism, in other words, can be read as a sign of the position of the author himself who supports the change but skeptical about the means, a theme that will be discussed below.

Yemen, Past and Present: The Allegory of the Place

What is at stake is that the situation of Aden, the 'English Miracle' that has 'gone with the wind' is used as a scapegoat to comment on the current political crisis of Yemen at large. Interestingly, the opening lines of the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats' poem entitled 'The Second Coming' (1919): "Turning and turning in the widening gyre, the falcon cannot hear the falconer; things fall apart; the centre cannot hold …" ("poets.org"), succinctly summarizing Zain's political message. Indeed, it is worth noting that Zain himself is a nationalist voice who foreshadows

the current situation of Yemen. He used Aden as an allegory to deliver his views. Hence, Aden, which used to be once 'a miracle' but falls apart due to the political conflict among the different parties, is used by Zain to warn Yemeni people about repeating the past in a broader context. In an interview, when he was asked about the relationship between the current events in Yemen and his novel *Steamer Point*, he said, "at this moment of Yemen, which is dominated by the utter darkness, it was necessary to go back to Aden" (Reuters 2015), as if warning them of some impending anarchy. The question thus becomes why is he revisiting Aden after such a long time of colonization? Obviously, it is an outcry through which Zain tries to remind people of the near past of Aden, which was described by Sameer, as a paradise, but unfortunately turns into ruins as a result of conflicts and disputes among different factions. He simply used the portrait of Aden as an allegory to warn people not to lead the whole country to fall apart. According to him, the modern history of Yemen is repeating itself, but to a wider extent and with a greater cost, exactly like what happened to Aden in the 1950s to the 60s. Aden, thus, has inspired the author to read the current situation in Yemen and warn people about repeating the past by revolting against the current regime. He seems to adopt Sameer's views in being very cautious of using violence to change the situation or to bring about a radical social change. The author, in other words, seems not ready to sacrifice the current achievements for the sake of an uncertain future. Sameer, the author's mouthpiece, sums up Zain's main concern when he remarks, "we will never appreciate what we have until we lose it forever" (81).

Sameer's comments clearly indicate that Zain has utilized the past to read the present, as if warning people about the endless revolution started in 2011 and continues until today. Interestingly, Zain's prophecy seems to come true as most of Yemenis nowadays regret Saleh's regime (1978-2012), against which they have revolted a few years back. The result is that the country has fallen apart, to borrow Yeats' words. Interestingly, the narrator protagonist made it clearer when he comments that "the revolution has become a game that its threads are no more in the hands of the Yemenis" (204). Indeed, this is the bottom of the matter. It is easy to start a revolution but is too hard to control or to put an end to it, later on. Still worse, the revolution may turn into an anarchy or a disaster. The current Yemeni revolution had started in 2011, but the crisis has been ongoing since then. It simply turns into a disaster. The author seems to indirectly question, the value of a revolution, led by multiple voices but with unclear views or unpredictable consequences. Interestingly, that "multiple view point" or the "multi-voicing technique" has been carefully functioned to "reveal a great deal not only about themselves and their socio-political

milieu, but also about basic human issues relating to the conflict between evil and good … and justice" (Al-Musawi 135).

Thus, as the novel was written in the mid-crisis of Yemen, it is clear that Zain's central message is that the Yemeni concerned parties should be wise enough to peacefully solve their disputes instead of using violence. He simply advised them not to repeat the past, which they felt regretful until today. In his thesis, *From Collective Memory to Nationalism: Historical Remembrance in Aden*, Kevin Alexander Davis pointed out, "For many of the southerners I spoke with, the British occupation was symbolic of modernization and prosperity". Davis concludes that Adanis are now feeling regretful of the huge change that happened to their city, from a 'paradise', according to Sameer, to a 'waste accumulation place' (Davis 27). Likewise, the whole country has turned into the "worst humanitarian crisis" in the current history, according to the United Nations and other world organizations, as a result of war and conflicts among the different parties ("Yemen Annual Report" 2019).

Conclusion

Zain's novel, *Steamer Point*, is very much engaged with the issue of colonization and its ramifications. Reading this novel through the lens of postcolonial perspectives aids the researcher in fully unpacking the fragility of the idealized mission of western colonization. This reflects its highly negative impacts on individuals and society. Interestingly, while the story appears to celebrate the cosmopolitans, underlying that voice, however, is a strong attack on the impact of colonization on the indigenous people of the southern part of Yemen. The story, thus, is caught up between two distinct voices, the first is the celebration of colonialism and the second is an anticolonial. While Sameer appears to represent the former, Nagib on the other hand, seems to embody the latter. Most of the attitudes of these voices are revealed through meetings and hot arguments between different characters. More importantly, it shows how that national resistance turned to be a disaster on the city and its people, as they were incapable of applying their reason and accepting their own differences to work hand in hand with each other to solve their problems peacefully. Instead, they attack and kill each other. Thus, the multiple voices used may symbolize the multiplicity of the views, races and motives of those voices, as well as chaos and confusion.

Interestingly, the situation of Aden city that used to be once a 'miracle' but turned into ruins has been carefully functioned as an allegory to deliver a strong political message to the different parties in Yemen, not to repeat the past and lead the

country to 'fall apart'. Unfortunately, however, such a voice is unheard, the country is really falling apart due to the political crisis that has lasted for many years.

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The Inaudible Skirmish of the Undocumented Expatriates and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Abstract Kiran Desai's Booker award winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* concentrates on the fate of a few vulnerable undocumented expatriates. The void which Biju, an Indian émigré, senses in USA in the story and his fracas for co-existence and quest for distinctiveness represent the fight of all those marginalized people, who, in the deficiency of a sound pecuniary condition are under the clemency of the overriding class. Desai farsightedly exposes the inconsistency between superficial ingresses of extravagance and majesty and the self-effacing genuineness of mistreatment, predominantly of the expats. The present research tries to portray this very battle of an expat against the age old despotism of the privileged people in an altogether extra-terrestrial country. The current investigation has highlighted the everyday life of the émigrés, their calamities, tirades and ignominies, their imaginings and longings, fears and interruptions through the folios of the novel.

Key words expat; struggle; void; overriding class; extraterrestrial country.

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Introduction

Social marginalization is both an ontological and epistemological wrongdoing that is usually assumed as the socio-economic side-lining of certain groups of

people, their distortion in or comprehensive omission from the inclusive systems of social-strata. The concept of marginality is vital in sociological thinking and has a multiplicity of meanings (Billson 31). Ontologically, it is a method of endurance of the destitute, a survived involvement on their part of existential deprivation, indignity, antipathy and most ominously, an excruciating sagaciousness of their breach from socio-economic extension process and sectarian politics. Further, they are debarred from the knowledge producing contrivance imbricated in explicit power relations, political conditions, economic processes and practices, at par with Foucault's "genealogy", which as a particular investigation into those elements which "we tend to feel [are] without history" (148), elucidates intensely.

Epistemologically, the openly erroneous are deprived of the means to verbalize the modalities, as to how to differentiate the others and be ostensible by the others, since they cannot design the template of their own rational sovereignty. Meanwhile from the year 1928 onwards, there have been three practices of marginality: cultural marginality—it is identified by variances in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and other cultural indicators; social marginality -it ensues when an individual is not considered part of a beneficial reference group owing to age, timing, situational constraints, or occupational role; and structural marginality -a condition that results from the political, social, and economic ineffectiveness of explicit underprivileged groups in societies (Billson 41). As cooperation, acclimatization and multiculturalism undertake a legal basis to humanity and the acknowledgment of shared political values and a respect for national unanimity, marginalized people are often stigmatized, leading to a vicious circle marked by a lack of reassuring associations and the ability to participate in community life, resulting in further isolation (Burton and Kagan 297).

Among the marginalized people, workers face many difficulties: cultural differences, low motivation and self-efficacy, difficulty in accessing organizational resources, difficulty in identifying and taking advantage of developmental opportunities, and work-family conflicts (Maynard and Ferdman 19) Among these marginalized workers, undocumented, i.e. those who are unauthorized or proscribed immigrants, are outside of the legal basis of society and the lack of legal status creates marginality within the society at large.[1] These peripheral émigrés are even less likely than legal immigrants to be able to attain the economic and social skills that will head to integration or enable them to participate in a multi-cultural society —they are more likely to live distinct lives and thus escalate the dissections within

1 A recent news note, NYT March 2, 2007, p.A6 estimated that 200 million urban migrants within China are marginalized because they are ineligible for residence permits.

culture.

Kiran Desai's T*he Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is a poignant demo of the scuffle of the marginalized expats in the richest country of the world. It fervidly analyses present day assorted issues such as imperialism, discernment, and insufficiency, by hobbling back- and- forth between India and the USA. Inadvertently, one of the most revealing occurrences of the story encompasses Desai's bizarre construal of the fortitude of an Indian illegal migrant Biju, who fights against all mishaps in the cosmopolitan epicenters of the deep-seated entrepreneurial demesnes. His know-how in America reiterates how the glitches in the impecunious undeveloped domain are knottily perceptible to the contest for excellence by the

superseding classes. Here we must keep in mind that people who are obligated by vigor to leave their homes face two options. Either they can abscond to another milieu within their home country, in which case they are known as *Internally Displaced Persons* (IDPs), or, they can flee to another country, becoming "undocumented expatriates", when they cross an transnational boundary. Those who travel directly to the country in which they seek "safe- haven" are referred to as "asylum seekers," while those who flee to another country and wait there for an opportunity for resettlement in a third country are called "refugees for resettlement."[1] In the novel *Inheritance of Loss*, Desai's characters commendably portray erratic kinds and echelons of disgruntlement at their own level, to the extent that it becomes an assortment of pitiable misapprehensions of being part of an ethos that is outlandish.

Aim of the Research Paper

The Research Paper while dealing with the modern-day concerns like proscribed migration, ethnic hodge-podge, bucolic skirmishes, monetary discrepancy, class hierarchies, unlawful actions under the camouflage of modern day radicalism, globalization and multiculturalism, aims to render the anguish and standoffishness of the undocumented expatriates, as depicted in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. The study under discussion centers on unlawful evacuees like Biju and how their 'blinding desire for a better life' steer to their eventual segregation, which somehow reflects the responsiveness of what Kiran Desai has experienced in the USA. As the critic Sara-Duana Meyer opines:

> Surely there is a lot of Desai's own experience of moving and living in between several worlds and histories in her second novel that addresses themes

1 https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/overview-us-refugee-law-and-policy

> like the colonial past of India, the legacy of class and more recent history of separatism, but also migration, economic inequality, hybridization and the question of the nation-state. (175)

The research paper under discussion, reconnoiters the reasons that led to the exodus of the migrants; their happenstance with the extraneous ethos and their scuffles for co-existence in an unconventional terrestrial. It also reveals the chance meeting of Eastern and Western culture that brings hitches in the life of the proscribed émigrés and their endeavour for a healthier living. The crunch for inimitability, which arises as a consequence of this indigenous clang, has also been highlighted to make the populace conscious about the conceivable difficulties associated with the unlawful trespassing to an extraterrestrial realm.

The conjectural exploration attempted to answer the following three research questions:

To what extent the resonating American dream of an unrestricted society has been proliferated especially among the emigrates from the third-world countries?

How the evolution of culture has been made possible through communiqué, and by what method it is through communication that the values are reassigned from one cohort to another?

In what manner, the everyday life of the émigrés, their misfortunes, invectives and disgraces, their imaginings and longings, fears and hindrances have an uninterrupted effect on their essence?

The Elusiveness of the American Dream and the Aimless Expatriates

Academic concerns about assimilation or multi-culturalism are a far cry from putting bread on the table and most immigrants do not think in these abstract terms, rather they think in terms of survival and "getting on" a subject, which will be central in this discussion of integration and marginalization. Desai prudently exposes the discrepancy between superficial ingresses of extravagance and majesty and the unobtrusive veracity of mistreatment, predominantly of the expats. As a downgraded status leads to lower earnings, when there is work, raises the question of how these migrants will participate in either an assimilative or multi-cultural society. A convergence of postmodernist technique and Post-colonial measures makes Kiran Desai proficient at frolicking with the epitomes of power arrangements of west that are reinforced and depended on the assumes of Third World and commotion of which "might upset the balance" (Desai 23).

Every time this very commotion of individual, non-customary, 'extra-national'

imitation dictates over mere community simulations or the ersatz of the 'national idea', local witnesses become trans-nationally pertinent, probed, disputed and altered.[1] Immigration is as old as civilization, because human beings have always moved in search of better living situations for themselves and for their loved ones or dodging histrionic circumstances in their native country through ages. These two major drivers were the fundamentals of the 'push and pull' theory that was first proposed by Lee in 1966,[2] incorporating economic, environmental, social and political factors pushing out from the individual homeland and attracting him/her towards the terminus country. Further to this distress, there may be the supplementary burden on the "have-nots" to earn enough to live and send back meager savings to their disadvantaged or even ravenous kindred. Desai in her novel shows that Biju is being treated as a slave in America and consequently, he becomes a quarry of racism. The cynicism and disarticulation of Biju actually represents the agony of all the expats, struggling hard to make life in an alien culture! In fact, his reverence for the fascination of the west, without knowing the real scuffle of those who have already settled there, climaxes the concerns of western cultural grumble among the emigrants.

May be exclusively for these reasons, the ascent for the American Dream had begun very early. Numerous people have been enthused by the belief that in the United States, hard work leads to prosperity and social mobility (Lee 47). Since 1970, the share and number of immigrants have increased rapidly, mainly because of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia, with the foreign-born population standing at 44.7 million as of 2018. Important shifts in U.S. immigration law (including the Immigration Act of 1965 that abolished national-origin admission quotas, the Refugee Act of 1980, and preferential treatment of Cuban immigrants); the United States' growing economic and military presence in Asia and Latin America; economic ties, powerful immigrant networks, and deep migration history between the United States and its southern neighbors; and major economic transformations and political instability in countries around the world, all have helped usher in the vast diversification of immigration flows (Khandelwal 107).

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1 Tarde has described as "European equilibrium" as published in New York Times in 2006.

2 Everett Spurgeon Lee, Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia is known for his pioneering theory of migration, which is known as the Push and Pull Theory, or also as Lee' Theory. Lee first presented his model at the Annual meeting of Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Kansas City, in 1965. Everett Lee has conceptualized the factors associated with the decision to migrate and the process of migration into the following four categories: (1) Factors associated with the area of origin; (2) Factors associated with the area of destination; (3) Intervening obstacles; and (4) Personal factors.

Nevertheless, the Indian immigrant often faces ethnic discernment amounting to even psychological aggravation. In *The Empire Writes Back,* this particular ordeal of the Indians has been revealed in an unmistakable way: "a major feature of post-colonialism literature is the concern with placement and displacement" (Ashcroft 169). The connotation of these two terms, "placement" and "displacement" are appropriate in deliberating the plight of Biju, who is an archetypal representative of the marginalized section of the society. In fact, the expatriates depicted in this celebrated post-colonial work, are the typical residue of the countries undergoing financial catastrophe in one way or the other. While fortuitously called for an interview for a position of an unskilled staff in the US, Biju observes that "a crowd of shabby people [that] had been camping, it appeared, for days on end" (Desai 105). The very disgraceful conditions of these applicants create a feeling of disrepute and manipulation in the mind of Biju: "Whole families that had travelled from distant villages... some individuals with no shoes, some with cracked ones; all smelling already of the ancient sweat of a never-ending journey" (105). He is, in fact, traumatized to see the mammoth number of people vying with each-other to go to the US with the vague hope of altering their prospect.

After efficacious accomplishment of all the processes, Biju hovers to America, as he is hardheartedly destined by the encumbrances of economic scarcity and knows inside out that in his realm, he singlehandedly cannot prizefight with inadequacy. Hence, willingly or unwillingly, he bears every kind of aggravation for earning his livelihood, like working unlawfully, and thus grossing sloppily in a multiplicity of New York bistros. Prior to January 1986, the Census Bureau's post-censal population approximations included no allowance for undocumented immigration.[1] In fact, after entering the alien land on a Tourist visa, Biju has to live like an animal in the outlandish city, miserably in ragged and inhuman conditions in the basement of a building, with many other immigrants, where he endures every kind of anguish. Despite the fact that there was extensive obligation of the spectacle, the only appraisals of the magnitude of undocumented immigration, particularly of the annual flow, were based on little more than speculation. Investigation directed at the Census Bureau over the last several years has shown that undocumented extraterrestrials appearing in censuses and surveys can provide a basis for measuring

1 Various terms have been used to refer to this group of noncitizens present in the United States who entered illegally or who violated their conditions of entry. In addition to undocumented immigrants, some examples include illegal aliens, undocumented workers, non-legal residents, and illegal entrants.

at least a portion of undocumented migration to the United States. [1]

In order to emphasize the American belligerence to the Indian immigrants, the novel hints at the forfeits of the late 1980's US precincts with respect to the admittance of professional south Asian émigrés. The latter arriving after the *1976 Immigration and Reform Control Act* were mostly recognized for family reintegration tenacities, being little proficient in English and unqualified for white collar jobs (Brown 122). Although Biju protracts than the legitimate limit of a sojourn, outlined by a tourist visa, he experiences the defies of acknowledgement, given his pedigrees and lack of educational qualifications.

In actual fact, the stratum of prosperous Indian immigrants in the US has been paralleled by a category of urban workers, i.e. taxi drivers, hotel, restaurant, factory workers or clerks, etc. who has not realized the American dream. These individuals, experience lack of security and receive low incomes (Batalova 122), and what is pathetic, undocumented immigrants like Biju face inimical retorts while in the US, like more than a few of his proprietors express their disgruntlement with respect to his debauched redolence. In point of fact, expatriates, asylum-seekers and migrants with undocumented status have particularly challenging migration trajectories. They may have suffered abuse and trauma pre- and during-migration and are more likely compared to other migrants, to be exposed to unfavorable and stressful conditions in the receiving-country, which puts these families at risk of marginalization (Bornstein et al.)

The novelist has tried to pin-point the unconstructiveness predominant among the poor people from the developing countries, where they actively participate in the exportation of the false American dream, throughout the whole world. Naturally, with the increasing craze for Americanization, the migration from Third World countries to economically advanced America also increases. The random flow of capital is accompanied by an unprecedented movement of people, technologies and information across previously impermeable borders-for one location to another (Nadia 17). Once these immigrants enter their trance terminus, soon they twig the uselessness of the American dream. Undocumented refugees like Biju realize very

1 Robert Warren and Jeffrey S. Passel, "A Count of the Uncountable: Estimates of Undocumented Aliens Counted in the 1980 United States Census, forthcoming in Demography"; Jeffrey S. Passel and Karen A. Woodrow, "Geographic Distribution of Undocumented Immigrants: Estimates of Undocumented Aliens Counted in the 1980 Census by State," International Migration Review 18, Fall 1984, pp. 642-71 ; Passel and Woodrow, "Growth of the Undocumented Alien Population in the United States, 1979-1983, as Measured by the Current Population Survey and the Decennial Census," paper presented at the 1985 annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Boston, mA, March 1985 .

snappishly that America provides in many ways, a far more upsetting and appalling way of life than he had ever experienced in India. But, the irony is that, even after enduring so much humiliation and suffering at the hands of an atrocious American society, these undocumented migrants are gratified because of the vast array of occasions available in the alien country. Biju's strain in winning of a green card exemplifies the Indians' limited reception in the American space regardless of their eagerness to belong to it. He spends his initial days working in the restaurants, but soon there is a "green card check" (16) on the employees. His manager instantaneously dismisses him and advices him to "just disappear quietly…" (16). According to Triandis, the market is the prototypical relationship in highly idiosyncratic cultures like the American one (368). In a context of this kind, people consider themselves distinct individuals whose association revolves around delivering and paying for services. Biju is frightened to see the lot of immigrants: "…there were those who lived and died illegal in America and never saw their families, not for ten years, twenty, thirty, never again" (Desai 99).

It is widely accepted that one of the characteristics separating humans from other animals is the development of culture. A contemporary definition of culture is that, it is "the shared ways in which groups of people understand and interpret the world" (Grewal 178). Culture is also a contrivance toward all-encompassing social conscience, one in which all populaces, present and future, permanent and temporary, are equally considered. Nevertheless, Biju's working experience at the Gandhi Café reveals the shortcomings of the American capitalist society, which unpleasantly disturbs its culture. The boss of the Café, allows the workers to sleep in the basement, sparing them the costs of the rent, but paying them only a quarter of the minimum wage and thereby promoting racial discrimination. No doubt, it is a matter of fact that culture and ethnic multiplicity is critical for promoting a healthy society, where there is no discrimination of any kind.

The Cultural Vacillation and the Origination of Miscommunication

The development of culture is made possible through communication, and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another (Jensen 151), thus proclaiming that both are two sides of the same coin; the understanding of one stresses the thorough knowledge of the other (Gudykunst and Young 133) and the changes to one will cause changes in the other. As Samovar and Porter propelled that when culture changes, communication practice also oscillate (183). Hence, as cultures fluctuate, misapprehensions and complications in intercultural communication are inevitable. This largely arises among the

undocumented immigrants, when there is slight or no sentience of incompatible cultural ethics, ideologies, and endeavors and so Biju and other illegal immigrants in New York are unable to communicate meritoriously with the immigration officials because of the language problem. This incompetence aggravates the situation and they are further downgraded to the so-called "shadow" class for which they show an ephemeral endurance, spending their nights in damp basements, dark alleyways, and uncouth kitchens of the apartments and restaurants.

Once, when he delivers food to three Indian girls of the immigrant "middle-class," Biju feels as if he is "standing at [a] threshold" enduring ambiances of love, compassion and fondness all mixed together, but it is not responded by the other side. David Spielman points to the issues of identity and the depravity which the asylum seekers face (77), as has been vividly described in Desai's novel, where the commemorative attitude towards hybridity and immigration has been ridiculed in unambiguous terms. In reality, "*The Inheritance of Loss* shows us a radical postcolonial subjectivity in which flexibility, assimilation, and multiculturalism are preferable to maintaining difference" (Samovar & Porter 128), and therefore, the three Indian girls are cognizant that they belong to the fortunate segment of the civilization and, consequently, uphold disinterestedness with the marginalized Biju.

All societies are multicultural in nature. Everyone today lives in a global village. With the passing of the days, Biju started considering himself merely one amongst many others who are struggling for their day-to-day existence. Biju's routine job delivering General Tso's chicken and Szechuan wings to city residents has him "on a bicycle with the delivery bag on his handlebars, a tremulous figure-between having buses, regurgitating taxis-what growls, what sounds of flatulence came from this traffic. Biju pounded at the pedals, heckled by taxi drivers direct from Punjab…" (49). In one of the most poignant jiffies in the novel, Biju on his bicycle "beg[ins] to weep from the cold, and the weeping unpick[s] a deeper vein of grief—such a terrible groan issued from between the whimpers that he was shocked, his sadness was so profound" (51). The sordid tale of Biju points to the hard-reality that it is high time that the regularity authorities must not only sign and endorse accords guaranteeing cultural rights and diversity to the immigrants, but implement them by enforcing regulations to ensure ethnic miscellany.

Inconspicuous Legitimacy of Exploitation and the Ensuing Identity-Crisis of the Undocumented Emigrants

In his writings, Homi Bhabha deliberates this spur-of-the-moment linking of

the suffering man to memory. Nervousness over one's self and identity as an individual links one to the memory of the past, while s/he fails to choose a path in the abstruse present (204), and hence, despite the fact that Biju spends unsleeping nights in the stained cellar sculleries; he gets sentimental about his wistful past in the lap of nature. Predictably, his calamity as a proscribed immigrant finds a reverberation in the ordeal of several emigrants who come from different parts of the world. Apparently, there are few immigrants, who pose to be affluent, but in reality, they are the same as that of their compatriots. Such as, a boy from his Zanzibarian friend Saeed's neighbourhood that Biju sees with a "gold chain as fat as a bathtub attachment, his prosperity flashing out," is not a typically "successful" or "productive" member of American society, but is, rather, a street hustler (Desai 17; 84; 110). Further, Biju's anxiety about telecommunication itself also speaks of the truculent ways in which the undocumented immigrants experience life in America quite inversely than do those who are legitimate holders of the green card. Nevertheless, what is more pathetic is the fact that their panic for the immigration hotline makes them an easy prey for the American officials who consider them mere illegal immigrants. As a consequence, instead of conferring legal citizenship to these people, it prompts the officials to deport them. Hence, apart from the manner in which Biju feels that he becomes "the only one displacing the air" in a space which should have "included family, friends," his lack of access to communication and information in New York is another exceptional example of the ways in which the "benefits" of modern technology are strictly limited to the creamy layer of the society. In reality, far from relishing the recompenses of a global village by the much hyped technical advancement that helped Biju to go to New York for his livelihood; it further creates the distance between the near and dear ones (Desai 18).

The firm perception of the native country is a familiar and conventional view, human beings hold distinctively in their realization. It indicates the obvious need for home/motherland in human life as a place of origin and means of alignment to the world. This idea considers home a single and territorially fixed place, a center of one's private and personal life over which one has full control. This home is described as a safe and secure haven to belong to and to live in and also to leave and return to if necessary (Loomba 112). Hence, Biju is no more excited by the glamorous image of the west; rather he begins to develop a repugnance for its subsistence. Mortification, sequestration, estrangement, and bone-chilling frost, all contributed to the sense of utter solitude experienced by Biju in America. His father's friend, Nandu, on whom he had been contingent upon for all kinds of help, is unpitying enough to give him the cold shoulder and terminates him with the

advice that he should go back to his homeland (Desai 98).

He senses waylaid among workers from incalculable nations and twigs to his long-held predispositions about the Pakistanis as "paki" and fights the "old war, best war" (Desai 23) with him without a second thought. He is also habituated to calling the blacks "hubshi" and "*bandor*" (monkey) (Desai 185), and to venerate whiteness as the standard of sanitation and gorgeousness and hate blackness as representing foulness and ugliness. Even though his co-workers goad him visit brothels, for one motive or another, he circumvents going there; because furtively he loathes the black woman who "smell[s] awful" (Desai 101). He feels an insightful seclusion in this big city like the destitute man or the displaced chicken which in the park scratches "in a homey manner in the dirt and felt a pang for village life" (Desai 81), and comprehends clearly that in America, only those expatriates get a pie of this "American Dream" who is parsimoniously sound.

Rodney Benson noted that since the mid-1970s and mid-2000s, U.S. immigration news coverage shifted from a focus on jobs and the global economy to an accumulative focus on racism, threat to public order, and humanitarian concerns about immigrant suffering (McLeod 77). He also observed that government administrators and unaffiliated personages were profoundly trusted on as sources. Nonetheless, foreign governments and international organizations conscious of the deep-rooted immigration issues are hardly used as sources in U.S. immigration news (Benson 278), and the so-called subaltern-class of the society have to verify the usefulness of their existence, in the face of newer and newer version of societal atrocity, assailed upon them with an authoritative vigor. Illegitimate migrants heralding from Africa, Latin America and Asia, working in the USA, represent this neglected fragment of the society who are not only helpless, but are rather tortured by the privileged lot. However, in lieu of an enthralling future, all these so-called proscribed immigrants endure every type of societal atrocity. Biju realizes it very well that though the racial discrimination and inequality torment his soul, and he lives a secluded life in America, but at the same time, the multiple prospects of earning a decent livelihood are missing in his own motherland. It is mainly, due to this contradiction of thoughts, that "Biju could not help but feel a flash of anger at his father, for sending him alone to his country, but knew he wouldn't have forgiven his father, for not trying to send him, either" (Desai 82).

In the 18th century, Jean de Crèvecoeur (1981 [1782]) observed that in America, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men" (192). More than two epochs later, the American experiment of *E Pluribus Unum* lingers with one of the most generous immigration policies in the world, one that includes

provisions for diversity, refugees, family reunification, and workers who bring scarce employment skills. The United States is home to almost one-fifth of the world's international migrants, including 23 million who arrived from 1990 to 2013 (United Nations Population Division, 2013).[1] Nonetheless, this predisposition has given rise to more multifaceted socio- cultural problems. In the new cultural and social set up, immigrants have to re-establish their cultural and historical distinctiveness, by compromising with their morality, ethical values and religious sentimentalities.

The concepts like social insecurity, socio-ethnic practices, sense of self-respect assume new proportions. Values and ethics are often compromised for the sake of obtaining asylum in the First World countries (Levitt 233). Biju's edginess upturns, and scuffs a sentiment already sternly mugged by the parched, transitory and practical human affiliations in New York. The white men are not diffident in battering the brown colour Indians: "*Uloo ka patta* son of an owl, lowdown son-of-a-bitch Indian" (Desai 23). Open to contemptuous annotations that pierced his heart, Biju had to toil under embarrassment, as his hopes are utterly horrified and he recognizes that the people from the unfledged or emerging economies are affianced in a mislaying combat for survival (Desai 102).

Most immigrants (77%) are staying in the USA legally, while almost a quarter are unauthorized, according to new Pew Research Center estimates based on census data adjusted for undercount.[7] Biju soon comprehends the predominance of a profound division between the documented and the undocumented settlers and realizes that unless and until his immigration was acknowledged and specified a legitimate endorsement, he stands nowhere. He spends thirty years of time fiddling the establishments, moving from one ill-paid job to another and craving for the "Green card" (Desai 75), but slowly and surely, he draws three inferences of his migrant status. First, having no family and friends here, he is the only one who suffers the pain of displacement. Therefore his life in the US is void and hollow. Secondly, it will not be conceivable for him to "manufacture a fake version of himself" (Desai 268) like other fellow Indians (undocumented expatriates) in America. And finally, he senses that he cannot bear the encumbrance of his enormous droning self-consciousness and depression to any further extent. Like a giant-sized monster, it has been escalating day- by-day and cannot be abridged. So

1 The most controversial aspects of the new population projections are the impact of immigration on population diversity and the prediction that the U.S. population will become a majority minority population; that is, non-Hispanic whites will be less than half of the total population by the middle of the 21st century (Colby and Ortman, 2015, Table 2).

he desires to relocate to the national space, where he will never be "the only one in a photograph" (Desai 270).

An expectant Biju consumes a share of his life-long earnings in purchasing monies for his father and other relatives and close- consociates and ultimately returns to his motherland in the Gulf Air Plane with a newfangled conviction. He is also in a home-making imaginary planning to buy a taxi with the secreted money in different parts of his clothing and to build a house with solid walls and a well-made roof that will endure cyclical deluges. Once he gets -off the plane in Calcutta, its dust appears to him "warm, mammalian" (Desai 300). An assorted compassion of wretchedness, soreness, nostalgia and saccharinity greets him, and he senses like a baby falling asleep in its mother's lap. The acquainted surroundings full of indigenous dialects diminish his "enormous anxiety of being a foreigner, the unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant" (Desai 300) and sedately provides him the obligatory coziness, which was so much missing in an alien country, like the US. Biju cherishes the acquainted rapture and tries to entomb his unabashed past!

The Inheritance of Loss: Amidst the Narrative called "Life"

Without wasting any time, he straightaway proceeds to Kalimpong, totally insentient of the fact that the vicious and gratuitous insurrection of the Gorkhas, lasting two years, had left the tiny Himalayan town in total wreck and syndrome. For four days, he is crammed on the way and then, making a depraved resolution, sets out to Kalimpong with GNLF insurgents in their jeep. On the way, they rob him of all his possessions, excepting his underwear and offer him a female nightgown, picked up from a nearby bush, to conceal his manhood. The particular uniform, instead of clothing him, coagulates him substantially as well as psychologically bare femininely vulnerable. Biju is for a second time empty-handed, "without his baggage, without his savings, worst of all, without his pride… with far less than he had ever had" (Desai 317). His repugnant chronicle gets over with his arrival at his father's timorous household. Nonetheless, Biju realizes the illusory nature of his dreams and forsakes his longing for the elusive Green card and money for his true individuality. He appreciates that: "Year by year, his life wasn't amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends….. Clumsy in America, a giant-sized midget… shouldn't he return to a life where he might slice his own importance… (Desai 268).

Biju's diffident father is, however, euphoric to accept his son after almost three decades. May be, after this long-awaited blissful re-union, the cook will fight the

battle of his life with a new gusto, because despite the backwardness, paucity, and illiteracy in one's own land, one can develop a sense of belonging and uniqueness only in one's own home land. On the other hand, his son Biju, may forget not only all the degradations at the hand of the powerful aliens, but also the sordid experience of losing his hard-earned money at the hands of aimless hooligans. Here, Kiran Desai destabilizes the notion of significant home (Frost 390) and presents her vision of lost home in *The Inheritance of Loss*. As a diasporic individual, he is dislocated twice—from Kalimpong to New York to Kalimpong again. Biju disastrously fails to grow any lasting spatial and passionate connection with any of his homes as the dislocation of wishes repeatedly occurs in his life. In reality, whether cultures are hereditary or calculatingly championed, as in the case of the migrant status, rudimentary problems of the definition of identity are inescapable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we may say with vivacity, that Biju is the representative figure of the turmoil-torn third world minds who desire to attain the "American Dream" by any warranted or unsubstantiated means. He belongs to the "second wave of less-skilled Indian migrants" (Rangaswamy 122), and his archetypal standoffishness and estrangement in New York can be taken as an emblem of the whole Indian diasporas by postponement—the Indians living abroad. But they are not aware that such life is suspended animation and has no apparition and absolution. The novel has highlighted the everyday life of the émigrés, their misfortunes, invectives and disgraces, their imaginings and longings, fears and hindrances. This shadow class is entombed in the throttling basement: "Then, of course, there were those who lived and died illegal in America and 'never saw their families not for l0 years, twenty, thirty never again" (Desai 99).

In their efforts to seek anchor, assimilation, their psychological pressures, their fear of racism and injustice, they behave exactly like real human beings. Biju's claims of being a civilized individual to a white person indicate his identity dilemma and reflect his failings under colonial dictation and his desperations for a privileged status. Biju's inner-conflict evokes his desires for his identity to be accepted. As such, the pains and agony which the expats endure sound reliable. They are placed in really testing and disastrous situations, from which it is very much challenging to escape. Substantially, Biju's dilemma concedes that his identity is designed and influenced by colonial impacts which presently fail his individuality. In other words, Biju is constrained as a post-colonial individual who is physically, socially and nationally under-valued, stereotyped and marginalized.

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The Unending Waiting of Homo Sapiens: A Comparative Study of Anand's *Untouchable* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

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Abstract Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand's Bakha and Irish Nobel laureate dramatist Samuel Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir have encompassed the whole world where Bakha is from the East and Estragon and Vladimir are from the West bearing uniformity in their voices. They are standing in the labyrinth of waiting as if waiting is the essence of human existence. Through the characterization of these three characters, Anand and Beckett have depicted the existential and identity crises of humankind on earth. They represent those people who are entangled with their surroundings and circumstances being completely unaware of their forthcoming future. Although the three protagonists have been shaped from two different worlds, there is a symphony of voices. The protagonists of both texts bear resemblance to some incidents of the contemporary world which are socially, culturally and politically significant to the world intelligentsia. This is a qualitative study and the objective is to critically analyze the unending waiting of *homo sapiens* (the scientific name of human beings) in relation to their existential crisis and their optimism for a better future in light of the masterpieces *Untouchable* and *Waiting for Godot*. The psychological trauma and never-ending waiting of the three protagonists Bakha, Estragon, and Vladimir can be observed through the lens of the materialistic class distinction, attempt of mimicry, oppression of the high caste, identity crisis of the inferior class and their living under the fear of continual domination and exploitation. To elucidate these socio-psychological dynamics, psycho-analysis and post-colonial theories and writings have been considered.

Key words waiting; Homo sapiens; untouchable; mimicry; existentialism

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Introduction

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), the prominent Irish dramatist has given his main focus on the miserable condition of the exterminated tramps who are the victims of existential crisis as well as the philosophical crisis in the masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* (1948) whereas Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), a writer of the Indian sub-continent has given his paramount concentration on racism and the psychology of the working-class people who are the victims of the vile caste system in the novel *Untouchable* (1935). *Waiting for Godot* is the representation of the ultimate helplessness of human beings on earth focusing on the universal themes like existentialism, absurdity, hopelessness, and nothingness whereas *Untouchable* is the vivid manifestation of the Indian caste system covering some significant themes like racism, untouchability, and social hierarchy. Being born and brought up in two different parts of the world, both Anand and Beckett have accumulated experience regarding the suffering souls on earth that subsist almost in each corner of this vast universe. Through the inscriptions of the Indian novelist and the Irish dramatist the ultimate helplessness and unflagging waiting of life on earth have been portrayed. Anand observed the heinous caste system prevailing in India whereas Beckett faced two massive World Wars and their consequences. In both texts, the reflection of

the authors' experiences is presented and the writers are the social critics of their contemporary world. Anand's Bakha represents the East and Becketts' Estragon and Vladimir represent the West with a sense of uniformity in their voices and similarity of their sufferings, and longings. Despite having different contexts and settings, these three characters Bakha, Estragon, and Vladimir represent the universal phenomenon of the oppressed, suppressed, traumatized, homeless, and helpless people of the world. The unity among these three characters is the portrayal of the universal human atmosphere in this universe where there are sufferings, trauma, and socio-political afflictions as well as existential problems. It will not be an exaggeration to mention the name of the Syrian child *Anal Qurdi*[1] (Gunter 2015) that reminds the "...naked shingles of the world" (Arnold 1867). So there is a sense of hollowness and emptiness in the existing world in which 'waiting' is unavoidable for every human being irrespective of race, caste, creed and nationality that has been portrayed by Bakha, Estragon, and Vladimir. This paper is a humble attempt to elaborate these critical issues in microscopic details and compare the novel and drama based on the theory of Bhabha's mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity, and Sartre's existential crisis. This study will help readers understand the inner sufferings of the tormented souls and their experiences with the flow of time.

Background of the Study

Many of the researchers have shed light on hopelessness and significance of time in human life whereas the present paper focuses on the never-ending waiting of human beings. Noorbakhsh and Torkamaneh claim that Samuel Beckett portrays a mysterious world of waiting 'wrapped in enigma' in the play *Waiting for Godot* (42). They further add that both optimism and pessimism of human life are simultaneously observed in the play. People become pessimistic in the world of suffering and destruction and again they find some new hope to live on (44). Khilfa asserts that due to the WWII, people become hopeless about life and suffer from existential crisis. All the characters of the play are trapped in the net of time and waiting (1). Being completely unable and helpless to get out of the situation, they are thinking about the miserable condition of their life that is based on waiting.

Yuehua has talked about the universal sufferings of human beings, whereas this paper asserts the universal waiting of human beings. Everybody in the play is suffering from some kind of agony and pain that life has brought them either physical or mental. Through the portrayal of the tramps' several attempts of suicide

1 Alan Qurdi is a Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean sea whose dead body was found in the Turkish seashore.

and Estragon's boot act, Beckett wants to make the readers aware of the fact that human beings are born to suffer and they have to undergo sufferings till death (Yuehua 71). The four main characters (Estragon, Vladimir, Lucky, Pozzo) of the play are trapped in 'today', 'tomorrow', 'now', 'at present', 'at this place', 'at this moment' which represent the general human condition of the world. Roy illustrates that human beings are completely dependent on fate and sometimes they become helpless victims of 'ontological fate' since they cannot play any active role to change it (11557). The two tramps are stuck at a place without any hope, salvation, and destination, they just pass their time through several insignificant activities.

The massive destruction of the two World Wars created a world of fragmentation, emptiness, loss and alienation. In the post-war period, people lost their rationality and logic and a feeling of nothingness grew in their minds. They even lost the concrete vision of life, death, time etc. and they used to spend time by waiting. As they waited, they deliberately attempted to distract their mind from the 'burdensomeness of time' by speaking nonsense, playing games, and doing irrelevant gestures which can barely be considered as events or actions (Khilfa 2). Each action of the characters, Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, and Lucky is to pass the time and to prove that they exist in this meaningless universe.

Researchers have focused on the miserable life of the subaltern class but this paper concentrates on the longing and waiting of the oppressed people for salvation and solution to their miserable condition. The representation of the "outcastes'' in the novel *Untouchable* discloses the miserable condition of the *Dalit* community in society (Bhat 87). Christopher presents that the failure of this novel lies in its incapacity to address the issues of equality and justice of the downtrodden rather it has glorified the Gandhian philosophy (64).

Anand demystifies the inner agony and suffering of the subalterns and explores the superstructure of the society where the lower caste people are deprived of fundamental needs. Bakha's miseries and pains are not because of his fault but of his birth in the subaltern class. Being a member of the downtrodden group, he faces humiliation and oppression everywhere in his daily life (Dar 85). Bakha was amused at hearing Gandhi's words of establishing equality in society. He also listens to the view of the poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar that the problem of untouchability can be solved if the modern flush-latrine is introduced. Then the sweepers can get recognition and prestige in society (Hossain 3). Therefore, Bakha is waiting for a better future like the two tramps Estragon and Vladimir.

Waiting as the Essence of Human Life

Waiting is the unavoidable aspect of human life; everyone waits for something all the time, even for a lifetime. There is no limitation of human expectations, desires, and sufferings that is why they cannot but wait until they reach the final destination. The same scenario is observed in Anand's *Untouchable* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Regarding the latter Esslin mentions:

> The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting, the act of waiting as an essential and characteristic aspect of the human condition. Throughout our lives, we always wait for something, and Godot simply represents the objective of our waiting for an event, a thing, a person, death. (50)

The inevitability of waiting for different things in different times of human beings gets overt through these lines. Estragon and Vladimir are waiting for Godot without knowing who s/he is and when and where s/he will come. The interpretations of Godot can be God, hope, regeneration, salvation, omnipotent power, punishment, love, death, future, etc. It represents the general condition of mankind, a lifelong journey of longing and waiting for something. All the human beings of the universe are waiting for some new hope, goal, and achievement of life till their death. Whenever people are in extreme danger, they always long for some omnipotent power, maybe God to be rescued from that problem. The following dialogue of Estragon and Vladimir represents their eternal waiting for Godot:

> ESTRAGON. Let's go.
> VLADIMIR. We can't.
> ESTRAGON. Why not?
> VLADIMIR. We're waiting for Godot. (Beckett 1.47)

Similarly, it happens in the case of Bakha who waits for the end of hatred, untouchability, and racism from society in *Untouchable*. He is waiting for a new morning where he has social, cultural, and racial status. There is a class binary in the same religion in which Bakha belongs to the lowest category. He wants to be treated rightfully in his community since he is a subaltern. Therefore, Anand utters regarding Bakha's pain: "But now he knew that there were degrees of castes among the low-caste and that he was of the lowest" (80). Bakha's longing and waiting are for the abolition of this class system and hatred towards the sweepers since by

belonging to the sweeper class he becomes untouchable in the society.

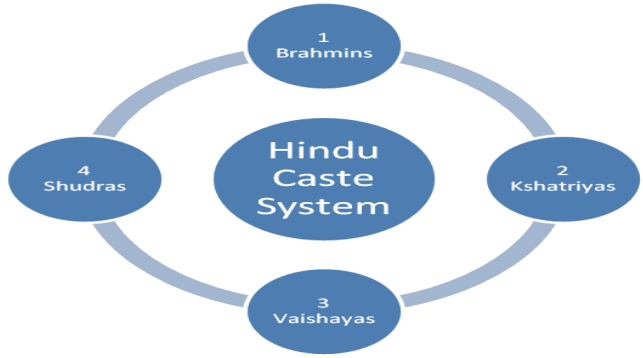

Figure 1: Class Distinction in Hindu Religion[1]

This figure shows the *Hindu* caste system that exists in Indian society where *Brahmins* stand high, then comes *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* and the *Dalits* are considered the lowest community. The *Harijans* or *Bhangis* belong to the *Dalit* community and people having high caste consider them 'untouchable' in society. This is related to Bakha's waiting since this abominable caste system makes him outcast from other communities and he wants the termination of it. It is a matter of great concern and agony for him since he is deprived repeatedly by others even in his very own religious association. Bakha utters with sorrow "Posh, posh, sweeper coming. The undertone, 'Untouchable, Untouchable,' was in his heart; the warning shout, 'Posh, posh, sweeper coming!'" (Anand 44). He waits and wants the consummation of 'untouchability' that is why the words 'posh' and 'untouchable' are so important here as these words reveal the inner agony of Bakha.

Universality of Waiting

Anand's Bakha sounds like an Indian Hindu name and Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir sound like French and Russian names respectively. Beckett's other two significant characters Lucky and Pozzo resemble English and Italian names respectively. Thus it can be argued that all these characters portray the general human condition across the planet. Bakha, a sweeper of the lower caste, is the victim of the Indian caste system because of the existing class distinction. This social system makes Bakha a colonized psyche where he is fascinated by western culture ignoring his own identity. Bakha is waiting to get rid of his lower-class identity and his waiting is for a new identity where there is no class consciousness,

1 Figure 1: The Hindu Caste System

racism, and hatred in the society. In the text, it is presented that he is unable to play with everyone, incapable of eating proper food, and going to school because he is poor and untouchable. Bakha's dream is social equality where he could get that opportunity to enjoy his life to the fullest like others. These characters remind us of the wretched condition of millions of children and people of Syria, Palestine and African countries who are suffering from malnutrition due to scarcity of food and waiting for a better tomorrow.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon wait for an unknown thing or person who can save them and make an end of their tormenting waiting. These two characters are jobless, purposeless and they are static in a particular situation. This stagnant condition is the reason for their sufferings as they have no food for survival and destination of life. Vladimir and Estragon are also traumatized and without any sense of belongingness, they just pass their time with lots of meaningless thoughts with the expectation of a blissful life. On the other hand, Bakha is a working boy whose work has no recognition in Indian racist society as sweeping is considered as insignificant work. Bakha is a character in pre-independent India when people are waiting and longing for an independent nation. Childs and Williams talk about the Indian people's longing and waiting for independence and the importance of 'the non-violent forms of Gandhian satyagraha' that combine all classes of people of Indian society irrespective of race, religion, and culture (28). It reveals and intensifies people's longing for Independence, *Swaraj*[1]. So, the motif of Anand's and Beckett's characters is the same and that is waiting, waiting to get relief from their present bitter condition. All three characters suffer from identity dilemmas and existential crises. Thus, in both texts, the context of pre and post-World Wars is the same. Beckett's characters are waiting for salvation and Anand's character Bakha is waiting for social equality.

The Indian oppressed people of all walks wanted to be relieved from British colonial rule and emancipation was their dream and subject of waiting. In 1947, India got independence, and then maybe another kind of desire and longing started to rise among people including waiting to get rid of neo-colonialism. During WWI and WWII, people's longing was to stop the war and destruction. This very scenario has been meticulously represented in Beckett's characterization. After the two World Wars, the world entered into a Cold War and people then longed for the end of the Cold War. In postmodern time, people are now encountering wars, conflicts, and violence like the Middle East crisis, Syria crisis, Rohingya crisis, and many more. People now are waiting for the end of the present crisis like the Rohingya

1 Liberty, freedom, emancipation

are waiting to go back to Myanmar with fundamental human rights, the people of Kashmir are waiting to get independence and termination of repeated bloodshed. Syria is waiting for constructive politics, Palestine is waiting to get relief from the aggression of Israel and the whole world is now waiting to overcome the global pandemic, Covid-19. Thus, Bakha, Vladimir, and Estragon represent the universal human condition through their characterizations in similar types of contexts where people are longing for salvation and relief from crisis. The wretched people who are the victims of war, conflict, domination, and crisis spend their time like the two tramps of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

The Expectation for an Omnipotent Power for Salvation

In both texts, there is the presence of hardships, the portrayal of the persecuted souls who are the victims of some kinds of oppression and maltreatment. There is the significant authority of the whites on the psychology of the natives in Anand's *Untouchable* and again there is the visible and invisible influence of the upper-class people having high caste status on the so-called lower or inferior class in society. Bakha's inner agony is exposed through these lines since he is a victim of cruel social distinction:

> All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused? The santry inspictor and the Sahib that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. (Anand 43)

There is direct oppression and suffering in the case of Bakha as people ignore him but in the case of Vladimir and Estragon, there is no direct oppression rather a trace of invisible oppression since their waiting for Godot turns into claustrophobic life. The sweeper class of people has no identity in society; they are not even touchable by other people having a high caste. Bakha's waiting is to get 'touch-ability' by others since he belongs to the outcast community where he cannot communicate with the superior community. Bakha expresses his agony by uttering "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper-untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am Untouchable!" (Anand 43). The lower class people have restrictions and regulations to maintain while communicating with the upper class and this signifies the communication gap due to the class system. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon's souls are also tormented by some kind of unknown, invisible power that is either domination or salvation. They are spending time on that invisible power but Godot does not come which is the cause of their suffering.

So, they are entangled in a world of nothingness as Estragon says "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (Beckett 1.84).

Lack of communication is a conspicuous feature of absurd drama that is observed in the characters of Vladimir and Estragon. They are talking but they are not communicating appropriately since there is fragmented language and repetition of things in their speech as they repeat the words 'nothing' and 'nothingness'. The drama begins with this line "Nothing to be done" (Beckett 1.57) and later Estragon repeats it several times. The two tramps are talking most of the time without effective communication with the ultimate communication gap which is the aftermath of their tormented psychology.

> ESTRAGON. I asked you a question.
> VLADIMIR. Ah.
> ESTRAGON. Did you reply?
> VLADIMIR. How's the carrot?
> ESTRAGON. It's a carrot. (Beckett, 1.56)

They are unable to give proper feedback to each other since one asks a question about one thing but the other answers something different. The communication gap and the inability to use language is a common phenomenon in modern plays. Language and non-communication is a conspicuous feature of the *Theatre of the Absurd*. In the play *The Birthday Party*, Pinter exposes the issue of non-communication through the lines uttered by Stanley "But what I mean is… you know how it is… away from your own…all wrong, of course… I'll be all right when I get back…but what I mean is…" (34). We observe the fragmentation of language and the failure of communication since nothing is exposed clearly. Similarly, Estragon and Vladimir are not communicating at all, they are just passing time to distract their mind forgetting the existing affliction because they have to wait there for Godot whose existence is in serious doubt. Thus, Bakha waits for someone or something that would make an end of untouchability whereas Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot who can be either savior or punisher.

Things Fall Apart

Both texts present the picture of the psychological sufferings of the wretched class of the society through the presentation and characterization. The powerful section of the society always wants to establish its authority over the subaltern or the powerless and marginalized people. This conflict and praxis of power are

universal in all nationalities. So, the subaltern class always has to wait for equality, touch-ability, and freedom of speech. To talk about the colonized society Sartre illustrates "Thus Europe has multiplied divisions and oppositions, forged classes and sometimes racisms, attempted by every means to cause and to increase the stratification of the colonized societies" (139). The fact is that these marginalized people are the worst sufferers because of the white man's so-called established superiority- the superiority of culture, religion, ideology, and everything.

As *Waiting for Godot* is contextualized after the Second World War, the two tramps represent those people who observed the destruction and suffering during wartime. People on earth observed that their familiar world was turning into an unfamiliar planet with the inauspicious arrival of manmade crises like capitalism, individualism, moral degradation, nuclear Holocaust and massive destruction in the World Wars. In the post-war world, they are stuck in psychological trauma being claustrophobic. That is why the two tramps are waiting for Godot believing that s/he can solve their problems and bring prosperity and destination in their lives. The English writers W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Matthew Arnold also talked about this conflict and suffering of the modern era in their writings. In the poem "The Second Coming" Yeats utters: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (120). The phrase 'things fall apart' signifies the deconstructed society represented in the contemporary world.

In the post-war world, there were death, destruction, sorrows, and sufferings everywhere. People observed massive destruction because of the conflict of power of powerful countries. Many people became alienated as they lost everything during the war. It is transparent from Vladimir's words, "In an instant, all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness" (Beckett 2.134). People's faith in God and religion become diminished because God cannot save them from the danger of war since Nietzsche has mentioned, "God is dead! God is dead!" and

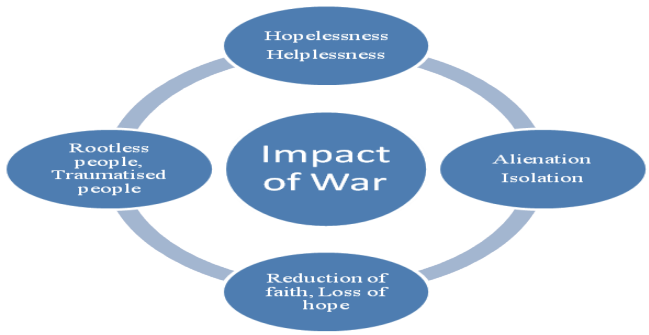

Figure 2: Presentation of Post World War Society

later he repeated, "God is dying! God is dying!" (Sautet 180-181). People need some optimistic power who can rescue them from their sufferings and Godot symbolizes that power. Beckett attempts absurd play to show the emptiness, isolation, alienation of the war victims through the two tramps Vladimir and Estragon who are waiting for that omnipotent power.

Therefore, the waiting of the common people is for getting rid of this kind of 'horror'. The two tramps symbolize the common people who want to be saved by some kind of unknown savior like Godot. In *Untouchable*, Anand presents the picture of the colonial period where there is colonial prevalence as well as domination among the natives within their same religion as he presents Indian racial society. Social discrimination is important to continue domination as is exposed through the line: "Nothing is more consistent, among us, than racist humanism, since Europeans have only been able to make themselves human beings by creating slaves and monsters" (Sartre 151). Anand's purpose is to present a group of people who are dominated by the people of the same society and also by the colonizers. So, there is a double layer of domination- by the natives and by the colonizers. A binary opposition has been constructed by the native themselves in their very own community as they cannot tolerate the sweepers who belong to their homeland and another imposition is executed by the colonizers who establish themselves as the superior. So, the agony and trauma of Bakha are the consequences of double colonization. The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Beckett presents the situation of the post-colonial period whereas Anand presents the situation of the colonial period in pre-independent India. In both texts, there is a picture of oppression, sufferings, sorrows, inner agony, and psychological trauma resulting from both internal and external forces.

A Blending of Pessimism and Optimism

Irrespective of their caste, creed, color, and nationality, Bakha, Estragon, and Vladimir are the role models of optimism since all of them are longing for a new morning where Bakha is in a prestigious position in the Hindu society, and Estragon and Vladimir get food, clothes, shelter, and a destination. In a word, they will become free from their current traumatic sufferings and get a world of self-fulfillment. Despite being optimistic, their past and present contexts drive them to pessimism, and again they get revitalized. Their pessimism is presented by Estragon's narration: "Let's hang ourselves immediately!" (Beckett 1.52) and optimism is by Vladimir's: "Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand" (1.53).

Again in his speech, optimism is observed: "Ah Gogo, don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better" (1.99). In *Untouchable*, being a sweeper, Bakha cannot enjoy the right of education, entrance to the temple and he becomes pessimistic thinking about their condition where they are only ignored and hated by the high caste. But his father Lakha pacifies his anger and handles his pessimism by uttering these words: "We must realize that it is religion which prevents them from touching us" (Anand 74). So, Lakha wants to explain their condition as a result of the religious system. Hindu religion creates this kind of binary and discrimination among different castes as higher and lower. From then Bakha thinks about the religious system and the existence of God. Bakha understands that what is necessary for all of them is to reconstruct the whole system. Though he becomes depressed sometimes for the existing system, there is a hope that the system will change when they will get recognition from all. In the speech of Mahatma Gandhi[1], Bakha finds some hope: "Well, we must destroy caste; we must destroy the inequalities of birth and unalterable vocations. We must recognize an equality of rights, privileges and opportunities for everyone" (Anand 145).

There is hope for change and a better future for the sweepers who are considered untouchable. There is a Gandhian voice against 'untouchability' and Mahatma Gandhi was keen to uplift the 'untouchables'. He delivered a speech on the need to uproot untouchability from India and it brings tranquility to Bakha's mind. Gandhi wants to unite all classes of people to fight against British rule; he wants to eradicate hatred, racism from India to get an independent nation. Childs and Williams assert Gandhi's dream of Indian independence and his ideology regarding the importance of establishing harmony among all classes of people in society (29). Gandhi's love for an untouchable boy is observed in Narayan's novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* where he says, the untouchables are the true cleaners. To glorify the worth of the sweepers Gandhi asserts "Now one can believe that the true cleansers of the city live here" (Narayan 52). *Mahatmaji* spoke of untouchability and caste system and Mahatma represents a great soul for whom Bakha is waiting for all these years. Similarly, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot who may also be a great soul like Mahatma whose arrival will resolve the mystery of their puzzled life.

Waiting and Time

Waiting is very much related to the concept of time. Time is an important aspect

1 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is an anti-colonial nationalist, social activist and pioneer of the nonviolent movement.

in the case of an absurd play like *Waiting for Godot* that resembles existentialist literature because it deals not only with existence or identity but also with the momentary and the internal time. The time mentioned in this play is related to the human psychological condition. The eternal waiting of two tramps makes them frustrated and helpless but they cannot but wait. The human trait to pass time is related to their existential dilemma. Beckett believes that human beings reduce their pain of living or existence through habit. 'Tomorrow' is an important word that indicates the near future for which each character waits. Tomorrow connotes new hope, a new beginning, and a new journey with new vitality. Therefore, time is very much related and relevant to the concept of 'waiting'. To wait for an uncertain time is tormenting for the two tramps as observed in their conversation:

VLADIMIR. We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. (Pause.) Unless
Godot comes.
ESTRAGON. And if he comes?
VLADIMIR. We'll be saved. (Beckett 2.152)

The two tramps firmly believe that they will be saved and rescued from their present hellish condition by the entrance of Godot who represents savior. As in the absurd play, time is not certain; the concept of time for these two tramps is confined in tomorrow:

VLADIMIR. We have to come back tomorrow.
ESTRAGON. What for?
VLADIMIR. To wait for Godot. (2.150)

The messenger boy also delivers the message that Godot will come tomorrow and they wait for this uncertain tomorrow. This tomorrow represents the undying, eternal, and endless time of human life. Everyone has to pass their time by doing something just to prove that they exist. Existentialist writer Albert Camus (1991) also portrays a similar picture in *The Myth of Sisyphus* where he describes the absurd condition of human beings who always wait for 'tomorrow' in this world that is a foreign, strange, and inhuman place. Shakespeare in his play *Macbeth* reveals it excellently through the voice of Macbeth:

To-morrow, and to-morrow and to-morrow,
... Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more, It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing. (Shakespeare 203-204)

These lines signify the futility of human existence in this universe. People always desire to achieve things and that is why they wait for tomorrow. This tomorrow is continuous and one-day they face death waiting for this tomorrow. The same idea about time sounds repeatedly in these words- "Clocks slay time... time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life" (Faulkner 85). Time is futile and sometimes becomes meaningless in the context of human life where people only wait for future happenings. Till death people have to wait for livelihood, better life, social security, job, freedom, liberty, and whatnot!

In *Untouchable*, Bakha also waits for the time when his life will be changed. He tries to copy the English master continuously ignoring his own cultural identity that Bhabha termed as mimicry. Nayar puts his thoughts as "Mimicry is the disciplined imitation of the white man by the native" (170). Similarly, to copy the master Bakha utters the lines, "I will look like a sahib, he had secretly told himself. And I shall walk like them. Just as they do, in twos, with Chota as my companion. But I have no money to buy things" (Anand 3). Thus a sense of mimicry grows in Bakha's psychology and at the same time, it is a matter of agony for him as he is helpless, poor, and unable to buy things like his master. Childs and Williams talk about Bhabha's 'colonial discourse' where people are in an ambivalent situation to follow the colonial master (124). Bakha tries to follow the *sahibs* and he becomes mesmerized by observing how they talk, walk, eat, wear dresses etc. It has a great impact on the psyche of people like Bakha who is the victim of the social class system as illustrated through the text: "But Bakha was a child of modern India. The clear cut styles of European dress had impressed his naive mind" (Anand 2). Racial domination and class discrimination have a great impact on the psychological growth of the outcastes. It is very queer that there is racial discrimination within the same Hindu community and religion:

> The outcastes were not allowed to mount the platform surrounding the well, because if they were ever to draw water from it, the Hindus of the three upper castes would consider the water polluted. (Anand 14)

Bakha suffers from mental agony and trauma thinking about this caste system. He does not want to accept the caste system that creates distinction among people and also brings chaos and hatred in society. He has a great passion for learning but he could not learn because of this class struggle and objectionable racial restriction. As a child, he visualizes everything with tender imagination and thought and he cannot accept the reality that remains in society for long. The sweepers are called "*dirty dog*," "*son of pig*," "*blackman*," "*swine*," "*dog*," "*bitch*," "*low caste vermin*," and similar vulgar words. So some issues arise in Bakha's mind like if it is their fault that they are sweepers and if it is their mistake to be a low caste. All these are the results of the inconsiderate construction of society, religion, and culture. It never brings any good for people or society but becomes the result of psychological sufferings of the downtrodden and low caste people like little Bakha. He always tries to get relief from this kind of work because others always hate his community. He always thinks about dignity, respect, and wants to get rid of humiliation and social discrimination.

In the name of religion, the upper castes establish this kind of discrimination but they manipulate religion for their very own advantage. His sister Sohini is molested by the *Pundit* in the temple and this same pandit Kali Nath shouted saying 'Polluted! polluted!' seeing Bakha entering into the temple as the untouchable class has no access to the holy place. It makes Bakha furious and helpless as he could not punish the Pundit for his crime because Bakha is inferior to him and at the same time untouchable. His father warns him saying- "'No, no, my son, no,' said Lakha, 'We can't do that. They are our superiors'" (Anand 71). Bakha thinks about this hypocrisy of society and like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's (1964) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Bakha thinks about the futility of society, religion, community, language, and everything where he has found no place for him or his class in this vast universe. He wants to break everything as it has no ideal rules; people make rules, customs, and rituals for their very own purpose. He wants to find peace and salvation in religion at a time when a priest tries to convince Bakha about Christianity and the mercy of Jesus Christ. Bakha is ambivalent with a traumatic psyche so it is easy to manipulate him by talking about mercy, peace, harmony, relief etc. Bakha questions equality, God, Christ, religion but he becomes confused as he utters "'Yes, yes, Sahib, I understand,' said Bakha eagerly. 'Yessuh Messih makes no difference between the Brahmin and myself'" (Anand 120). Thus, each character is waiting for something supernatural or benevolent for a change in their fate.

The Inception of Industrialization and Waiting

After industrialization, with the entrance of machinery into the production system manual labor started to be diminished. It triggers the abolishment of the cultural identity of a state or nation as stated here: "In the colonial situation, culture, which is doubly deprived of the support of the nation and the state, falls away and dies" (Fanon 197). At the end of the novel *Untouchable*, a similar picture is observed as there is the possibility of the arrival of machinery which has been presented as the solution to uproot untouchability from society. But the matter is whether the profession of sweeping has gained any respect or identity as other professions or not. It is a question of the cultural identity of a particular community that has been neglected due to the indifference and hatred of the people.

Bakha's agony is not for changing the nature of his profession with the entrance of machinery but for a respectful identity and an end to the existing social racism. Nayar describes the race as a 'marker of difference' that is responsible to create 'slavery, exploitation, and death' (222). The problem is the existing social racism but the solution has been presented through machine production and the application of new machinery. It has destroyed the necessity of manual labor for human beings. Lane explains the picture of pre and post-industrialized society where after industrialization people get detached from manual labor forgetting the use of tools that were used in manual labor earlier (73). So in the industrial period, lots of modern instruments have been invented to make human life luxurious and comfortable but those do not bring any prestigious change for the lower class people who always seek better identity and approval or acceptability in society. According to Lane:

> What this means is that human beings in industrialized capitalist nations no longer understand their "social relations", which were stable within older societies. Neither do human beings consider themselves as subjects given meaning by the tools they use at work- as did, according to Marxist, the craftsperson in pre-industrialized society. (69)

Modern machinery could not help to bring or establish social harmony rather creates social isolation and discrimination. Despite these truths, Bakha becomes happy with the hope of changing his fate listening to the words of Mahatma:

> When the sweepers change their profession, they will no longer remain

> untouchables...Then the sweepers can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society. (Anand 146)

Besides, in *Waiting for Godot*, two helpless, purposeless tramps are the witnesses and victims of war. The question 'who can save us?' becomes stuck in their mind. Godot signifies that savior; s/he might be some hope of prosperity, diversity, mobility, salvation, regeneration, and vitality. Being in the middle of the valley of death and decay, with some new hope and belief they just wait there whatever happens to them. Everything becomes meaningless, illogical to them in a post-war atmosphere, only emptiness and nothingness remain. It becomes transparent from Vladimir's words: "In an instant, all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness" (Beckett 2.134). War evokes death and destruction that remain in the psyche of the people to make them traumatized. They become alienated from their work and now they are waiting for a new life with a new future where they can start again with new enthusiasm being saved by someone like Godot or Mahatma. Two World Wars symbolize the failure of reason, logic of the modern world and the breakdown of grand narratives. The two tramps still wait for that unacknowledged Godot who remains invisible until the end of the play. The two tramps continue their waiting for him/her:

> VLADIMIR. Well? Shall we go?
> ESTRAGON. Yes, let's go.
> They do not move. (Beckett 1.100 & 2.152)

They are standing there with the belief in mind that 'Godot will come tomorrow' and without this hope, they cannot exist and everyone in this uncertain universe lives with hope.

Conclusion

It can be asserted that there is consonance in both texts that deal with waiting, a common phenomenon of every human being. The novel *Untouchable* ends with the prospect of scientific development and the ultimate message is that the inception of technology and science can eradicate the problems of the sweepers and outcasts. Thus, the rejection of Indian roots and culture is closely intertwined with British colonialism. Bakha is not the only Indian fascinated by English superiority and culture; it is the authentic picture of all colonized people. At the end of the novel,

it has been suggested that the European 'machine' might be the path of salvation and freedom for the "untouchables." It also shows the paradigm shift of agricultural society to modern technological and industrial society highlighting the rejection of Indian heritage and their way of clearing waste replaced by the European and modern way of flushing system. But the question is the professional identity of the sweepers whether or not they will get proper respect and identity in society. Maybe their waiting remains as usual but in a different way. Likewise, in *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon's 'waiting for Godot' does not come to an end. They suffer from physical as well as psychological quandary being stuck in a crucial situation from which they need to be relieved by some omnipotent and supernatural power. Therefore, the three characters wait until the end of both texts. It is questionable and uncertain whether they continue waiting until death or it comes to an end during their lifetime. This waiting signifies the waiting of humankind for something in their lifetime. From birth to death, everyone has to go through this waiting and longing for something. Waiting is the ultimate essence of human life; people always pass their time through this continuous process of waiting. Whatever happens, good or bad, happy or sad, people will start waiting again for some new destination with the expectation of a certain life. The three characters Bakha, Vladimir, and Estragon go through this vicious cycle of waiting that replicates the eternal waiting of the *Homo sapiens*.

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The Absorption and Transformation of Neo-Confucianism during the Edo Period of Japan

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Abstract The acceptance of neo-Confucianism during the Edo period in Japan was not a simple imitation or entire collection of the advanced country's high-quality resources by the backward country under cultural deficit, but a process of selection, absorption, transformation and localization. Its absorption was embodied in the transition from "nature" to "artificiality," as well as in the transition from "respect" to "sincerity." The transformation covered "Li-Qi Dualism," "Monarch-Subject united in righteousness," "Change of Ruling Imperial Family," etc. During the Edo period, Japan's absorption and transformation of neo-Confucianism showed features like indirect-to-direct, passive-to-active, subjective-and-selective, practical-and-applicable. Moreover, it followed the internal rule that based on Yamato people's values, thinking mode and aesthetic orientation, to form an ideological system with Japanese characteristics in the process of continuous collision, digestion and fusion with Confucianism.

Key words neo-Confucianism; the Edo period of Japan; localization; absorption; transformation

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After Confucianism was introduced to Japan, as a resource, it produced a profound impact

on Japan's politics, economy, culture, education and many other aspects. However, Japan's acceptance of Confucianism is not a simple imitation or entire collection of the advanced country's high-quality resources by the backward country under cultural deficit, but a process of selection, absorption, transformation and localization. After the introduction of neo-Confucianism, this tendency became especially obvious, and reached its peak in the Edo period (1603-1867). This article attempts to explore the process and features of Edo-Japan's acceptance of neo-Confucianism, in order to re-discover the contents and traits of Confucianism beyond ethnic and national boundaries through historical experience, and to seek the revival of Confucianism under the background of unprecedented changes in a century.

Process and Features of Edo-Japan's Absorption of Neo-Confucianism

According to *Kojiki* (712), pre-Qin Confucianism was introduced to Japan by Wani in the 5th century AD, followed by *Book of Changes*, *Book of Poetry*, *The Book of History*, *Zuo Zhuan*, *The Book of Rites*, and began to work in all fields of Japan. While the Muromachi period (1336-1573) began, with the introduction of neo-Confucianism, the influence of pre-Qin Confucianism gradually declined to the point where "only fragmented speech expressing political thought remains" [1]. However, it cannot be denied that, due to the dominance of "Zen and Confucianism Integration," neo-Confucianism was not initially regarded as an ideological system independent from the native Zen in Japan. The main purpose of Zen monks preaching Confucianism is not to spread Confucianism, but to demonstrate the brilliance of Zen.

During the Edo period, Samurai class with political power and the merchant class with economic power coexisted as dual forces in Japan. Both the two classes showed active acceptance of neo-Confucianism to meet political and economic needs. In addition, the structure of Tokugawa feudalism was highly similar to that of Zhou Dynasty in China. Consequently, neo-Confucianism began to slip the leash of Zen and gradually developed into a dominant ideology. There were four main groups of Confucian scholars including Zhuzi school (represented by Seika Fujiwara, Razan Hayashi, Ansai Yamazaki, etc.), Yangming school (represented by Toju Nakae, Banzan Kumazawa, etc.), Ancient school (represented by Soko Yamaga, Jinsai Ito, etc.) and Kobunji-gaku (represented by Sorai Ogyu), among which Zhuzi school was the largest one. Some researchers oppose the division by school, but advocate that the acceptance and development of neo-Confucianism

1 Kenichiro Ishida ed.. *History of Japanese Land Tenure 22. History of Thought I* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishing Co. Ltd., 2001) 70-79. Anything not specifically marked is from the author's own translation.

in Edo-Japan should be divided into two successive stages with the year of 1733 (the 5th year after the death of Sorai Ogyu) as the dividing line. The early stage was consisted of the above-mentioned four schools, and the later stage mainly referred to Baigan Ishida's Shingaku[1]. However, Confucian scholars of the latter stage did not make breakthroughs in the ideological contents or logical thinking, but only further emphasized the propositions advocated by Yangming school in the early stage. Therefore, on the whole, the acceptance of neo-Confucianism in Edo-Japan showed two transitions: from Samurai class to citizen class, and from Zhuzi school to Yangming school. These two transitions were embodied in changes from "nature" to "artificiality"[2] and from "respect" to "sincerity"[3].

The transition from "nature" to "artificiality" was completed in sequence by four Confucian scholars, namely Razan Hayashi, Soko Yamaga, Jinsai Ito, Sorai Ogyu, and it was also reflected in the alternation of four Confucian schools. Neo-Confucianism advocated a worldview of "Harmony between Man and Nature," of which the essence was to derive social laws from natural laws, to guarantee the effectiveness of social laws with the authority of natural laws, and to implement social laws as a natural law. In fact, "Order of Nature" by neo-Confucianism contained "Order of Man," and its "Order of Man" was attached to "Order of Nature." Razan Hayashi highly praised the neo-Confucian notion that "Order of nature is order of man," and also emphasized the idea that laws of "nature" ought to cover moral laws like "to cultivate the self, regulate the family, govern the state, then lead the world to peace." However, with the shake and collapse of the shogunate system during Genroku and Kyoho periods, the notion that "Order of nature is order of man" lost social foundation on which it depended to survive. Thus, Japanese Confucian scholars began to shift their emphasis from natural laws to man-made laws. Among them, Soko Yamaga separated "Order of Nature" from "Order of Man," and laid more emphasis on "Order of Man." He claimed that only "Order of Man" could help people make judgements on the inadequacy and overabundance of desires. Later, Jinsai Ito went further to specify "Order of Man" into ethical guidelines, such as "benevolence, justice, etiquette, wisdom, faith," claiming that ethical guidelines were not inherent with people, but to be strived for by people. However, it was Sorai Ogyu who finally completed the transition of

1 Hiroshi Watanabe. *Neo-Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2010) 10-65.

2 Masao Maruyama. *Studies in intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1952). The corresponding Japanese expressions are「自然」和「作為」.

3 The corresponding Japanese expressions are「つつしみ」和「まこと」.

neo-Confucianism from "nature" to "artificiality" in Japan. He replaced "Order of Man," which was believed to be derived from "Order of Nature" by Zhuzi school, with man-made "*dao*" (the Confucian way). He held that "*dao*" was not an absolute abstract existence, but a common concrete man-made basis to form orders in daily human relations. So far, the transition from "nature" to "artificiality" was completed. Through this process, it is found that Japanese Confucian scholars were keen to the value orientation that serves the ruling class and provides theoretical basis for "making" "*dao*" to meet the ruling class's interests. Meanwhile, modern Japanese law sprouted within the feudal system.

The transition from "respect" to "sincerity" actually reflected different choices and emphasis on the essential of virtues by Japanese Confucian scholars in the process of accepting neo-Confucianism. In China, the emphasis on both "sincerity" and "respect" began with pre-Qin Confucianism, then developed by Cheng-zhu School and gradually became an important part of Chinese Confucian ideological system. Seika Fujiwara, the earliest Confucian scholar in the Edo period of Japan, relatively faithfully accepted the concepts of "respect" and "sincerity" of Cheng-zhu school, and advocated equal emphasis on both. But later, Razan Hayashi laid more emphasis on "respect" and believed that "etiquette" was the universally basic principle. Therefore, in his opinion, it was "etiquette" that made people's gestures and expressions meet the requirements of "respect." [1] Moreover, Ansai Yamazaki also emphasized "respect" and considered it as an individual's subjective consciousness. Predictably, at this stage, Japanese Confucian scholars' understanding of "respect" had shown a clear introversion tendency. This was undoubtedly related to the ethical tradition of Japanese samurai class focusing on self-respect and it revealed the contradiction between "respect" in neo-Confucianism and "respect" in traditional Japanese views. After that, Soko Yamaga approved of "respect" in neo-Confucianism but laid more emphasis on "sincerity." Moreover, Jinsai Ito regarded "sincerity" as the way and guarantee to realize "loyalty" and the foundation of virtues. Among latter Confucian scholars, more and more paid attention to "sincerity." This was certainly related to the rise of Yangming school in Japan, but "makoto" advocated by Yangming school referred to the sincerity to intuitive knowledge, which was an attitude and process of cultivating the body and mind. But the "sincerity" understood by Japanese Confucian scholars related to "emotion," which required sincere emotions toward others and into sincere actions. Therefore, through the transition from "respect" to "sincerity," it is not difficult to see the tolerant attitude of Japanese Confucian scholars towards human desires and

1 Toru Sagara: *Sincere Japanese* (Tokyo: Perikansha Publishing Inc., 1980) 166-167.

their ethical position on physical sciences.

Process and Features of Edo-Japan's Transformation of Neo-Confucianism

When discussing the transformation of neo-Confucianism in Japan during the Edo period, Chinese and Japanese scholars usually hold two different positions. Chinese scholars are accustomed to analyzing the influence of Chinese Confucianism on Japanese Confucianism based on the inherent Chinese Confucian ideology; while Japanese scholars are committed to demonstrating the rationality of Japanese Confucian ideology to prove the effectiveness of its transformation. This article tries to analyze the process and characteristics of Japan's transformation of neo-Confucianism during the Edo period based on the historical facts of the dissemination of Confucian classics in Japan.

Firstly, Zhu Xi, the master of Confucian Idealistic School in Song Dynasty, advocated a cosmological system centered on "Li-Qi Dualism," but Japanese Confucian scholars did not faithfully inherit his ideas. Although Razan Hayashi agreed with "Li-Qi Dualism," he actually emphasized its ideology based on human nature and political position, rather than cosmology, by advocating Shinbutsu-shugo. Ansai Yamazaki claimed to be a loyal apprentice of Zhuzi school, but his understanding of "Li-Qi Dualism" was quite different from Zhu Xi's from the perspective of inquiry into physics. Zhu Xi emphasized the direction of transitions from physics to metaphysics and from "Fen Shu" to "Li Yi" in the process of inquiring into physics; while Ansai Yamazaki advocated the exclusion of physical "Li" and the direct transition from "heart" to "Li Yi" through "self-consciousness." From the above, Japanese Confucian scholars transformed Zhu Xi's thought from two aspects. First, they externalized Zhu Xi's metaphysical "Li" into the realistic principles or rules among substances. Second, they transformed Zhu Xi's "Li-Qi Dualism" into "Qi Monism" with Japanese characteristics. The external reason came from the "synchronic" coexistence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in Japan, which was different from the "diachronic" situation in China. Because most of the Japanese Confucian scholars had been influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, they inevitably felt "unacclimatized" when accepting Confucianism, which required transformation to be localized in Japan. The internal reason was attributed to the inherent way of thinking of Japanese people, that is, they are accustomed to regard the given environment and objective conditions as self-sufficient existence unattached to other matters.[1]

1 Hajime Nakamura. *The Ways of thinking of Eastern people* (Tokyo: Shunjusha Publishing Company, 1989) 13.

Secondly, in terms of the monarch-subject relationship, Japanese Confucian scholars transformed "Monarch-Subject united in righteousness" into "Monarch-Subject united by origin." In *Collected Annotations on the Analects*, Zhu Xi proposed that the Monarch and his ministers should be united by righteousness, which not only required ministers to be loyal to the emperor, but also required the emperor to treat his ministers with virtue, etiquette and justice. However, "filial piety," which was based on consanguinity, only required the son to be filial to the father unilaterally, which was embodied in "father-son united by origin." In Japan, since the selection of officials did not rely on the imperial civil examination system, but the "list of Kuge families" (the status of family), the relationship between the monarch and ministers had been determined since the birth, which was performed in the relationship between the monarch as the parent and the retainer as the family member. Based on this special feudal system and the Confucian principle of "father-son united by origin," Japanese Confucian scholars transformed "Monarch-Subject united in righteousness" into "Monarch-Subject united in origin," and required the ministers to be unilaterally loyal to the monarch. Since "loyalty" and "filial piety" were governed by the same principle, loyalty to the superior was filial piety, and vice versa. In ancient Japanese ethics, this was embodied as "a consistent loyalty and filial piety."

Thirdly, "Change of Ruling Imperial Family" underwent a qualitative change in its connotation after being spread to Japan. It originally referred to the overthrow of the emperor's ruling and the change of the name of the dynasty by high-status people according to the will of God. In China, Confucianism advocated kingcraft politics, and tyrants should be condemned by heaven and replaced by virtuous ones. Therefore, the change of dynasties was often accompanied by the change of ruling imperial family. But in Japan, subject to the theory of "divine descendants to be monarch," only members of the Emperor family, who were descendants of Amaterasu-Omikami, were eligible to become emperors. Even after the Samurai seized power, the Emperor was still confined to his divine identity. Although he possessed no authority of force, he still enjoyed the authority of the divinity, so there was no possibility of being replaced by someone outside the emperor's family. It was true that in the process of changing the samurai regime, not a few people preached "ruling by virtuous man" to prove the legitimacy of the seizure of power, but this was only for the inside of the samurai class, not including violating the divine authority, that is, the Emperor. Moreover, after the seizure of power, the preach of "ruling by virtuous man" immediately lost its value and meaning. Therefore, unlike Chinese "change of ruling imperial family" among emperor,

ministers and literati, Japanese "change of ruling imperial family" underwent a qualitative change in connotation, and it could only happen to those apart from the Emperor, like the Shogun, the Daimyo, and the Samurai.

In summary, on the one hand, the absorption of neo-Confucianism in the Edo period of Japan could be embodied in the transitions from "nature" to "artificiality," and from "respect" to "sincerity." But no matter what kind of transition, it never deviated from the scope of neo-Confucian world outlook, and it was always the result of Japanese Confucian scholars' emphasis on different aspects of neo-Confucianism in different historical periods. On the other hand, during the Edo period, Japan also transformed neo-Confucianism's "Li-Qi Dualism," "Monarch-Subject united in righteousness," "Change of Ruling Imperial Family." However, no matter what kind of transformation, the original intention was not to fundamentally shake Japanese social system, but merely to make necessary measures to adapt neo-Confucianism to the system. Undeniably, during the Edo period, Japan's absorption and transformation of neo-Confucianism showed features like indirect-to-direct, passive-to-active, subjective-and-selective, practical-and-applicable. Moreover, it followed the internal rule that based on Yamato people's values, thinking mode and aesthetic orientation, to form an ideological system with Japanese characteristics in the process of continuous collision, digestion and fusion with Confucianism.

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