

**Re-Imagining Literatures of The World:
Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins**

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Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins**

**Ré-imaginer les littératures du monde:
mondial et local, grands courants et marges**

**მსოფლიო ლიტერატურის გადააზრება:
გლობალური და ლოკალური,
წამყვანი და მარგინალური**

Collected Papers of the XXIII Congress of the ICLA

**Edited by
Irma Ratiani**

Volume 1

**Re-Imagining Literatures of The World:
Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins**

Edited by
Irma Ratiani

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Irma Ratiani

Introduction

1. Brief Preface

1.1. აღტაცება და სირთულეები

სასიხარულო ინფორმაცია იმის თაობაზე, რომ შედარებითი ლიტერატურის საერთაშორისო ასოციაციის (AILC/ICLA) XXIII მსოფლიო კონგრესის ჩატარების ადგილად თბილისი შეირჩა, 2019 წელს მივიღეთ. ამ ცნობამ საქართველოს შედარებითი ლიტერატურის ასოციაციის (GCLA) წევრების დიდი აღფრთოვანება გამოიწვია; პოზიტიური განწყობა მალე მოედო ფართო ლიტერატურულ და აკადემიურ წრეებს საქართველოში; თუმცა, პირველი ემოციების შემდეგ, გაჩნდა გარკვეული ეჭვები: შევძლებთ თუ არა ასეთი მასშტაბური ღონისძიების მოწყობას? შევძლებთ თუ არა შესაბამისი სამთავრობო უწყებების მხარდაჭერის მოპოვებას? გვაქვს თუ არა საკმარისი ადამიანური და ინფრასტრუქტურული რესურსი? ყველაზე მეტად ეროვნული ორგანიზაციის გამოცდილება გვაფიქრებდა: შედარებითი ლიტერატურის ქართული ასოციაცია ხომ მხოლოდ 2008 წელს დაარსდა (პროფესორ მანფრედ შმელინგის მხარდაჭერით), როდესაც ქვეყანა საბჭოთა მენტალიტეტისა და ცხოვრების წესის დაძლევის იწყებდა... მაგრამ, არსებული პრობლემები, სამწუხაროდ, უფრო დიდი გამოწვევით გადაიფარა – კოვიდ-19-ის პანდემიით, რომელმაც მთელი მსოფლიო მოიცვა და უზარმაზარი ზიანი მიაყენა ქვეყნებსა და ხალხებს. იმედი გვქონდა, რომ პანდემია მალე დამარცხდებოდა, მაგრამ მან გაცილებით მეტხანს გასტანა, რამაც გვაიძულა გადაგვეხედა კონგრესის ტრადიციული ფორმატისათვის, კერძოდ კი, დავფიქრებულებიყავით კონგრესში მონაწილეობის ალტერნატიულ ფორმებზე. 2022 წლის დასაწყისში, გამწვავებულ პანდემიას თან დაერთო რუსეთის მიერ უკრაინაში გაჩაღებული სამხედრო მოქმედებები, რამაც გაამწვავა

პოლიტიკური ვითარება რეგიონში და კონგრესს უსაფრთხოების პრობლემებიც შეუქმნა. შედეგად, მიღებულ იქნა მტკიცე გადაწყვეტილება, რომ თბილისში AILC/ICLA კონგრესი ჰიბრიდულ ფორმატში ჩატარდებოდა, რაც იმას ნიშნავდა, რომ შედარებითი ლიტერატურის ქართული ასოციაციისა და მისი პარტნიორი ორგანიზაციის – შოთა რუსთველის სახელობის ქართული ლიტერატურის ინსტიტუტის გუნდს უნდა ეზრუნა კონგრესის სამი განსხვავებული ფორმატის სრულყოფაზე: ფიზიკურ, ჰიბრიდულ და სრულად ონლაინ მონაწილეობაზე. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ პანდემია და პოლიტიკური პრობლემები სრულად ფარავდა კონგრესის მოსამზადებელ პერიოდს, ორგანიზატორებს მხედველობიდან არ უნდა გამორჩენოდათ კონგრესის ჩასატარებლად საჭირო პრაქტიკული ამოცანების გადაჭრა, როგორებიცაა შესაბამისი ფინანსური, ინფრასტრუქტურული და ადამიანური რესურსების მობილიზება. ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვან ასპექტს, ცხადია, კონგრესის მასალების გამოქვეყნების ორგანიზება წარმოადგენდა. ამ თვალსაზრისით, ფასდაუდებელია ივ. ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის მხარდაჭერა, რომელმაც გამოთქვა მზადყოფნა, რომ კონგრესის მასალების გამოქვეყნებაზე თბილისის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა იზრუნებდა. ვინაიდან კონგრესის მასალების ბეჭდვის პროცესი, გამოცემის ყველა პროცედურის გათვალისწინებით, ხანგრძლივ დროს მოითხოვდა, მონაწილეთა გარკვეულმა ნაწილმა გადაწყვიტა, რომ მოხსენებები ცალკე თემატური კრებულების სახით გამოეყვეყნებინა. იგივე გადაწყვეტილება მიიღო ე.წ. მომავალი თაობის (Next Gen) სესიის ხელმძღვანელმა, პროფესორმა უილიამ სპურლინმა. საბოლოოდ, შედარებითი ლიტერატურის საერთაშორისო ასოციაციის (AILC/ICLA) XXIII მსოფლიო კონგრესის შრომებში გამოსაქვეყნებლად შერჩეულმა მასალებმა გაიარა შესაბამისი რეცენზირება და, საბოლოოდ, ოთხ ტომად გაერთიანდა. კონგრესის ფორმატიდან გამომდინარე, მასალების გამოცემა ელექტრონულია, თუმცა გადაწყდა ბიბლიოთეკებისა და სასწავლო-აკადემიური ცენტრებისთვის მცირე ტირაჟის ჩამო-

ბეჭდვა. ვიმედოვნებ, რომ კონგრესის მასალები სრულყოფილად გადმოსცემს თბილისში გამართული ამ დაუვიწყარი ღონისძიების მასშტაბსა და მრავალფეროვნებას.

1.2. Joy and difficulties

We received the joyful news that the XXIII World Congress of the AILC/ICLA would be held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 2019, which immensely excited the members of the Georgian Comparative Literature Association (GCLA). The positive emotional mood soon spread to the wider literary and academic circles of Georgia. However, after the initial excitement, some doubts arose: will we be able to organize such a large-scale event? Would we be able to find support from the relevant government agencies? Do we have sufficient human and infrastructural resources? What made us think most was experience: after all, the Georgian Comparative Literature Association was founded only in 2008 (with the support and encouragement of Professor Manfred Schmeling), when the country was just beginning to overcome the Soviet mentality and way of life... However, unfortunately, the existing problems were soon exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which swept the world and caused enormous damage. We had hoped that the pandemic would be defeated soon, but it lasted much longer, forcing us to reconsider the traditional format of the Congress: in particular, consider alternative forms of participation in Congress. In early 2022, the pandemic problem was aggravated by the military actions unleashed by Russia in Ukraine, that exacerbated the political situation in the region and generated security problems for the Congress. Consequently, a firm decision was made that the AILC/ICLA Congress in Tbilisi would be held in a hybrid format, which meant that the team of Georgian Comparative Literature Association in partnership with Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature had to take care of working out three different formats of the congress: in person, hybrid and fully online participation. Although the pande-

mic and political problems completely covered the preparatory period for the Congress, the organizers should not lose sight of the practical tasks necessary for holding the Congress, such as mobilization of appropriate financial, infrastructural and human resources. One of the important aspects was the organization of the publication of the Congress proceedings. From this point of view, the support of Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which expressed its readiness for the Tbilisi University Press to undertake the publication of the congress materials, is invaluable. Since the printing process of the Congress proceedings, taking into account all the publishing procedures, would take a certain amount of time, number of participants decided to publish their articles in the form of separate thematic collections. The head of Next-Gen session, Professor William Spurlin, made the same decision. Finally, the materials selected for publication in the XXIII AILC/ICLA Congress Proceedings underwent the appropriate review and were eventually combined into four volumes. Due to the format of the Congress, the publication of proceedings is electronic, however, it was decided to print a small circulation for libraries and educational-academic centers. I hope that the proceedings of the Congress will convey the scale and diversity of this fabulous event held in Tbilisi.

1.3. Joie et difficultés

Nous avons reçu la joyeuse nouvelle que le XXIIIe Congrès mondial de l'AILC/ICLA se tiendrait à Tbilissi, en Géorgie, en 2019, ce qui a extrêmement enthousiasmé les membres de l'Association géorgienne de littérature comparée (GCLA). L'ambiance positive s'est rapidement propagée à l'ensemble des cercles littéraires et universitaires de Géorgie. Cependant, après l'excitation initiale, certains doutes sont apparus: serons-nous en mesure d'organiser un événement d'une telle ampleur? Serons-nous en mesure d'obtenir le soutien des agences gouvernementales compétentes? Disposons-nous de ressources humaines et infrastructurelles suffisantes? Ce qui nous a

le plus fait réfléchir, c'est l'expérience: après tout, l'Association géorgienne de littérature comparée n'a été fondée qu'en 2008 (avec le soutien et les encouragements du professeur Manfred Schmeling), alors que le pays commençait tout juste à se défaire de la mentalité et du mode de vie soviétiques... Malheureusement, les problèmes existants ont rapidement été exacerbés par la pandémie de Covid-19, qui a balayé le monde et causé d'énormes dégâts. Nous espérions que la pandémie serait bientôt vaincue, mais elle a duré beaucoup plus longtemps, ce qui nous a obligés à reconsidérer le format traditionnel du Congrès: en particulier, envisager des formes alternatives de participation au Congrès. Au début de l'année 2022, le problème de la pandémie a été aggravé par les actions militaires déclenchées par la Russie en Ukraine, qui ont exacerbé la situation politique dans la région et généré des problèmes de sécurité pour le congrès. Par conséquent, il a été décidé que le congrès AILC/ICLA de Tbilissi se tiendrait dans un format hybride, ce qui signifie que l'équipe de l'Association géorgienne de littérature comparée, en partenariat avec l'Institut de littérature géorgienne Shota Rustaveli, a dû élaborer trois formats différents pour le congrès: une participation en personne, une participation hybride et une participation entièrement en ligne. Bien que la pandémie et les problèmes politiques aient entièrement couvert la période de préparation du congrès, les organisateurs ne doivent pas perdre de vue les tâches pratiques nécessaires à la tenue du congrès, telles que la mobilisation des ressources financières, infrastructurelles et humaines appropriées. L'un des aspects importants était l'organisation de la publication des actes du congrès. De ce point de vue, le soutien d'Iv. Javakhishvili, qui s'est déclarée prête à ce que les Presses universitaires de Tbilissi se chargent de la publication des documents du congrès, est inestimable. Étant donné que le processus d'impression des actes du congrès, compte tenu de toutes les procédures de publication, prendrait un certain temps, un certain nombre de participants ont décidé de publier leurs articles sous la forme de collections thématiques distinctes. Le responsable de la session Next-gen, le professeur William Spurlin, a pris la même décision. Enfin, les documents

sélectionnés pour être publiés dans les actes du XXIIIe Congrès AILC/ICLA ont fait l'objet d'un examen approprié et ont finalement été regroupés en quatre volumes. En raison du format du congrès, la publication des actes est électronique, mais il a été décidé d'imprimer un petit tirage pour les bibliothèques et les centres éducatifs et universitaires. J'espère que les actes du congrès rendront compte de l'ampleur et de la diversité de ce fabuleux événement qui s'est tenu à Tbilissi.

2. The theme and the essence of the Congress

After Seoul (2010), Paris (2013), Vienna (2016), Macau (2019), the ICLA, for the first time, held its triennial Congress in Caucasia, in Georgia, at the intersection of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. The ICLA's regular Congress once again allowed all comparatists in the world, working in many fields of Comparative Literature and from different perspectives, to get together, interact and exchange ideas. The theme of the XXIII World Congress of the AILC/ICLA was the following: *Re-Imagining Literatures of the World: Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins*.

In proposing the theme of the Congress, we were guided by the interests of Georgian literature and the interests of the literatures of all those small countries whose writing has a long history, but today, for various reasons, is in a marginal position. What is the fate of these literatures in the conditions of contemporary global capitalism? How important is their role and place on the world literary map?

The world literary community today lives in a period of minimization of frontiers, when the

concepts of geographical distance or proximity acquire an all but conditional meaning, while the "World Literature" and the "World Literary Process" appear to us as the most urgent and frequently quoted terms. Interrelation of different literary systems and styles has taken the shape of the central problem of various scho-

larly debates: at authoritative gatherings of scholars, issues of World Literature and National Literatures, Literary Canon and National Canons are discussed under permanent regime, different opinions – more or less extreme and moderate – are demonstrated.

If we pass under review the developmental history of literary discourse from the Early Classical period to present-day literary thought, we shall become convinced that it constantly changes its attitude to the concept of “frontier”. But, the dynamic trend of this line is unequivocal expansion. The frontiers of literary communication expand not only at the level of basic aesthetic principles but at that of individual textual structures as well, such as plot, subject, composition, etc. This trend of literary development finds perfect reflection on the methodological plane. Theoretical conceptualization of a “literary frontiers” differs at various stages of the development of literature, obviously determined by the specificity of the current literary process, but, since Plato and Aristotle until the 20th century, it is also focused on the expansion of the vision.

In 20th century this tendency has been resulted in a kind of an inter-disciplinary and multi-interpretative space, and the methods developed within it quickly spread at the level of various national literatures. The methodological regulation of this process became the prerogative of comparative studies. The activation of the comparative method eventuated in the rapprochement of national literatures, while during the current process of globalization it provoked the already urgent question whether literature has national frontiers and if it does, then how it works alongside the international literary process.

Comparative studies or comparative literary criticism itself has no frontiers per se, it acts under condition of observation of the boundaries of national literatures, which do exist yet – rather conceptual than visual, but essentially important. National literature retains its own individuality while it retains its memory. Comparative literary criticism reflects this involved process with maximum precision, moving freely within the boundaries of national characteristics and beyond its boundaries. It creates the possibilities of

mutual communication and integration of different national cultures and literatures, merely on condition of preserving cultural identity. Exactly in case of sharing the latter explanation, it is admissible to assert that cultures and literatures active worldwide do not at all represent self-sufficient systems, but an intellectual area, open to interventions and influences.

Accordingly, if universal literature creates the specimens, standards, canon, which are shared and absorbed by national literature, *vice versa* – each valuable model of national literature supplements and enriches by its originality the universal standard, and under the modern capitalist conditions imports its production. For national literatures being on the marginal positions it is very important to be original, not to be lost and mixed in the whirlpool of major literary magnates and very often they succeed in achieving this goal. In such cases the asymmetry of the world literary system is only graphic, not substantive.

Georgian national literature and Georgian literary studies is also a part of this common movement. Georgian literature is a small, but not a minority literature; it cannot dictate rules or cannot control the world literary space, but throughout its fifteen-centuries-old history it was eager to be at the center of the global, important, influential literary processes and reflect these processes with the invariable awareness of its inner dignity, using correctly its initial primary concept, historical and geographical dynamics and inter-system relationships.

We are extremely grateful to the AILC/ICLA that supported the proposed theme. The AILC/ICLA is a carrier of the idea that every national literature is remarkable, deserves attention and makes a significant contribution to the development process of world literature. We believe that the world literary map will not be complete without considering these literatures.

2.1. კონგრესის თემა და შინაარსი

სეულის (2010 წ.), პარიზის (2013 წ.), ვენის (2016 წ.), მაკაუს (2019 წ.) შემდეგ შედარებითი ლიტერატურის საერთაშორისო ასოციაციის (ICLA) კონგრესი პირველად გაიმართა კავკასიაში, საქართველოში, აღმოსავლეთ ევროპისა და დასავლეთ აზიის გადაკვეთაზე. ICLA-ს რეგულარულმა კონგრესმა (რომელიც ყოველ სამ წელიწადში იმართება) კიდევ ერთხელ მისცა საშუალება მსოფლიოს სხვადასხვა ქვეყნებში და შედარებითი ლიტერატურის სხვადასხვა სფეროებში მოღვაწე ლიტერატურათმცოდნეებს, რათა შეკრებილიყვნენ, მოესმინათ ერთმანეთისთვის, გაემართათ დიალოგი, გაეცვალათ აზრები. შედარებითი ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის რიგით XXIII მსოფლიო კონგრესის თემა იყო: *მსოფლიო ლიტერატურის გადააზრება: გლობალური და ლოკალური, წამყვანი და მარგინალური*.

კონგრესის თემის შეთავაზებისას ვიხელმძღვანელებთ ქართული ლიტერატურის ინტერესებით, აგრეთვე, ყველა იმ პატარა ქვეყნის ინტერესებით, რომელთაც კულტურისა და მწერლობის დიდი ისტორია აქვთ, მაგრამ დღეს, სხვადასხვა მიზეზის გამო, მარგინალურ პოზიციაზე იმყოფებიან. როგორია ამ ლიტერატურათა ბედი თანამედროვე გლობალური კაპიტალიზმის პირობებში? რამდენად მნიშვნელოვანია მათი როლი და ადგილი მსოფლიო ლიტერატურულ რუკაზე?

მსოფლიო ლიტერატურული საზოგადოება დღეს საზღვრების მინიმიზაციის ეპოქაში ცხოვრობს, როდესაც გეოგრაფიული მანძილის ან სიახლოვის ცნებები პირობით მნიშვნელობას იძენს, ხოლო „მსოფლიო ლიტერატურა“ და „მსოფლიო ლიტერატურული პროცესი“ ყველაზე აქტუალურ და ხშირად ციტირებულ ტერმინებად გვევლინება. სხვადასხვა ლიტერატურული სისტემისა და სტილის ურთიერთმიმართება სამეცნიერო თავყრილობების ცენტრალური თემად იქცა: მეცნიერთა ავტორიტეტულ შეკრებებზე მუდმივ რეჟიმში განიხილება მსოფლიო ლიტერატურისა და ეროვნული ლიტერატურების, უნივერსალური ლიტერატურული კანონისა და

ნაციონალური კანონების საკითხები. თავს იჩენს განსხვავებული მოსაზრებები – მეტად ან ნაკლებად ექსტრემალური.

თუ გადავხედავთ ლიტერატურული დისკურსის განვითარების ისტორიას ადრეული კლასიკური პერიოდიდან თანამედროვე ლიტერატურულ აზროვნებამდე, დავრწმუნდებით, რომ იგი მუდმივად იცვლის დამოკიდებულებას „საზღვრის“ ცნების მიმართ. მაგრამ, ამ ცვლილების დინამიკური ტენდენცია ცალსახა გაფართოებისკენაა მიმართული; ლიტერატურული კომუნიკაციის საზღვრები ფართოვდება არა მხოლოდ ძირითადი ესთეტიკური პრინციპების, არამედ ცალკეული ტექსტური სტრუქტურების დონეზეც, როგორცაა – სიუჟეტი, საგანი, კომპოზიცია და ა.შ. ლიტერატურის განვითარების ეს ტენდენცია სრულყოფილ ასახვას ჰპოვებს მეთოდოლოგიურ სიბრტყეზე. „ლიტერატურული საზღვრების“ თეორიული გააზრება განსხვავდება ლიტერატურის განვითარების სხვადასხვა ეტაპებზე, რაც აშკარად განპირობებულია მიმდინარე ლიტერატურული პროცესის სპეციფიკით, მაგრამ, პლატონისა და არისტოტელეს ეპოქიდან მე-20 საუკუნემდე, ისიც ხედვის გაფართოებაზეა ორიენტირებული.

მე-20 საუკუნეში ეს ტენდენცია ინტერდისციპლინარული და მულტიინტერპრეტაციული სივრცის შექმნით დაგვირგვინდა, რომლის წიაღში შემუშავებული მეთოდებიც სწრაფად გავრცელდა სხვადასხვა ეროვნული ლიტერატურის დონეზე. ამ პროცესის მეთოდოლოგიური რეგულირება შედარებითი კვლევების პრეროგატივა გახდა. შედარებითი მეთოდის გააქტიურებამ გამოიწვია ეროვნული ლიტერატურის დაახლოება, თუმცა, დღესდღეობით, მიმდინარე გლობალიზაციის ფონზე წამოჭრა სხვა აქტუალური შეკითხვაც: აქვს თუ არა ლიტერატურას ეროვნული საზღვრები და თუ აქვს, მაშინ როგორ მუშაობს „საზღვარი“ საერთაშორისო ლიტერატურული პროცესის პარალელურად?

შედარებით ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობას თავისთავად არ გააჩნია საზღვრები, ის მოქმედებს ნაციონალური ლიტერატურების საზღვრებზე დაკვირვების პირობით, რომლებიც დღეს უფრო კონცეპტუალურია, ვიდრე ვიზუალური, მაგრამ

არსებითად მნიშვნელოვანი. ყოველი ეროვნული ლიტერატურა მანამდე ინარჩუნებს საკუთარ ინდივიდუალობას, ვიდრე ინარჩუნებს მეხსიერებას. შედარებითი ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობა მაქსიმალური სიზუსტით ასახავს ამ პროცესს, ვინაიდან თავისუფლად მოძრაობს ეროვნული მახასიათებლების საზღვრებს შიგნით და გარეთ. შედარებითი ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობა ქმნის სხვადასხვა ეროვნული კულტურებისა და ლიტერატურების ურთიერთკომუნიკაციისა და ინტეგრაციის შესაძლებლობებს მათი კულტურული იდენტობის შენარჩუნების პირობით. სწორედ ამ უკანასკნელი პოზიციის გაზიარების შემთხვევაში დასაშვებია იმის მტკიცება, რომ მსოფლიოში მოქმედი კულტურები და ლიტერატურები სულაც არ წარმოადგენს თვითკმარ სისტემებს, არამედ ინტელექტუალურ სფეროს, რომელიც ღიაა ჩარევებისა და გავლენებისთვის.

შესაბამისად, თუ უნივერსალური ლიტერატურა ქმნის ნიმუშებს, სტანდარტებს, კანონს, რომელსაც იზიარებს და აირეკლავს ეროვნული ლიტერატურა, პირიქით – ყოველი ეროვნული ლიტერატურის ღირებული მოდელი თავისი ორიგინალობით ავსებს და ამდიდრებს უნივერსალურ სტანდარტს და, თანამედროვე კაპიტალისტურ პირობებში, შემოაქვს ის წარმოებაში. მარგინალურ პოზიციებზე მყოფი ეროვნული ლიტერატურებისთვის ძალიან მნიშვნელოვანია, რომ იყონ ორიგინალურები, არ ჩაიკარგონ მსხვილი ლიტერატურული მაგნეტების ნაკადში და, არცთუ იშვიათად, ისინი ახერხებენ ამ მიზნის მიღწევას. ასეთ შემთხვევებში მსოფლიო ლიტერატურული სისტემის ასიმეტრია მხოლოდ გრაფიკულია და არა შინაარსობრივი.

ქართული ეროვნული ლიტერატურაცა და ქართული ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობაც ამ საერთო მოძრაობის ნაწილია. ქართული ლიტერატურა პატარა ქვეყნის ლიტერატურაა, მაგრამ ის არ არის მცირე ლიტერატურა; ის დღეს ვერ კარნახობს წესებს ან ვერ აკონტროლებს მსოფლიო ლიტერატურულ სივრცეს, მაგრამ თავისი თითქმის თექვსმეტსაუკუნოვანი ისტორიის მანძილზე მუდამ იყო და არის გლობალური, მნიშ-

ვნელოვანი, გავლენიანი ლიტერატურული პროცესების ეპიცენტრში და ახდენს მათ რეფლექსირებას შინაგანი ღირსების უცვლელი შეგრძნებით, თავისი პირველსაწყისი კონცეფციის, ისტორიული და გეოგრაფიული დინამიკისა და სისტემათაშორისი ურთიერთობების სწორად გამოყენების გზით.

ჩვენ უადრესად მადლობელნი ვართ შედარებითი ლიტერატურის საერთაშორისო ასოციაციისა, რომელმაც მხარი დაუჭირა შედარებითი ლიტერატურის ქართული ასოციაციის მიერ შეთავაზებულ თემას. ICLA ჭეშმარიტად გამტარებელია იმ პოლიტიკისა, რომლის თანახმადაც ყოველი ნაციონალური მწერლობა მოიაზრება, როგორც განსაკუთრებული და საინტერესო მოდელი, რომელიც იმსახურებს ყურადღებას და თავისი წვლილი შეაქვს მსოფლიო მწერლობის განვითარების საქმეში. ამ ლიტერატურების გარეშე ვერ იქნება სრულყოფილი მსოფლიო ლიტერატურული რუკა.

2.2. Le thème et l'essence du Congrès

Après Séoul (2010), Paris (2013), Vienne (2016), Macao (2019), l'ICLA organise pour la première fois son Congrès triennal dans le Caucase, en Géorgie, à l'intersection de l'Europe de l'Est et de l'Asie de l'Ouest. Le Congrès régulier de l'ICLA a une fois de plus permis à tous les comparatistes du monde, travaillant dans de nombreux domaines de la littérature comparée et dans des perspectives différentes, de se réunir, d'interagir et d'échanger des idées. Le thème du XXIIIe Congrès mondial de l'AILC/ICLA était le suivant: *Réimaginer les littératures du monde: Global et local, courants principaux et marginaux.*

En proposant le thème du congrès, nous avons été guidés par les intérêts de la littérature géorgienne et les intérêts des littératures de tous ces petits pays dont l'écriture a une longue histoire, mais qui se trouvent aujourd'hui, pour diverses raisons, dans une position marginale. Quel est le sort de ces littératures dans les conditions du capitalisme mondial contemporain ? Quelle est l'importance de leur rôle et de leur place sur la carte littéraire mondiale ?

La communauté littéraire mondiale vit aujourd'hui une période de minimisation des frontières, où les concepts de distance ou de proximité géographique acquièrent une importance croissante.

La communauté littéraire mondiale vit aujourd'hui une période de minimisation des frontières, où les concepts de distance géographique ou de proximité acquièrent une signification tout à fait conditionnelle, tandis que la «littérature mondiale» et le «processus littéraire mondial» nous apparaissent comme les termes les plus urgents et les plus fréquemment cités. L'interrelation des différents systèmes et styles littéraires a pris la forme d'un problème central dans divers débats scientifiques: lors de rassemblements d'érudits faisant autorité, les questions de la littérature mondiale et des littératures nationales, des lois littéraires et des lois nationales sont discutées en permanence, et différentes opinions – plus ou moins extrêmes et modérées – sont exprimées.

Si nous passons en revue l'histoire du développement du discours littéraire depuis la période classique jusqu'à la pensée littéraire actuelle, nous serons convaincus qu'il change constamment d'attitude à l'égard du concept de «frontière». Mais la tendance dynamique de cette ligne est sans équivoque l'expansion. Les frontières de la communication littéraire s'étendent non seulement au niveau des principes esthétiques de base, mais aussi au niveau des structures textuelles individuelles, telles que l'intrigue, le sujet, la composition, etc. Cette tendance du développement littéraire se reflète parfaitement sur le plan méthodologique. La conceptualisation théorique des « frontières littéraires » diffère selon les étapes du développement de la littérature, évidemment déterminée par la spécificité du processus littéraire en cours, mais, depuis Platon et Aristote jusqu'au 20e siècle, elle est également axée sur l'expansion de la vision.

Au XXe siècle, cette tendance s'est traduite par une sorte d'espace interdisciplinaire et multi-interprétatif, et les méthodes développées en son sein se sont rapidement répandues au niveau des différentes littératures nationales. La régulation méthodologique de ce processus est devenue la prérogative des études comparatives.

L'activation de la méthode comparative a abouti au rapprochement des littératures nationales, tandis qu'au cours du processus actuel de mondialisation, elle a suscité la question déjà urgente de savoir si la littérature a des frontières nationales et, dans l'affirmative, comment elle fonctionne parallèlement au processus littéraire international.

Les études comparatives ou la critique littéraire comparée n'ont pas de frontières en soi, elles agissent sous condition d'observation des frontières des littératures nationales, qui existent encore – plutôt conceptuelles que visuelles, mais essentiellement importantes. La littérature nationale conserve sa propre individualité tout en conservant sa mémoire. La critique littéraire comparée reflète ce processus avec une précision maximale, en se déplaçant librement à l'intérieur des frontières des caractéristiques nationales et au-delà de celles-ci. Elle crée des possibilités de communication mutuelle et d'intégration des différentes cultures et littératures nationales, à la seule condition de préserver l'identité culturelle. Si l'on partage cette dernière explication, on peut affirmer que les cultures et les littératures actives dans le monde entier ne représentent pas du tout des systèmes autosuffisants, mais un espace intellectuel ouvert aux interventions et aux influences.

En conséquence, si la littérature universelle crée les modèles, les normes, les lois, qui sont partagés et absorbés par la littérature nationale, vice versa – chaque modèle de valeur de la littérature nationale complète et enrichit par son originalité la norme universelle et, dans les conditions capitalistes modernes, importe sa production. Pour les littératures nationales qui occupent des positions marginales, il est très important d'être originales, de ne pas être perdues et mélangées dans le tourbillon des grands magnats de la littérature et très souvent, elles parviennent à atteindre cet objectif. Dans ce cas, l'asymétrie du système littéraire mondial n'est que graphique et non substantielle.

La littérature nationale géorgienne et les études littéraires géorgiennes font également partie de ce mouvement commun. La littérature géorgienne est une petite littérature, mais pas une littérature minoritaire; elle ne peut pas dicter des règles ou contrôler

l'espace littéraire mondial, mais tout au long de son histoire vieille de quinze siècles, elle était désireuse d'être au centre des processus littéraires mondiaux, importants et influents, et de refléter ces processus avec la conscience invariable de sa dignité intérieure, en utilisant correctement son concept primaire initial, la dynamique historique et géographique et les relations inter-systèmes.

Nous sommes extrêmement reconnaissants à l'AILC/ICLA qui a soutenu le thème proposé. L'AILC/ICLA est porteuse de l'idée que chaque littérature nationale est remarquable, mérite l'attention et apporte une contribution significative au processus de développement de la littérature mondiale. Nous pensons que la carte littéraire mondiale ne sera pas complète sans tenir compte de ces littératures.

3. Re-Imagining Literatures of the World: Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins

A brief look at the progress of XXIII World Congress of the AILC/ICLA in Tbilisi, 2022, highlights the following key aspects:

- The Congress was a “hybrid” conference.
- In-person participants were welcome to attend all sessions.
- The opening ceremony was *live streamed*.
- All in-person plenary sessions were on Zoom, recorded and uploaded on the Internet for viewing *upon receiving the agreement of plenary speakers*.
- Zoom technology was an option for all Group Sessions, Special Sessions, and for Regular Sessions as well.

The main theme of the Congress – *Re-Imagining Literatures of the World: Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins* – was broken into the following sub-themes:

- Words and Images crossing literary and critical borders;
- East and West: Literary and Cultural Paradigms;
- Global South and Global North;
- Minorities and/ in Literature;

- Translating difference: the Other in Other Words;
- Minor Literature, Small Literatures, Literatures of Small Nations;
- Colonial, Postcolonial, Decolonial and Neocolonial Experiences: Rewriting Cultural History;
- Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Literature and Culture;
- The post-Soviet Literary Space and the World after the Cold War;
- Digital Culture: Media, Transmedia, Intermedia.

Beyond the individual sessions 49 group sessions, 3 special sessions and Presidential session were confirmed. The 2022 Tbilisi Congress made a special effort to include early-career scholars with special sessions, academic and social events intended for them, as well as some new grants and prizes.

All sessions and special sessions of the Congress covered a wide range of topics, allowing us to move the discussion of the problematic issues of contemporary world writing into a broader international context.

The distribution of Group, Individual and special sessions was in person, online, partly online, hybrid. Congress also hosted distinguished plenary speakers and invited writers.

In addition to scientific work, numerous cultural events were held that contributed to the promotion of Georgian literature and sharing of international experience.

The Grigol Kiknadze Scientific Prize was awarded to Georgian scientists.

The Congress was widely covered by Georgian media.

After the congress was ended, call for the submission of papers was announced. Now the editing process is completed, and the Congress materials will be published in four volumes.

The first and second volumes of the Congress proceedings contain materials from the following group sessions:

- Art Criticism and Creation in European Literatures;
- Urban Borderlands – Comparative Perspectives;
- The Political Aesthetics of Agricultural Protest in the 21st Century;
- South Asian Visions of Africa and African/Diasporic Literatures;
- Pandemic Imaginations;
- Chinese Influences on Modern and Contemporary European and American Literature and Literary Theories;
- Colonial, Postcolonial, Decolonial and Neocolonial Experiences: Rewriting Cultural History;
- Imagining Cultural Transfers – Poetics of Cultural Contact, Circulation and Exchange;
- Transnationalism and the Languages/Literatures of the Global South: South Asian Perspectives;
- Characters without Names: the Anonymous and the Crowds;
- Texts and Visions Across Genres and Media: Re-thinking Arab Cultural History;
- On Our Post-mediatic Bodies;
- Translation and Reparation;
- The Place of Asia in Comparative Literature: A Panel on Method;
- Translation of Differences: Lost in Translation, Found in Translation;
- Small and Minority Literatures and Literary Historiography;
- Two Centuries of Colonial and Postcolonial Georgia;
- The Sacred and the Profane: Intersections Between Religion and Literature;
- „The Knight in the Panther’s Skin“ in the Context of World Civilization;
- Expressions of Widowhood across Cultures: Social Constructions and Contestations;
- Mutual Learning among Civilizations through Comparative Literature;

- Comparative Literary Studies in Georgia: Challenges and Perspectives;
- How Can Literature Change the Geography? European Globalism and Georgian Locality in the 19th and 20th Centuries;
- Cross-cultural matches: Beyond Medievalism;
- (Re)Mapping Gender;
- Identity and Otherness: A Comparative Overview of Basque and Georgian Literatures.

The third volume contains materials from the plenary and individual sessions; The last volume will cover individual and special sessions. Once again, I would like to thank the publishing team of Georgian Comparative Literature Association (GCLA), Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature and Tbilisi University Press for their hard work.

3.1. მსოფლიო ლიტერატურის გადააზრება:

გლობალური და ლოკალური, წამყვანი და მარგინალური

2022 წლის ივლისში თბილისში ჩატარებული AILC/ICLA-ის XXIII მსოფლიო კონგრესის მიმდინარეობის პროცესის მიმოხილვა გამოკვეთს შემდეგ ძირითად ასპექტებს:

- კონგრესი ჩატარდა „ჰიბრიდულ“ ფორმატში.
- მონაწილეებს, რომლებიც ჩამოვიდნენ საქართველოში, საშუალება ჰქონდათ დასწრებოდნენ ყველა მიმდინარე სესიას.
- გახსნის ცერემონია პირდაპირ ეთერში გადაიციმოდა *live stream*-ის ტექნოლოგიის მეშვეობით..
- ყველა პლენარული სესია, პლენარული მომხსენებლების თანხმობის შემთხვევაში, იწერებოდა ზუმის მეშვეობით და იტვირთებოდა ინტერნეტ-სივრცეში.
- Zoom-ის ტექნოლოგია გამოიყენებოდა ყველა ჯგუფური და სპეციალური, აგრეთვე, რეგულარული სესიებისთვის.

კონგრესის მთავარი თემა – *მსოფლიო ლიტერატურის გადააზრება: გლობალური და ლოკალური, წამყვანი და მარ-გინალური* – ჩაშლილი იყო შემდეგ ქვეთემებად:

- სიტყვები და მხატვრული სახეები ლიტერატურისა და კრიტიკის საზღვრებს მიღმა;
- აღმოსავლეთი და დასავლეთი: ლიტერატურული და კულტურული პარადიგმები;
- გლობალიზებული სამხრეთი და გლობალური ჩრდილოეთი;
- უმცირესობების ლიტერატურა/ უმცირესობები ლიტერატურაში;
- თარგმანის განსხვავებანი: *სხვა სხვისი სიტყვებით*;
- მცირე ლიტერატურა, პატარა ლიტერატურები, მცირე ერების ლიტერატურები;
- კოლონიური, პოსტკოლონიური, დეკოლონიური და ნეოკოლონიური გამოცდილებები: კულტურის ისტორიის გადაწერა;
- გენდერი და სექსუალობა/სქესი თანამედროვე ლიტერატურასა და კულტურაში;
- პოსტსაბჭოთა ლიტერატურული სივრცე და მსოფლიო ცივი ომის შემდეგ;
- ციფრული კულტურა: მედია, ტრანსმედია, ინტერმედია.

გარდა ინდივიდუალური სესიებისა, დადასტურდა 49 ჯგუფური, 3 სპეციალური და 2 საპრეზიდენტო სესია. 2022 წლის თბილისის კონგრესმა განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება დაუთმო ახალგაზრდა მეცნიერებს – გარდა იმისა, რომ მათი სესიები კონგრესის ცალკე მიმართულებად გამოიყო, მათთვის საგანგებოდ მოეწყო ღონისძიებები, გამოცხადდა გრანტები და პრემიები.

კონგრესის ყველა ჯგუფური, ინდივიდუალური თუ სპეციალური სესია მოიცავდა თემების ფართო სპექტრს, რამაც საშუალება მოგვცა, რომ თანამედროვე მსოფლიო მწერლობის

პრობლემური საკითხების ფართო საერთაშორისო კონტექსტში განგვიხილა.

ჯგუფური, ინდივიდუალური და სპეციალური სესიები ჩატარდა როგორც ფიზიკური დასწრების, ისე – ონლაინ, ნაწილობრივ ონლაინ და ჰიბრიდულ ფორმატებში. კონგრესმა ასევე უმასპინძლა პატივცემულ პლენარულ გამომსვლელებსა და მოწვეულ მწერლებს.

სამეცნიერო მუშაობის პარალელურად, ჩატარდა არაერთი კულტურული ღონისძიება, რომლებმაც ხელი შეუწყო ქართული ლიტერატურის პოპულარიზაციასა და საერთაშორისო გამოცდილების გაზიარებას.

ქართველ მეცნიერებს გადაეცათ გრიგოლ კიკნაძის სახელობის სამეცნიერო პრემია.

კონგრესის მუშაობა ფართოდ გააშუქა ქართულმა მედიამ.

კონგრესის დასრულების შემდეგ გამოცხადდა მოხსენებების მიღების ვადები. ამჟამად რედაქტირების პროცესი დასრულებულია და კონგრესის მასალები ოთხ ტომად გამოიცემა.

პირველსა და მეორე ტომებში იბეჭდება ჯგუფური სესიების მასალები, მესამე ტომში წარმოდგენილი იქნება პლენარული და ინდივიდუალური სესიების მასალები; ბოლო, მეოთხე ტომში კი დაიბეჭდება ინდივიდუალური და სპეციალური სესიების მასალები.

კიდევ ერთხელ, დიდ მადლობას მოვასხენებთ შედარებითი ლიტერატურის ქართული ასოციაციისა (GCLA) და შოთა რუსთაველის სახელობის ქართული ლიტერატურის ინსტიტუტის საგამომცემლო გუნდს, აგრეთვე – თბილისის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობას მასალების რედაქტირებისა და გამოცემის საქმეში გაწეული წვლილისთვის.

3. Réimaginer les littératures du monde: Global et local, courants principaux et marginaux

Un bref aperçu du déroulement du XXIII^e congrès mondial de l'AILC/ICLA à Tbilissi, en 2022, met en lumière les aspects clés suivants:

- Le congrès était une conférence «hybride».
- Les participants en personne étaient invités à assister à toutes les sessions.
- La cérémonie d'ouverture a été diffusée en direct.
- Toutes les sessions plénières en personne étaient en zoom, enregistrées et téléchargées sur internet pour être visionnées après avoir reçu l'accord des orateurs pléniers.
- La technologie Zoom était une option pour toutes les sessions de groupe, les sessions spéciales et les sessions régulières.

Le thème principal du congrès – Réimaginer les littératures du monde: Global et local, courants principaux et marginaux – a été divisé en sous-thèmes:

- Mots et images: franchir les frontières littéraires et critiques;
- Est et Ouest: Paradigmes littéraires et culturels;
- Le Sud global et le Nord global;
- Littérature minoritaire/Minorités dans la littérature;
- Traduire la différence: *l'autre dans d'autres mots*;
- Littérature mineure, petites littératures, littératures des petites nations;
- Expériences coloniales, postcoloniales, décoloniales et néocoloniales: Réécrire l'histoire culturelle;
- Le genre et la sexualité dans la littérature et la culture contemporaines;
- L'espace littéraire post-soviétique et le monde après la guerre froide;
- Culture numérique: Media, Transmedia, Intermedia.

Outre les sessions individuelles, 49 sessions de groupe, 3 sessions spéciales et la session présidentielle ont été confirmées. Le Congrès de Tbilissi 2022 a fait un effort particulier pour inclure les chercheurs en début de carrière avec des sessions spéciales, des événements académiques et sociaux qui leur sont destinés, ainsi que de nouvelles bourses et de nouveaux prix.

Toutes les sessions et les sessions spéciales du Congrès ont couvert un large éventail de sujets, ce qui nous a permis de déplacer la discussion sur les questions problématiques de l'écriture mondiale contemporaine dans un contexte international plus large.

Les sessions collectives, individuelles et spéciales se sont déroulées en personne, en ligne, en partie en ligne et de manière hybride. Le congrès a également accueilli d'éminents orateurs plénières et des écrivains invités.

Outre les travaux scientifiques, de nombreux événements culturels ont été organisés, contribuant à la promotion de la littérature géorgienne et au partage de l'expérience internationale.

Le prix scientifique Grigol Kiknadze a été décerné à des scientifiques géorgiens.

Le congrès a été largement couvert par les médias géorgiens.

Après la clôture du congrès, un appel à la soumission d'articles a été lancé. Le processus d'édition est maintenant terminé et les documents du congrès seront publiés en quatre volumes.

Les premier et deuxième volumes des actes du congrès contiennent des documents issus des sessions de groupe suivantes:

- Critique d'art et création dans les littératures européennes;
- Frontières urbaines – Perspectives comparatives;
- L'esthétique politique de la protestation agricole au 21e siècle;
- Visions sud-asiatiques de l'Afrique et littératures africaines/diasporiques;
- Imaginations pandémiques;
- Influences chinoises sur la littérature et les théories littéraires européennes et américaines modernes et contemporaines;

- Expériences coloniales, postcoloniales, décoloniales et néo-coloniales: Réécriture de l'histoire culturelle;
- Imaginer les transferts culturels – Poétique du contact, de la circulation et de l'échange culturels;
- Transnationalisme et langues/littératures du Sud global: perspectives sud-asiatiques;
- Personnages sans nom: les anonymes et les foules;
- Textes et visions à travers les genres et les médias: Repenser l'histoire culturelle arabe;
- Sur nos corps post-médiatiques;
- Traduction et réparation;
- La place de l'Asie dans la littérature comparée: Un panel sur la méthode;
- La traduction des différences : Lost in Translation, Found in Translation;
- Petites littératures et minorités et historiographie littéraire;
- Deux siècles de Géorgie coloniale et postcoloniale;
- The Sacred and the Profane: Intersections Between Religion and Literature (Le sacré et le profane: intersections entre la religion et la littérature);
- «Le chevalier dans la peau de la panthère» dans le contexte de la civilisation mondiale;
- Les expressions du veuvage à travers les cultures: Constructions sociales et contestations;
- Apprentissage mutuel entre les civilisations par le biais de la littérature comparée;
- Études littéraires comparatives en Géorgie: Défis et perspectives;
- Comment la littérature peut-elle changer la géographie ? Globalisme européen et localité géorgienne aux 19e et 20e siècles;
- Correspondances interculturelles: Au-delà du médiévalisme;
- (Re)cartographie du genre;
- Identité et altérité: Un aperçu comparatif des littératures basque et géorgienne.

Le troisième volume contient des documents issus des sessions plénières et individuelles; le dernier volume couvrira les sessions individuelles et spéciales. Une fois de plus, je voudrais remercier l'équipe de publication de l'Association géorgienne de littérature comparée (GCLA), l'Institut Shota Rustaveli de littérature géorgienne et les Presses universitaires de Tbilissi pour leur travail acharné.

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I would also like to include a word of mourning for Professor Chandra Mohan, who was a General Secretary of Comparative Literature Association of India and Chair of ICLA Standing Committee for Research in South Asian Literature and Culture and who passed away in March 2024. He will never be forgotten in the community of Comparative Literature and by Georgian scholars who had a pleasure of meeting him in person at the AILC/ICLA XXIII Congress in Tbilisi.

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Members of local organizing and advisory committees – Maka Elbakidze, Associated Professor of Tbilisi State University, Vice-director of Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature; Gaga Lomidze, Associated Professor of Tbilisi State University, Former President of Georgian Comparative Literature Association and Head of the Department of General and Comparative Literary Studies at Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature; Dr. Miranda Tkheshelashvili, Scientific secretary of Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature; Chief coordinator, young scholar, Dr. Tatia Oboladze; Senior coordinator – PhD student Lili Metreveli; Coordinators – Dr. Irine Modebadze and Dr. Giuli Kalatozishvili;

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Analysis of the Concept of Reliability in The Origin of the Work of Art

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Abstract:

In Heidegger's article *The Origin of Works of Art*, "reliability" is an obscure but not easy to understand concept. By contrast with "usefulness", we can find that "reliability" is revealed because of the self-manifestation of the existence of the appliance. In this manifestation, the existence of the farmer woman is also revealed, so that the farmer woman has a grasp of her own world and hears the silent call of the earth. Heidegger chose works of art to reveal the existence of utensils because: First of all, although utensils can show their existence by themselves, such manifestation can only be realized at a specific moment; Secondly, the disclosure of the existence of the appliance itself depends on abnormal behaviors or phenomena, and it is no longer the appliance itself that is playing a role. At the same time, the artistic work reveals the existence of the appliance depends on the image reproduction of the appliance. In addition, although Heidegger's division of the boundary between instruments and works of art appeals to the mystery of art, it does not lead to the elitism of art, because Heidegger's division is not at the level of existence.

Keywords: Equipment, Reliability, The Origin of the Work of Art

This paper will start with Heidegger's discussion on the nature of equipment, trying to clarify the boundaries between equipment and work of art.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger explained the essence of the work of art through the revelation of the nature of the peasant shoes in Van Gogh's paintings. But we should note that in the first subsection, Heidegger originally tried to get some clues about the nature of work of art by the discussion of the nature of equipment and the comparison of equipment, pure objects, and works of art. These two ways of thinking are different. Though the train of thought in the first subsection is forgotten, it is beneficial to our understanding of the work of art. Moreover, when Heidegger talks about the essence of equipment, he implies the occurrence of the world's worlding¹. But how does the essence of the equipment make the world world? And the occurrence of the world's worlding is also the occurrence of truth, so there is a possibility of making the truth happen in the essence of the equipment. So what is the difference between the relationship between the equipment and the truth and that between the work of art and the truth? This question may also provide an entry point for us to understand the boundary between works of art and equipment. Therefore, the discussion of the "reliability" of the equipment becomes the primary issue.

I

So what did Heidegger mean when he proposed that the essence of equipment is reliability? Usefulness seems to be closer to our daily understanding, but why does Heidegger say that reliability is the more primitive nature of equipment? The first thing we seem to be addressing is the question, what is something like "the essence of equipment is reliability" or "the essence of equipment is usefulness"? Is it the truth? Is it some concrete truth? Obviously, these two sentences are by no means truths in the sense of Heidegger, but

¹ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 14.

truths in the sense of traditional metaphysics that he tried to distinguish, truths in the sense of conformity of propositions, that is, truths as correctness¹.

Then, what state of unmasking of beings as beings do these two propositions respectively conform to? When we speak of usefulness, it is actually a grasp of a way of existing in which the equipment exists, that is, when the user has owned the equipment for a long time and has become very familiar with it. So it has become extremely unobtrusive, and is only used naturally when needed. And in this state, the grasp of the existence of the equipment, the grasp of its unconcealed state is the proposition that "the essence of the equipment is usefulness". But what Heidegger wants to emphasize, and what we need to pay attention to is such a question—is this the whole essence of the equipment? Is this the self-unveiling of equipment as equipment? Obviously not. A piece of equipment becomes equipment not only after we turn a blind eye to it, but when we first own it, the equipment is already a piece of equipment. At this moment we may be excited to obtain it for the first time. Perhaps when using it, we will be strongly aware of its existence, and always notice it from time to time, but at this time the equipment is already the equipment itself. We are excited and pay more attention to it unconsciously because it is such a piece of equipment, and it is already at hand². Our attention to it is not a contemplation of it as a ready-made thing, but a natural sight of it as a hands-on thing.

The initial striking and excitement is not just simple emotional arousal, but contains the arousal of the vitality of the owner, and a kind of power that makes a man perceive his world and plan his own life, although this force is not as strong and persistent as that the works of art will bring. We will discuss this difference later. This power of equipment can be illustrated by an example from literature. In *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, a former

¹ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 29.

² Martin H. (1996). *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*. State University of New York Press. 65.

Soviet writer, the desk at Mikulichin's house is a piece of equipment with such power. When Zhivago took refuge in Valregino, he glanced at the Mikulichins' study. The large desk by the window, almost as wide as the wall, caught his eye. He said to the host, "What a wonderful place you have! What a splendid study, it must be a perfect place to work in, a real inspiration."¹ In later, when Zhivago came to this house again, the desk losing its master strongly attracted his attention and aroused his writing enthusiasm: "Once again, as so long before, Yurii Andreievich stood spellbound in the door of the study, so spacious and comfortable with its large, convenient table by the window. And once again he thought that such austere surroundings would be conducive to patient, fruitful work."² "From the moment they got up, Yurii Andreievich kept glancing at the table standing so temptingly by the window. His fingers itched for paper and pen."³ If we look back on our life, we will find our own desk of the Mikulichin, and the equipment that kindles our passion and bestows us the honey of being.

We can imagine that after a period of time we will no longer pay attention to that piece of equipment, and it becomes the same as other equipment we already have before, but this once striking is also the essential state of the equipment as equipment. Then the grasp of the whole essence of the equipment is what the proposition "the essence of the equipment is reliability" is intended to express.

II

So how do we make sense of equipment, which were initially striking but later unobtrusive? According to Heidegger's discussion of reliability, we can interpret reliability in this way, that is, reliability refers to the guarantee of a certain underlying causal connec-

¹ Boris P. (1997). *Doctor Zhivago*. The New American Library. 228.

² Boris P. (1997). *Doctor Zhivago*. The New American Library. 356.

³ Boris P. (1997). *Doctor Zhivago*. The New American Library. 357.

tion¹. Equipment, unlike non-equipment, must have been made for a certain purpose, and therefore must have had some connection with the world of causal connections. But the causal connection in the equipment is not always the causal connection of the world in Da-sein. Strictly speaking, the pre-set causal connection in the essence of equipment is only a potential causal connection. This kind of connection is not a causal connection that always tends to be embedded in the world of Da-sein silently and fittingly when the equipment appears at the very beginning. When the unfamiliar equipment hits the original causal connection, the original causal connection, this equipment, and Da-sein all become conspicuous at the same time. And just at that moment, the equipment begins to embed itself in the original causal connection and change it at the same time. This embedding-changing is not arbitrary, but dictated by the intended use of the equipment. However, this embedding-changing is not entirely mechanical, not merely an unfolding of something already known, but a kind of self-generation with certain free space. We can often find such situations in our daily life. There are two boys who get a pair of shoes respectively. But one of them already has a lot of shoes in a well-to-do life while the other from a poor family has never had sneakers. Then the meaning of the sneakers to them is completely different. Although they both wear it to play football, and the appearance of the new shoes brings excitement to their daily football training to some extent, there is no doubt that the change that the appearance of this pair of new shoes has brought about is completely different. But the embedding-changing of the equipment to the original causal connection will be completed. When this embedding-changing is completed, that is, when the equipment has completely become a piece of familiar equipment, the light by which the equipment, the causal connection, and Da-sein were opened is extinguished. This completion is pre-determined by the essence of the equipment. As equipment, it has always pre-determined the complete insertion into the

¹ Martin H. (1996). *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*. State University of New York Press. 70.

causal connection it encounters. This is the promise and guarantee of the essential nature of the equipment as an equipment. This commitment and guarantee are the essence of the equipment.

We can find that in our interpretation of the nature of the equipment, there is actually a certain truth happening. When the equipment first meets the user, enlightening the causality of Da-sein and the mortal existence, there is truth happening. Therefore, in the essence of the equipment, there is actually the happening and operation of the truth. Although Heidegger did not directly mention the relationship between equipment and truth in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in fact, many of his statements in the article are about the occurrence of truth, for example, "World and earth exist for her and those who share her mode of being only here – in the equipment"¹, here the "exist... here", that is, "present", the reliability of the equipment makes the world and the earth appear in the presence, which can only be realized when the truth occurs; another example, "The equipmental being of the equipment, its reliability, keeps all things gathered within itself, each in its own manner and to its own extent"², this kind of gathering of beings can only happen when truth occurs. But in spite of the equipment's relation to truth, this occurrence of truth is short-lived. Because the causal connection in the essence of the equipment is ultimately determined by the purpose of the equipment, and such production purpose is born to be fit for the world, the embedding-changing of the equipment to the original causal connection must end. The occurrence of the truth in this equipment also comes to an end.

III

From this, the difference between equipment and works of art is obvious. The difference between equipment and works of art is not whether they are useful or not, or their uses are different, because if a work of art is defined in terms of use, it is not a work of art itself. In fact, we can see their difference in their different rela-

¹ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 14.

² Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 15.

tion to the truth. As discussed in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the essence of the work of art is to set the truth into the work, whereby the truth enters its eternal brilliance¹, and the dispute between world and earth in the work of art does not end, but perpetually keeps itself as a dispute², which is clearly different from the relationship of the equipment to the truth. Because of their different relationships with truth, their fates are also different: equipment is divided into old and new, they are consumables, they always have their service life, and there will always be a day when they will be used up, while the work of art is eternal; there will always be a day when the equipment becomes ordinary, while the momentum in the work of art makes the work of art manifest itself forever³.

However, here, obviously, we naturally have such questions, is the line between works of art and equipment really so clear? Are all works of art really timeless? Is it true that all equipment will soon become ordinary? In fact, we sometimes find some works boring and common, and sometimes we find certain equipment around us especially intriguing. Therefore, although the boundaries between works of art and equipment are clear, there are some pieces of equipment that seem to be somewhat artistic and equipment-like works of art.

What is a piece of artistic equipment? It is the kind of equipment that won't become commonplace in a short time. There is such extract cited by Heidegger in the essay named *What Is A Poet:* "Even for our grandparents a 'house', a 'spring', a familiar tower, yes even their clothes, their coat: infinitely more and infinitely more intimate; each thing, almost, a vessel in which they found the human, and preserved and added the human to it."⁴ These objects are equipment with seemingly artistic features. However, intriguing as they are, they will not be brilliant all the time like works of art. Their being will inevitably be ignored when being used.

¹ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 19.

² Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 27.

³ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 39-40.

⁴ Martin H. (2002). *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge University Press. 218.

What is a work of art like equipment? There are two cases. One is that there is a certain concept or idea that is so prominent or conspicuous in the work that we cannot help viewing it as its primary value, and then the work of art seems to be a carrier to express this idea or notion. But in fact, we see it as a work of art not because of the ideas or thoughts in it, but because of something else, the poetics in it, its creation of truth in the Heideggerian sense. But if we take the concept or idea in it as its artistic value, then when we are very familiar with the concept or idea which though had a great impact on us at first, the work will seldom touch us. But usually, it will ultimately not become completely untouchable, because after all, we always feel that there is something intriguing about it, and this intriguing part is its artistry. This is the equipmentalization of works of art due to our conception of art. But there are also some so-called works, which are literally equipmental works, that is, they have nothing intriguing except to convey ideas. The extreme example here is fables. Such equipmental works may initially be able to bring us a touch, just like the touch that equipment brings to us, but this touch will eventually disappear completely, so this so-called work is more appropriate to be called equipment than work.

Emphasizing the boundaries between equipment and work of art is not to imply that the value of work of art is higher than that of equipment, or that art is higher than philosophy. Due to its relationship with truth, equipment has certain similarities with works of art, which makes it easier for us, whose minds are easily influenced by equipment, to confuse the boundary between them, and to understand works of art by the existence of equipment. The point is that only when we accept a piece of work of art as work of art, not as equipment for carrying ideas, can we not miss its most essential value, which is unique to it.

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Criticizing by Creating: Friedrich Schlegel's Early Romantic Idea of "Criticism"

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Abstract:

Friedrich Schlegel is the main representative of early German Romanticism. His romantic poetics are not only important for the development of German poetry, but also for the change from Classic to Modern in European intellectual life. And at the center of his theory is the term "criticism" (Kritik). There is already a lot of research on this term, including Walter Benjamin's doctoral thesis *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*. Most of them put this term in the Cartesian and Kantian tradition and see it as an artistic expression of philosophical "reflection". This is indeed one of the most important perspectives to view this term, but in Schlegel's case this is only the first step. In addition, most of these studies are limited to works from his romantic period only, and his earlier works on classical studies are usually not included, which makes the analysis of this term incomplete. Accordingly, this essay attempts to advance the discussion of Schlegel's romantic "Criticism" in two directions. First, apart from the traditional reflective dimension, this term will further be explored in a skeptical, phenomenological and existential dimension respectively. Second, his classical studies, especially the studies of Greek poetry, will also be included in the discussion because they have also played an important role in the shaping of this term. Through these efforts, this essay intends to prove that literary criticism is actually another name for poetic creation in Schlegel's romantic poetics, and more importantly, it also reflects the transformation from Classic to Modern in European intellectual life.

Keywords: Criticism, Creation, Romanticism, Idealism, Existentialism

The poetic theory of Friedrich Schlegel, the main representative of early German Romanticism, is significant not only for German poetry or art criticism in general, but also marks the transition from the Classic to the Modern in European intellectual life. At the center of his argument is the term “critique” (Kritik), which has already been discussed by many other researchers. Schlegel views criticism as a fundamental element of poetic creation rather than just a review of artistic works because, in his words, “poetry can only be criticized by poetry” (Schlegel, 1967), which makes his conception of “critique” truly unique. This article represents a new attempt to analyze Schlegel’s romantic idea of criticism with a comparative approach, not only examining his concept of “critique” from literary texts and contexts, but also returning it to its philosophical basis. This new interpretation of Schlegel’s criticism illuminates not only the aesthetics of early German Romanticism, but also the intellectual history of modern Europe.

1. Reflection as the Fundament of Schlegel’s Romantic Poetics

We must first look at the philosophical underpinnings of Schlegel’s poetics to comprehend his romantic understanding of criticism. Among all the philosophers of his time, he particularly admires Fichte, and his entire poetic system is based on Fichte’s “Science of Knowledge” (“Wissenschaftslehre”).

Fichte’s “Science of Knowledge” is a modification and further development of the Critical Philosophy of Kant: While Kant maintains that “things-in-themselves” (“Ding an sich”) are incomprehensible to human beings, Fichte disagrees with Kant’s agnosticism and attempts to bring the “things-in-themselves” within the realm of human comprehension by moving the first principle of philosophy entirely inside. The absolute “I” now plays the only important role in Fichte’s philosophy, which is also why his theory has been referred to as “the philosophy of Ego” (“Ich-Philosophie”). This

means that for Fichte, Kantian ideas of God or the World no longer serve as the pivot of philosophy.¹

The philosophical roots of both Kant and Fichte can be found in Descartes, whose famous dictum “cogito, ergo sum” turns out to be the cornerstone of modern European metaphysics. In Descartes’ philosophy, people are seen as the objects of thought, and as such, they provide the only unquestionable basis for philosophical inquiry and all knowledge. This foundation stems from the human being reflecting, which means perceiving himself thinking. Given that, in Fichte’s opinion, this is the only reality left and cannot be further abstracted from the empirical; he concurs with Descartes’ philosophy at this precise point.

However, Fichte has developed an original interpretation of this Cartesian principle in his “Science of Knowledge”. The formula $I=I$ (Ego=Ego) serves as Fichte’s first philosophical tenet, which is unconditionally and absolutely valid in Fichte’s eyes. First, it is unquestionably valid in FORM because the components on either side of the equal sign are, in fact, the same (I/Ego). Second, it is valid in CONTENT because the Ego is posited “absolutely, with the predicate of self-equality”, that is, it is posited without any conditions. It is an act of Ego setting himself without any further empirical conditions, and therefore this equation also means: *I am* (Fichte, 1889).

We can all see that this is just another way of saying what Descartes said: “Cogito, ergo sum”, because, by making this equation the first tenet of his philosophy, Fichte is attempting to say that “the ground of explanation of all facts of empirical consciousness is this: before all positing, the Ego must be posited through itself”. To explain it in Fichte’s own words:

¹ It’s important to remember that, despite Fichte’s philosophy initially appearing to be solipsism, which rejects any claims of ultimate knowledge, it is de facto the exact opposite of solipsism. The fundamental tenet of Fichte’s “science of knowledge” is that humans are capable of knowing all concepts.

The positing of the Ego through itself is, therefore, the pure activity of the Ego. The Ego *posits itself*; and the Ego is by virtue of this its mere selfpositing. Again, *vice versa*: the Ego *is* and *posits* its being, by virtue of its mere being. It is both the acting and the product of the act; the active and the result of the activity; deed and act in one; and hence the *I am* is expressive of a deed-act; and of the *only possible* deed-act, as our science of knowledge must show (Fichte, 1889).

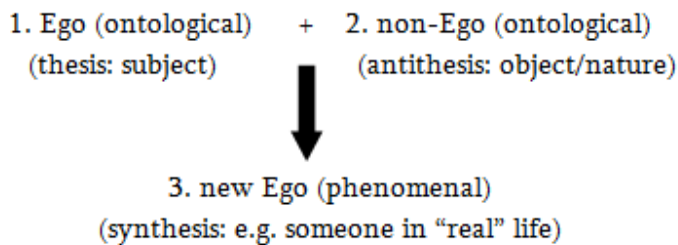
The first tenet forms the basis of Fichte's idealism, but this equation only represents the beginning of his theory. While the first step is a "positing", the second one is an "oppositing": non-Ego \neq Ego, which means, "a non-Ego is absolutely opposed to the Ego" (Fichte, 1889). Since the second principle, like the first, is an act of the absolute Ego and has no higher ground above it, it is also unconditionally possible. As to why the Ego should set a non-Ego as its opposite, Fichte answers: the Ego is an absolutely free acting, which would not be limited to itself; by setting a non-Ego, the Ego is able to unfold itself in all the experiences of itself and of others, thus making itself complete.

The confrontation between Ego and non-Ego also can be seen as a variation of Kant's dialectics, to be exact his antinomies in the *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft)*. In this work, Kant lists four antinomies to demonstrate the false application of human reason. Every antinomy contains both a thesis that can be supported from a platonic viewpoint, which sees ideas as the only source of reality, and an antithesis that can only be supported from an Epicurean viewpoint, which only considers the physical, empirical aspects of reality. Kant argues that in order to resolve these antinomies, human reason must be constrained. By limiting all platonic concepts to the ontological domain and attaching the law of causality only to the phenomenal world, the problem is resolved.

Fichte draws on Kant's idea and takes it a step further: Based on the antinomy, he proposes a synthesis of both to unite the ontological and the phenomenal realms. He introduces a new "Ego"

into his system, but it is not the original absolute Ego, but an empirical Ego in the realm of phenomena, such as an individual in the so-called “real” life. The original absolute Ego, or the thesis, and the equally absolute non-Ego, or the antithesis, combine in this new empirical Ego by giving up part of themselves and thus limiting each other. The third equation is therefore stated by Fichte as follows: “*The Ego opposes in the Ego a divisible Non-Ego to a divisible Ego*” (Fichte, 1889).

Fichte’s “Philosophy of Ego”



Now the entire process is complete, and each step in this process is necessary: **Benjamin Walter’s** SHOULD be changed to: **Walter Benjamin’s**

It’s necessary to have an absolute Ego that can reflect on itself, serving as the starting point of the entire system; besides, it is necessary to set an absolute non-Ego, which allows the absolute Ego to manifest itself in all areas of experience or in nature; and finally, it is necessary to combine both on an empirical individual, because it is the only way to bring the ideas into the physical world, and hence be productive. This “philosophy of Ego” is the theoretical foundation of Friedrich Schlegel’s romantic criticism¹, which can be further subdivided into two dimensions, namely metaphysical and existential, the latter of which results from the former.

¹ One of the most well-known concepts in Schlegel’s romantic poetics, namely “irony”, is not only a product of classic western poetry, but also an application of this “philosophy of Ego”: The subject (Ego) creates via his imagination an object (non-Ego); with the aid of the worldly-wise “wit” (Witz), the subject is able to unite himself with the object into an individual (the empirical Ego), and the outcome is exactly the “irony”.

2. Criticism Within Metaphysics: “Sympoetry” of Poet and Critic

The first dimension of Schlegel’s criticism is still constrained by the metaphysical frameworks, which means, Schlegel insists that a metaphysical idea, namely the Ego a priori, should stay in the center and serve as the starting point; all the other elements, including non-Ego and the empirical Ego, should lie under this concept. This idea inspired Schlegel to develop the so-called “Sympoetry” (Sym-oesie), which is a form of poetry in which the poet and the critic alternately play the part of the absolute “Ego”.

It all starts from the poet. The poet is compared by Schlegel to the unconditional Ego a priori in Fichte’s philosophy because he strives “only for the infinite” and detests “earthly utility” (Schlegel, 1967). Similar to this, the poet should also necessarily set a non-Ego, which in Schlegel’s romantic poetics is exactly the reader, or the critic (these two terms are basically synonymous in his poetics). This non-Ego is equally unconditional and absolute, because it is actually “a thought, a postulate” from the poet, and the poet “constructs and creates for himself a reader as he SHOULD BE”, but not as HE IS (Schlegel, 1967).

As in Fichte’s philosophy, the final task of a romantic poet is to incorporate the non-Ego into the Ego, which means for the poet:

he does not think of him [the critic] as dormant and dead, but as alive and counteracting (entgegenwirkend) [...] He does not want to make a certain effect on him, but he enters into the sacred relationship of the most intimate [...] sympoetry with him (Schlegel, 1967).

The result of this “sacred relationship” is precisely the “Sym-poetry”, which corresponds to the final empirical Ego in Fichte’s theory. “Sympoetry” requires the poet to engage himself in “dialogue” with the critic (Schlegel, 1967). In this dialogue, the poet should not “merely express [himself]”, imagining that he may touch his audience without being affected, but he should consider incor-

3. Criticism Beyond Metaphysics: “Love” Between Poet and Critic

This interaction between creation and criticism, which is based on the Fichtian dichotomy of Ego and non-Ego, should never end, because the longer this interaction lasts, the more poetic works can be produced, and the more poetic works this interaction brings forth, the closer we get to our full humanity. It is noteworthy that during the endless (re-)cycle, the initial metaphysical frameworks slowly break down, and a new, existential perspective emerges. Since the poet and the critic alternately play the role of the Ego/subject, it gradually develops into a kind of “intersubjectivity” that excludes any metaphysical substance, be it external (e.g. “God”) or internal (e.g. “Humanity”); the absolute Ego lies no longer at the center of the process, but the interaction itself, or rather the creation per se that takes place in the form of interaction between poet and critic, becomes the “tenet”, which is the very key to existential philosophy.¹

Goethe’s comment on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to be genuine poetry, and vice versa, in his study of Lessing, he considers Lessing’s poetic works such as *Nathan the Wise* (*Nathan der Weise*) to be excellent critiques.

¹ Clear as it may sound, it can be challenging to distinguish between “subject a priori” and “intersubjectivity”. An example of this would be Husserl’s transcendental-phenomenological explanation of “intersubjectivity”: Based on his concept of “intentionality” and “epoché”, Husserl introduces an “ego” that is “not as I myself, but as something *reflecting* in my own Ego i.e. my monad” constituted; A second “ego” is then created, actually as an “alter ego”, which is “a reflection of myself, and yet not actually a reflection”, since the “sense of being” is fundamentally “a priori” and has actually no “you” in itself; so Husserl attempts to introduce the “alter ego” through analogizing appresentation, i.e. through the analogy of “my” body and “your” body, but this is precisely where the problem arises: By fantasizing, one has only doubled one’s own “Ego” and he does not really acquired an external “alter ego”, and so his “intersubjectivity” is de facto still problematic. (Husserl, 1950; Schloßberger, 2005) This article does not delve further into this problem, instead adhering to the distinction that has already been outlined: Whereas in metaphysics everything still revolves around the substance, there is no longer such a center in existential theory - the creation per se alone plays now the core role.

This seemingly subtle but in fact revolutionary transition is described by Schlegel using a seemingly trivial but perfectly appropriate word: “love”. This makes perfect sense because, as Schlegel stated, “the first thing in love is the sense of each other”. He contends that all genuine “romantic” love acts exactly as an “interaction”, which calls for the constant presence of both love (Liebe) and counter-love (Gegenliebe). The most remarkable aspect of this mutual love is that it is productive, as this interactive bond between the two lovers would necessarily result in the birth of a child, literally or figuratively, which represents something new and original – a work of art. The more the lovers interact with each other, the more artistic works come into being, and only in such abundance can love manifest itself as everything:

There is everything in love: friendship, beautiful company, sensuality and passion; there must be everything in it, and people must strengthen and alleviate, enliven and elevate each other.

To summarize, both components of this shared love are dependent upon one another, and their interaction leads to everyone’s “highest enjoyment” and improves their knowledge of the outside world as well as of themselves. This romantic mode of love actually has two dimensions, the metaphysical and the existential, and the shift from the former to the latter also signifies a fundamental change in the intellectual history of modern Europe (Schlegel, 1962-1979).

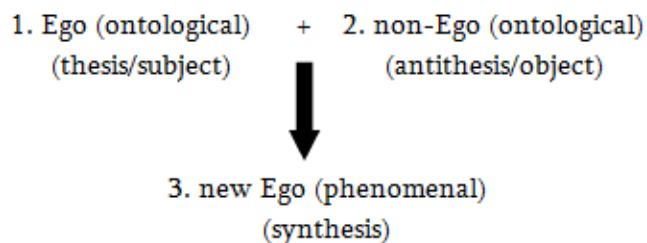
The ontological realm, also known as the world of ideas, and the phenomenal realm, also known as the world of appearances, make up the first dimension of this romantic love, which continues to be situated within the frameworks of European metaphysics (like “Sympoetry”). It all begins with the spirit (Geist) of the poet (Ego), which then encounters the spirit of the critic (non-Ego), and this spiritual union between them is finally realized in the phenomenal realm, giving birth to their figurative children, namely the literary

works and critiques; thus the combination of both gives rise to the colorfulness of the world, and the previously invisible spirit is now able to manifest itself in this spectrum.

Love in this sense serves as a bridge between the two realms, which also requires that it be a part of both. This definition of love predominates in Schlegel's early critiques, in both his studies of ancient poetry and in his comments on contemporary works. He contends in his study of Diotima, a character who appears as the "teacher of love" in Plato's well-known work, *The Symposium*, that Diotima, so perfect her teaching might seem, has only taught Socrates the "half-truth about love", because "love is not merely the silent desire for the infinite" (in the ontological realm), but also the "sacred enjoyment" of the present moment (in the phenomenal realm). On the other hand, he also criticizes many contemporary works of his time, claiming that they lack the true "spirit" and take unnatural debauchery mistakenly for love (Schlegel, 1962-1979).

"Love" as transcendental being

(based on Fichte's Idealism)



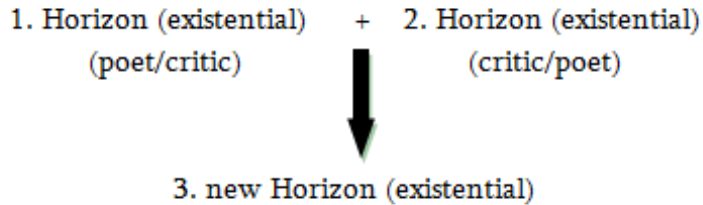
However, in Schlegel's romantic poetics, this metaphysical interpretation only serves as a preliminary form of "love" because, through the ongoing dialogue between poet and critic, the creation itself, instead of transcendent ideas, comes to represent the "being", and this creative "being" is precisely our existence:

As long as human nature exists, the drive for representation will stir and the demand for beauty will endure. The natural disposition of man, which, if allowed to evolve freely, would feel compelled to produce beautiful art, is *eternal*.

Love and life become synonymous with each other in existence, because they both embrace the whole spectrum of human experience, “from the most playful sensuality to the most spiritual spirituality”. The driving force behind both is the innate urge to create, or “genesis”, which excludes any metaphysical thinking centered on immovable transcendent ideas, and can only be understood and grasped through dynamics. (Schlegel, 1962-1979; Gadamer, 1990). The creation is no longer guaranteed by any transcendent ideas like “God”, instead it completely submerged in the ocean of existence and forgets about the kingdom above; it is not difficult to see that this is already a foreshadowing of Nietzsche’s famous statement, “God is dead” (Nietzsche, 1967-77/1988), which has ushered in a new era of European intellectual life (Schlegel, 1962-1979).

Since there is no longer an absolute substance (Ego), around which everything revolves, the so-called “intersubjectivity” now plays the dominant role, which means that the distinction between subject and object vanishes and both the poet and the critic are now equal subjects, or in the words of Gadamer, individual “horizons”. They are constantly ready to “fuse” with each other to establish a wider “horizon”, which again anticipates to “fuse” with another “horizon”, so that the restrictions in both poetry and critique can be gradually lifted and their horizons be steadily broadened (Gadamer, 1990). This now still half-hidden “intersubjectivity”, which is fundamentally connected to the shift in European intellectual history from metaphysics to existential philosophy, later emerged as a major trend in modern and postmodern art criticism. Such criticism rejects any transcendent aspect and tries to go “back to the things” (Husserl, 1984); the only issue that matters is the life itself, in which the “genesis” dominates all.

“Love” as existential desire
(based on intersubjectivity)



4. Conclusion

The foundation of Schlegel’s romantic theory of creation and criticism is the traditional European metaphysics promulgated by Plato, which divides everything into two worlds: the world of ideas and the world of appearances. In his “Sympoetry”, Schlegel brings the poet and the critic together with the aid of Fichte’s “Science of Knowledge”. This interactive “Sympoetry” values both the ego and the non-ego equally, which leads to a gradual development of intersubjectivity that rejects ontological ideas and serves as a precursor to modern and postmodern art criticism. Schlegel’s romantic theory of creation and criticism can therefore be viewed as both an advancement of his predecessors’ metaphysical notions and an inspiration for succeeding generations.

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**From Street-Life to Cruising in the Park:
Queers & the Dancefloor
(1978-1988)**

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Abstract:

It is only in recent decades that appraisal of pop music has gained footing in academic musicology studies. Intersections of pop and queer sexualities have since been well documented. However, this paper argues that comprehensive analysis of the role and impact on queer audiences, of the dance floor, and its musical soundtrack, has remained relatively uncharted. The paper commences in 1978, a point by which disco had saturated the lexicon of mainstream North American and European pop cultures (Echols, 2010). Outlining its trajectory, and the subsequent backlash provoked by its perceived challenges to heteronormativity, the paper questions the notion of the reputed ‘death of disco’. Here, the genre of Hi-Nrg is introduced and explored, as proof of disco’s musical evolution, and for its pioneering embodiment of “ [...] gay life on the dancefloor” (Jones & Kantonen, 1999, p.145). The significant role pop music can play in relation to individual identity formation LGBTI/queer constructions (Dhoest, Herreman & Wasserbauer, 2015) is then considered. Its proven dexterity, as a fostering agent with the capacity to imbue a sense of mutual connectivity among audiences (Gill, 1995; Siegel, 2001), is also explored. Leading to further analysis, of the importance and role of ‘safe spaces’ to queer audiences, and in offering examples of lyrical, pop artifacts from the period, the paper builds a

picture of the dance floor's transnational function, as vital space for queer audiences.

Keywords: Queer Theory, Intermediality, Popular Music

This paper analyses a unique period when pop music began, for the first time, to reflect the lives of its loyal queer audience explicitly. Various contexts concerning the representation of queer sexualities in popular music are offered for exploration before the lyrics to popular songs are explored to illustrate this development. Crucial to framing the investigation of these songs are concepts related to two distinct areas: Intermediality and Queer theory. Intermediality has been defined as a framework that “[...] allows us to gain insight into the hybrid character of art forms: their intertwinement with each other, but also the everyday, science, philosophy, and societal engagement” (van de Ven, 2018). Wolf elaborates on the relationship between literature and music, noting that they “[...] occupy a sub-field within the area of intermedial relations” (2009, p.134). The second framework, Queer theory, is built upon the concepts put forward by Michel Foucault and developed by Judith Butler and others. Rejecting the former implicit importance placed on binary sexual identities and the assimilationist gay politics of the era (Jagose, 1997), the author describes Queer theory as “[...] analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire” (*ibid*, p.3). Motschenbacher & Stegu (2013) confirm the commonality of “[...] analyses of language data informed by the insights of queer theory” (p.521), such as this paper.

Pop music, particularly dance music, has always been linked to LGBTI/queer communities. Pop has been shown to affect queer

audiences individually and collectively. Despite this, scholars such as Bullock (2017; 2022) and Doggett (2016) have shown that, for the first thirty years of its birth as a form in the early 1950s, most efforts to address queer sexualities explicitly were subject to censorship, by both the record industry and also by artists themselves. The ten years under review in this paper were ground-breaking, representing a milestone where pop explicitly addressed queer themes at a time when its queer audiences were now “hungry for gay role models” (Kantonen & Jones, 1999, p.45). Despite the breakthrough, the era remains relatively under-reported by both pop and rock music critics & scholars and queer commentators.

A long-standing snobbery about pop music may be held at least partly accountable for the former two categories. See the work of McLeod (2001) and Warwick (2013), who have both exposed the gendered perceptions of pop, revealing an implication that pop is traditionally seen as feminine, disposable and of little use. In the case of the latter, the 1980s posed a considerable threat, from the ‘family values’ campaigns of the likes of President Reagan, to the emergence of AIDS and its devastating effect on queer communities. The material covered in this paper originates from the US and the UK, where such issues understandably diverted the attention of sexuality-focused researchers from these countries as they did globally, a fact acknowledged by Keeps (1992) and addressed by this paper.

By 1978, disco had become an omnipresent force firmly embedded in popular culture. The genre’s roots have been traced to North America’s black & Latino queer clubs. Its reputation for affording women and queer spaces has been well established, alongside its role in de-segregating black and white audiences (Dyer, 1979; Echols, 2010). North American group, The Village People, were one of the many emerging acts to embody this new disco sound. Formed having answered an advertisement placed by French producer Jacques Morali, which read, “*Macho types Wanted, must have a moustache*”, the reference which reflects his original vision of a

“gay vocal troupe” (Aston, 2016, p.291), primarily designed to occupy a gay audience.

Each member of The Village People adopted a look straight out of gay pornography, emphasising their roots and queer affiliation (Kirk, 1999). The intended target market quickly recognised these overtly gay sartorial reference points – the traffic cop, the leather clone, and the construction worker. In addition, the group's catalogue included songs such as San Francisco (You've Got Me) and Go West seemed to pay homage to the burgeoning urban environments where LGBT communities were beginning to take shape. Even their moniker was interpreted as a nod to New York's Greenwich Village, an area long recognised as a hub for the emerging gay community (Loughrey, 1988). On top of this, their songs commonly contained lyrics containing homo-erotic content. While the band had already had some mainstream crossover success, 1978's YMCA would become a worldwide hit, a song which remains a staple today and is one of fewer than 40 songs to have sold 10 million plus physical copies (*The Telegraph*, 2001). Its lyrics told a tongue-in-cheek tale, which endorsed the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) as a meeting place and the song was widely read by queers, especially gay men, as referencing the past time of cruising. However, despite the "[...] open secret" (Buckland, 2012, p. 69), the majority of their newly discovered mainstream audience did not know that such images and lyrics rife with references to same-sex relationships had queer beginnings (Midgely, 2014). As Napier-Bell would observe of the band's success with YMCA:

Without a clue of what the song was about, the whole of America was copying. Every small-town club, every bar, every church hall, could be heard thumping out a mini-version of the decadence that had once been only found at the Sanctuary in New York...(as) gays around the world laughed at America's blindness" (2001, p. 216).

Often dismissed as crass, and despite having long since fallen out of favour with the gay community due to enduring but unsuccessful efforts to distance themselves from anything remotely homosexual, The Village People remain an essential milestone in queer representations in popular music. Echols notes their place in history as “the first gay-to-straight crossover group” (2010, p.138). Their success provided a first indication of how aesthetically and sonically, explicitly queer imagery and themes could exist and thrive outside the sub-culture from which they were derived. Crucially, while read as clearly queer by such audiences, such prompts often went unnoticed by heterosexual listeners. This strategy would be similarly employed by many major acts in the 1980s, as they walked the tightrope between offering queer-imbued performativity or lyrics while falling short of declaring themselves as so. As such, coded queer messages in pop would be highly prevalent throughout the decade.

Such was disco’s cultural dominance; a backlash would ensue, eventually resulting in the infamous ‘disco demolition’ nights held across the US. These events, where rock fans were invited to bring disco records to be burnt, have since been widely acknowledged as a reaction to the inclusivity of disco and have since been vilified by scholars for their homophobic and racist undertones (Dahl, Hoekstra & Natkin, 2016; Robb, 2020). However, as Smith notes of the period, “[...] the gays hadn’t stopped dancing yet” (*in* Kirk, 1999, p.11). This was illustrated by the development of a new genre derived from disco roots, which would become even more readily and explicitly associated with queer communities. If ever there was ‘gay music’ (a concept still robustly debated by scholars), then this was it.

The origins of the genre of Hi-Nrg can be incontestably attributed to Patrick Cowley and Bobby Orlando (Kirk, 1999; Waterman, 2000). Both men’s influence and championing of the genre are irrefutable. As disco continued to impinge on mass culture, they would harness new technologies to adapt and re-work aspects of the genre’s core stylistic trademarks. Increasing the tempo of the music

produced, these and other embellishments would define Hi-Nrg as a stand-alone genre. Patrick Cowley identified as gay, while Bobby Orlando's role in the genre's development is perhaps more surprising, given a reportedly overtly hostile attitude toward homosexuality. Described by poet Dennis Cooper as "[...] a hyper-macho, incredibly cocky, rampantly homophobic ex-boxer who made gay disco" (2020), Orlando cuts a distinctive character, authoring a book on creationism and reputedly offering to 'cure' his artists of their homosexuality. This apparent inconsistency, however, has no impact on his status as a form innovator.

Hi-Nrg songs were frequently sexually suggestive lyrically and commonly imbued with the overt glorification of the male body. Various social concepts and constructs relating to the urban queer experience of urban, gay America, itself proliferating as 'gay ghettos' sprang up in cities across the country (Bell & Binnie, 2004), were commonly referenced in song titles and lyrics. In titles such as *Bring on the Men*; *I Need A Man*; *Megatron Man*; *Thank God For Men*; *Male Stripper*, the repeated espousal of desire for and veneration of the male body is a predominant theme. That some scholars have already attributed this to be part of the genre's allure to a queer audience (Buckland, 2012, p.68) is hardly surprising. One of the few queer scholars writing about queer matters and pop music in the 1980s, English journalist Kris Kirk would note, "The phenomenal rise of the gay disco has brought in its train a new type of dance music, which, like it or not, is now regarded as ours – the ubiquitous Hi-Nrg" (1999, p.123). For final confirmation of the genre's origins and affiliation, Walters confirms, "This is gay ghetto music with no other goal than to pump up the drama, sexual innuendo and beats per minute" (1996, p. 72).

Patrick Cowley's track *Menergy* (Blecman & Cowley, 1981) perfectly illustrates how emerging queer linguistics were used to accompany thumping Hi-Nrg beats and is the first example proffered. The sound epitomised early 1980s gay San Francisco, its lyrics unabashed. The 'boys' featured in the song, busy 'checkin' you out', are engaged in 'cruising', a concept acknowledged as a definitively

queer cultural practice (Stacey, 2004; Espinoza, 2019). Referencing the 'back-room' vividly locates a geographical sphere for the lyric, the argot term having been adopted to describe the sex-on-premises bars of the emerging gay metropolitan centres of the United States (Martin, 1987). The bar itself, along with the street and the bedroom, feature as further locations in the song's lyrics, all serving as places where the possibility of sex can be navigated, negotiated or had. This is graphically confirmed by Cowley's 'boys/guys', who 'shoot off' in each verse's unique setting. The phrase, used by gay men as a vernacular description of ejaculation, reveals the explicitly queer resonance of Cowley's formative take on the genre.

Cowley would be an early casualty of the encroaching AIDS epidemic, and his death in November 1982 would unfortunately mean he would not witness Hi-Nrg's ascendancy into the mainstream. As for Menergy, a further enhancement of its queer credibility would come when it was covered and re-released with Cowley's vocals replaced by gay disco star and former protégé Sylvester in 1984. The success of both versions ensured its continued predominance on gay dance floors for a sizable part of the decade. Menergy's lascivious lyrics became a typical staple of the genre. While often cyclical and repetitive, nonetheless, they illustrate the raunchy, queer sexual assertiveness that is at the heart of many Hi-Nrg lyrics, amplifying its queer associations. For most of the decade, it was the omnipresent sound danced to in queer clubs, providing a triumphantly queer synth pop soundtrack.

Of the many junctures of queer sexuality and pop music which would manifest in the 1980s, the pop incarnations of Scottish singer Jimmy Sommerville command particular attention and form the second example. Bronski Beat, the band through which the public was first introduced to the Glaswegian singer, represented an actual first in pop music. While Bowie had ushered in his revolution in the 1970s, his declaration of queerness was later retracted. Elsewhere in the 1980s, of course, Boy George and the incongruous group of artists who would come to be known as 'the gender benders' would represent a significant visual affront to the heteronor-

mativity of pop. However, George was also at first reticent about any declaration of queerness. Sommerville was different. Unashamedly gay, while singing about explicitly gay themes (Bullock, 2017), his staunch politicism was forthright. Detailed projections and declarations of homosexuality would ensure his emblematic status as a new breed of 'out and proud' pop star. In addition to the insolence of singing about same-sex love, the band's lyrical themes often addressed the lives of queer audiences more broadly, writing on issues including homophobia and HIV/AIDS.

Bronski Beat's single and worldwide chart hit, *Smalltown Boy* (Bronski, Sommerville & Steinbach, 1984), addressed homosexuality with an explicitness rarely seen in pop. Even by the 1980s, few mainstream chart acts would assert anything other than a heterosexual identity. Still unaccustomed to seeing such a perspicuous reflection of their lives in the form, the sustained cultural significance of the song among LGBTI audiences has been well established (Maconie, 2014, p.272). The song's lyrics concerned a young gay man, rejected and left with no choice but to escape parochial heteronormativity. Halberstam's 'metronormativity' theory is exemplified by Sommerville's lyrics and the song's accompanying video, according to Kelaita (2021). Scholars have pointed to the term's frequent appearance in gay autobiography narratives (Maddison, 2002), described as "[...] the story of migration from "country" to "town" [...] within which the subject moves to a place of tolerance after enduring life in a place of suspicion, persecution, and secrecy" (p.37). Kelaita also notes that Somerville's "[...] actual destination is incidental since it is clear he is symbolically headed towards the queer city" (*ibid*, p.8). It is here in the queer geographies of the city that Bronski Beat were confidently mapped, with no need for subtlety or the commonly coded messages of same-sex desire frequent in pop. This changed everything. While Sommerville would remain lead-singer of Bronski Beat for scarcely more than a year, it was not to matter, as ensuing musical contributions made through his successive band, *The Communards*, and later a solo career, would prove equally as explicit (Coles, 2014). In particular, Small-

town Boy would shine a light on an important but heretofore invisible section of pop's audience and irrevocably change the representation of gay men in pop music.

Conclusion.

There is no doubt about it; queer love pop, and research exists to prove it. LGBT consumers are significantly more likely to have purchased pop music or attended a live concert in the previous year than their straight equivalents, with 92% of LGBT people considering themselves 'pop music fans' (GLAAD, 2017). As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, pop's function in aiding identity formation has been well established. Scholars such as Niebuhr (2007) have noted its specific role in helping queer people assert their identities. Furthermore, in the collective sense, pop music's proven dexterity as a fostering agent with the capacity to imbue a sense of mutual connectivity among audiences is both long and reputable (Gill, 1995; Schäfer *et al.*, 2015; Siegel, 2001). Aspects of this realm have also been explored with a specifically queer lens. Writing on the role of music in contributing to queer cultures and spaces, Coleman (2002) captures pop music's vital functioning in the sensory development of 'safe spaces', such as those frequented by queers seeking refuge from the overt hostilities of the decade. Gill (1995) notes that "Dancing, dance music & places where people dance have been central to the lives of queers since queers were first invented" (p. 134). Indeed, so acute is the connection and awareness of the affinity that scholars have gone as far as developing hypotheses which suggest a queer sensibility inherent in the form of pop itself (Himes, 2015).

Today, terms such as 'gay anthems' and 'gay icons' have entered the popular linguistic vocabulary. Many of the artists who fill the dance floors of today routinely identify as LGBTQI or being non-binary or fluid in relation to their gender identity, reflecting the general eschewal of traditional labels of sexual identity politics chronicled by sexuality scholars. However, there is little doubt that

there is a debt to be paid to the pioneering artists of the 1980s for their opening of such pathways. From the beginning of the end of disco's reign to a period of another inevitable but temporary backlash in the late 1980s, pop spoke to its queer constituents for the first time, loudly and proudly. Queer audiences could explicitly hear their sexualities and lives being sung about, which had never happened before.

In conclusion, we can return to Gill, who describes the period as a time when

"Enough brazenly queer performers had stated their sexuality, in fact, insisted on it being known, to suggest that a successful career in pop and retaining one's personal dignity and integrity as a self-identified queer were not mutually exclusive" (Gill, 1995, p. 173).

The author sums up the significant queer cultural legacy of the period. Pop music had changed irrevocably in relation to its once-censored queer affiliations. Once out of the closet, there was no going back.

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The Political Aesthetics of Agricultural Protest in the 21st Century

In Search of a Sky to Protect the Earth: Houellebecq's Political Aesthetics Considering *Sérotonine*

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Abstract:

As an agronomic engineer, it is one of Michel Houellebecq's personal endeavors to protect the environment and foster local and sustainable agriculture. It is therefore no surprise that he stresses the personal and economic disasters of industrial production in nearly all of his novels. Through the example of *Serotonin* (2019), this article will show how Houellebecq proceeds aesthetically through the staging of his characters to defend the cause of the farmers. On the one hand, there is the voice of Aymeric d'Harcourt-Olonde, depicted as a lovely, loyal, and moral friend and a courageous hero with deep historic roots and agricultural ideals, and Camille, Florent's biggest love, shocked by animal husbandry. Both are complementary and embody a premodern state of civilization: medieval times and the 19th century. On the other hand, there is the narrator, Florent, who is uprooted, works for the state economy, and embodies industrial production based on profit. There are two parallel plots by which Houellebecq tries to explain our contemporary decadence: the betrayal of the religion (Camille) and the attempt to get her back during the whole novel, and the decline of the medieval culture as our common roots (Aymeric), which ends in suicide. Through these characters, who are de facto incarnations, the whole parable of serotonin aims at depicting the relationship

between the state and religion through time and its economic and human fallouts. By retracing the sacrifice and tragic fate of the medieval stage of civilization, its pre-industrial mode of production, and Christian culture, Houellebecq aims to arouse awareness among his readers of the necessity of transcendence, which, according to him, can only lead to a fair economic production. Until the very end, Houellebecq aimed at evangelizing the state economy to make it a more moral one (see also Anéantir, 2022) through his parables, which eventually could change society from within. The article will show how agricultural production remains a central aspect of Houellebecq's whole poetics.

Keywords: Contemporary Political Literature, Economics and Religion, Transcendence and Social Change

Michel Houellebecq often criticizes industrial farming as in his latest interview with philosopher Michel Onfray (Houellebecq & Onfray, 2022). My thesis in this paper is to argue that Michel Houellebecq shows by the staging of events in *Serotonin*, that the lack of Christianity and the search for an appropriate spiritual shelter also impacts the way the protagonists treat the earth and its operation, meaning agriculture. In fact, we are not more faithful to the earth, as Nietzsche put it, if we abandon the sky, i.e. God. I focused on the inversion of Nietzschean messianism in another article of mine entitled "Recurring Prophets. The inversion of Nietzschean messianism in Michel Houellebecq's The possibility of an island. Throughout *Serotonin* there is a link between the homeless protagonist and his professional failure to protect the local economy. On the contrary the search for a sky seam to go hand in hand with the protection of the land by a sustainable economy. Thus, once again

through concrete events that happened also in reality, Houellebecq manages to link a physical story to the metaphysical (Hi)story of occidental mankind by writing an embodied speech. Therefore, the protagonists are incarnations of more general ideas and discourses. As Gero Faßbeck rightly puts it, Houellebecq's realism is not an imitation of nature, but one of discourses (Faßbeck, 2021, p. 289). Until recently, in his latest novel, *Annihilate* (2022), Houellebecq maintained his endeavor to spread Christianity like the apostle Paulus and to rehabilitate the authority of God, since Paul Raison works aside the state's economy (embodied by a certain Bruno Juge) to regulate it.

In *Serotonin*, the first part is a wandering around of the protagonist Florent-Claude Labrouste, who has no roots, meaning the Christian faith, and who also fails during his lifetime to protect the local agriculture, which he is in charge of at the DRAF ("Direction nationale de l'agriculture et la forêt"). In fact, Florent works for the state, which fails to put in place protective measures to sustain its national economy. Thus, at the very beginning of the novel, Yuzu and Florent are tourists, meaning without spiritual shelter, who stop by various hotels without being able to find a single smoking hotel. The hotels symbolize the transitory shelter of states, and the smoke detector is its monitoring big brother's eye. In the very opening scene of the novel, the transcendence is embodied by an apparition "la châtain d'Al Alquian", that he lets go on the national road, "voied'accès à la nationale" (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 17). From that moment on, as the sacred has migrated to the nation-state, it will be a long, lost journey to find a suitable home. In the first part, the narrator, Florent, is looking for a smoking hotel with a woman who is foreign to him (Yuzu).

After having tried different roofs, one more totalitarian, rationalistic, and hygienic than the other, he undertakes a journey into the past to reconnect with the faith of the 19th century (Camille). The whole first part is thus devoted to the touristic roofs that the nation-states have tried to build since the 19th century. But the climax of the tragedy is the break with the Christian faith

embodied by Camille, that he betrayed in a "frightfully stupid" way with a coloured girl (embodied by Tam) from the British delegation in Brussels. But more, he repeats his betrayal in Paris, in the "Quartier Latin," the very heart of humanistic Europe, where faith this time realizes it. On the one hand, Houellebecq's work tells the individual drama of Florent and Camille, but beyond that, it tells the drama of the white man with his beloved Christianity and his desperate quest for the right words to hold back his betrayed European transcendence.

Mon cerveau travaillait lentement, brumeusement, à chercher une formule [...]. Le lendemain elle continua à pleurer en rassemblant ses affaires, pendant que je me creusai la tête pour trouver une formule adéquate, à vrai dire j'ai passé les deux ou trois années qui suivirent à chercher une formule adéquate, probablement même est-ce que je n'ai jamais cessé de chercher (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 184).

After the expected separation, he goes back in History to tell the reasons that led to the loss of transcendence and eventually the devastating humane consequences we can see through all the novels. It is the story of the aristocrat Aymeric d'Harcourt-Olonde who is depicted as a courageous hero with deep roots and ideals (he is the descendant of Robert d'Harcourt who accompanied Richard Coeur de Lion in his third crusade). "Je me suis dit que c'était bien, quand même, d'avoir des racines" (Ibid, 204). He is a farmer, which in itself is an anti-realistic element of the aesthetics of the writer, because it is not the primary vocation of the aristocracy to be farmers, but it allows the author to link the moral economic behaviour to a medieval state of civilization. Aymeric plays the "good" role and engages in quality dairy production on his farm with a castle inherited from his aristocratic family. Not only does he protest in the name of all the farmers and threaten the police during the farmers' demonstration, but he ends up committing suicide. This demonstration, of which the scale and violence as well as its media fallout, are described in details, is just a paradigmatic example for Houellebecq for the European agricultural policy and the killing of

French production in particular because of the abolition of EU milk quotas. This scene in the novel was often said to refer to the “Gilets jaunes” movement, which took place in France due to the increase in the domestic consumption tax on energy products. The whole staging of events take place at the turn of a not specified new year in the novel, which later turns out to be 1789 (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 269). Therefore, beyond the anecdotic story hides a symbolic counterpart, which is the history of transcendence and its moral fallout. In this case, Aymeric embodies a pre-modern and more precisely a medieval stage of civilization, where people were able to make sacrifices or even to die for their principles (Skagen, 2020, p. 154). He is described as an "aristocrat martyr of the farmer's cause" (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 265) and his suicide also has a moral scope. The state dumbs its prices and forces him into ruin, whereas he resists with the price of his life.

Aymeric is thus the synonym of a moral production which renounces to profit and make sacrifices for a better quality. The fact that he is Florent's best friend shows Michel Houellebecq's sympathy with this way of producing. In much the same way the narrator's love Valérie from *Plateforme* (2000) comes from a farmer's family in Brittany, which had to quit the production, because money does not reward manual work anymore, but is more and more earned by financial speculation. To survive, the premodern must now a fortiori rent standardized bungalows to tourists on his land where the sea (symbol of the divine) has retreated. It is on this dry spiritual ground, left by the Middle-Age, that the sixties and seventies culture will settle. This culture is marked by an absolutism of nature, that doesn't speak to anyone (embodied by a German naturalist). This culture takes the perspective of a toad, worships youth (the young Nathalie) and focuses on sex, homosexuality, and gender.

J'eus du mal lorsqu'elle démarra à reconnaître la chanson, ça ressemblait à un truc disco de la fin des années 1970 ou du début des années 1980, du Corona peut-être, mais la fille réagit bien [...] et c'est là que je commençai vraiment à avoir mal au cœur, pas à cause du contenu mais de la prise de vue, il devait s'être

accroupi pour la prendre en contre-plongée, il devait sautiller autour d'elle comme un vieux crapaud (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 216).

This scene could also remind the time in history when the Church was accused of sexual abuse and paedophilia. After the confession of medieval politics having divorced from his faith, there remains only solitude and a bunch of individual bungalows. The father tries in vain to stay in touch with a spiritual future, but they have nothing to say to each other anymore (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 222). In this situation the narrator cannot do anything for the medieval culture but to witness the decline of a defeated old male. Much like Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Houellebecq makes contemporary social-political events coincide with pivotal moments in the history of thought and transcendence. In *Serotonin* for example, he aligns the difficult situation of the Norman dairy farmers with the situation of France before the French Revolution. The premodernity, like the dairy farmers, is on the verge of bankruptcy as liberalism is taking its toll and transcendence (his wife Cécile) doesn't resist the tough conditions. On the contrary, his faith is seduced by a worldly Anglo-Saxon way of life and doesn't care much for metaphysics. The mistake of the premodern according to the narrator is in having married a faith of its exclusive nobility, which however had no interest and motivation to maintain the medieval heritage. To show the scope of liberalism Houellebecq specifies that Aymeric's father, a traditional aristocrat, maintained the estate with no work, while his son works himself to death to eventually impoverish the family. But before Aymeric's suicide, Florent spends some time with him, and the parable of serotonin shows that what the modern white man learns from the premodern man is to bear his cross. Even if Aymeric himself does not know how to hold his gun anymore because of alcohol, he teaches Florent to carry his cross, a weapon he would have liked to have against the 70s and 80s culture. On the surface, Aymeric teaches Florent how to handle a gun, but in fact, he teaches him the biblical meaning of the cross, as he finds it justified to have only one life, i.e., accepting mortality and the sacrifice it entails. «Tu trou-

veras des mecs zen qui te diront que l'essentiel c'est de ne plus faire qu'un avec sa cible. J'y crois pas c'est des conneries; d'ailleurs, les Japonais sont nuls en tir sportif. [...] moi je trouve que c'est bien, personnellement, d'avoir une seule chance» (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 234). But after having trained for hours, the moment comes when Florent must act himself and fails to sacrifice even an animal. On the medieval philosophical ground, Florent finds the contact of the transcendence that he chases and observes without being able to get back in couple with her because she has a son that he does not know how to sacrifice.

This year 1789, is going to make all shiver, whereas Florent could have lived eternally with his premodern friend by listening to the song Child in time. However, the medieval man fought and organized himself on Sundays to fight in Pont l'Évêque to block and protest against the measures which bled him. But no significant action is done, Florent can only assist as a witness to his loss. The suicide of the farmer finally coincides with the French Revolution itself, since the author inserts a temporal clue by quoting 1789. "Je sentais autour de moi une étranger ambiance dans ce café, presque Ancien Régime, comme si 1789 n'y avait laissé que des traces superficielles, je m'attendais d'un moment à l'autre À ce qu'un paysan évoque Aymeric en l'appelant «notre monsieur» (Ibid, 270). From now on the Church ceases to be a socially structuring institution organizing communion and leaves the protagonists and especially Florent homeless. Florent in fact is in search of Eucharist and first stops at L'hostellerie de la Baie (Ibid, 268), then Chez Maryvonne (with the name Mary in it) where the inhabitants mourn the end of the Ancien regime and their lord Aymeric d'Harcourt-Olonde. The third day he ends in Coutances in a restaurant facing the cathedral, "c'était visiblement the place to be" (Ibid, 270). After the fatal turn of 1789, Florent is in search of the one and only divine love, embodied by Camille. It has been seven (a number that also symbolizes God) years since Florent hasn't seen Camille, and he discovers that she has a son. The son finishes a puzzle of Snow White, which symbolizes leaving death towards life, exile towards the kingdom,

i.e., resurrection (Skagen 2020). However, while trying the ultimate shot that would release him from the wandering in his life, he starts to tremble. Florent fails in accepting to kill the Son on the Cross to join religion and so continues his desperate errancy and the swallowing of the Captorix instead of the Oblate. The communion with transcendence from the 19th century didn't take place and will continue to haunt him until his death. By taking upon himself all the contemporary sins to which the non-sacrifice leads, the author paradoxically enough executes the sacrifice of himself.

Dieu s'occupe de nous en réalité, il pense à nous à chaque instant, et il nous donne des directives parfois très précises. Ces élans d'amour qui affluent dans nos poitrines jusqu'à nous couper le souffle, ces illuminations, ces extases, inexplicables si l'on considère notre nature biologique, notre statut de simples primates, sont des signes extrêmement clairs. [...] Et je comprends, aujourd'hui, le point de vue du Christ, son agacement répété devant l'endurcissement des cœurs. ils ont tous les signes, et ils n'en tiennent pas compte. Est-ce qu'il faut vraiment, en supplément, que je donne ma vie pour ces minables? Est-ce qu'il faut vraiment être, à ce point, explicite ? Il semblerait que oui (Houellebecq, 2019, p. 347).

Houellebecq thus shows that both, human and divine love, are just two sides of the same coin and traces back the history of transcendence to explain how the civilization of the Middle-Age divorced from transcendence (this is Aymeric's story) while at the same time he tries to catch up with the 19th century religion (this is the plot with Camille) through a postmodern narrative. In doing so, he shows how the motive of the cross can have a crucial significance for us today specifically also regarding farming and the economy. The notions of Good Friday, Pentecost, assumption of Mary, resurrection and so on are known without being fully understood by moderns: We vaguely heard about the theological vocabulary, but we cannot assign him a meaning today. The behaviour of the modern is the opposite of the premodern: Florent betrays his women, ideals and himself. He is characterized by lassitude and opportunism, whereas Aymeric stands for his convictions and embodies commitment. The novel begins and ends with the same sentence that describes the Captorix tablet. Thus, the meaning is

inscribed in the form of the novel, which adopts a circular shape. This “form-follows-function” aesthetics is a constant throughout Houellebecq’s work and explains some of its shocking effects. To understand further his aesthetics, we will have a look at *The map and the territory* which is a key novel in that respect. It is the parable that explains why he has been writing in parables and how they are conceived.

Jed consacra sa vie [...] à l’art, à la production de représentations du monde, dans lesquelles cependant les gens ne devaient nullement vivre. Il pouvait de ce fait produire des représentations critiques – critiques dans une certaine mesure, car le mouvement général de l’art comme de la société tout entière portait [...] vers une acceptation du monde [...] (Houellebecq, 2010, p. 37).

As stated Houellebecq aims at criticism through his novels and meets the aesthetic requirements of Marxist literary theory, since he pursues the unity between form and function that Adorno inherited from Hegelian aesthetics (Adorno 1970).

Je sais que cela peut paraître absurde; certains vous diront que le sujet n’a aucune importance, que c’est même ridicule de vouloir faire dépendre le traitement du sujet traité, que la seule chose qui compte est la manière dont le tableau ou la photographie se décompose en figures, en lignes, en couleurs. – Oui, le point de vue formaliste [...] c’est même plus répandu en littérature que dans les arts plastiques, il me semble (Houellebecq, 2010, p. 140).

This “form-follows-function” aesthetics was at the time of its emergence a revolutionary and social one. «C’était en effet une œuvre curieuse. [...] et le traitement avait quelque chose d’ample et d’aérien qui le rapprochait du réalisme socialiste à la chinoise» (Houellebecq 2010, p. 195). It’s a kind of realism, which does not describe reality, but rather enacts it in his fiction (see also Betty, 2016, p. 19). «Vous, je ne sais pas si vous pourriez faire quelque chose, sur le plan littéraire, avec le radiateur, insista Jed. Enfin si, il y a Robbe-Grillet, il aurait simplement décrit le radiateur... Mais, je ne sais pas, je ne trouve pas ça tellement intéressant...» (Houellebecq, 2010, p. 137).

Toute cette accumulation de détails réalistes, censés camper des personnages nettement différenciés, m'est toujours apparue, je m'excuse de le dire, comme pure foutaise. [...] Pour atteindre le but autrement philosophique, que je me propose, il me faudra au contraire élaguer. Simplifier. Détruire un par un une foule de détails. J'y serai d'ailleurs aidé par le simple jeu du mouvement historique. Sous nos yeux, le monde s'uniformise (Houellebecq, 1993, p. 16).

Entirely in line with Nietzschean language and subject critique, which sees language as the great "falsifier" that throws a veil over things through words and is therefore only prejudice and ideology, Houellebecq uses language "actively" or performatively: it has no representative function, rather it executes a reality. This therefore leads to misunderstandings when his novels are read literally or in an all-too-positive way, because the language paradoxically does not say what it means here. With this specific use of language, Houellebecq tries to avoid a well-known problem: how can a linguistic critique of ideology be expressed that would not itself become ideology? His aesthetic decision consists of a performative language that gives priority to the object (reality) over the subject (author), which is therefore a function of reality and, if possible, does not distort it through stylistic devices.

Retour à la peinture, ou à la sculpture, enfin retour à l'objet. [...] A vrai dire je n'ai jamais fait de performance, mais j'ai l'impression d'avoir quelque chose en commun avec ça. D'un tableau à l'autre j'essaie de construire un espace artificiel, symbolique, où je puisse représenter des situations qui aient un sens pour le groupe. – C'est un peu ce qu'essaie de faire le théâtre, aussi. [...] – Ce que je fais, en tout cas, se situe entièrement dans le social (Houellebecq, 1993, p. 145).

The parables are made of symbolic actions that shall make sense to the group. Therefore, the question to ask when reading Houellebecq is rather a theatrical one: what is performed here? As quoted, he doesn't aim at describing but at mystifying Christianity through an actual narrative. As a result, he acts much like an activist to resurrect the Christian symbolism, which makes him a conservative revolutionary or a revolutionary conservative. The meaning of the parables is not stated in assertive sentences but

enacted in his fictions. Eventually, when read in this performative way, Houellebecq's supposed anecdotic stories disclose actually Christian motives in a contemporary story. They thus continue the Christian message, which is the very function of the Son: the word of God made flesh.

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South Asian Visions of Africa and African/Diasporic Literatures

A Postcolonial Native in Colonial Africa: An Exploration of the Travelogue Kappirikalude Nattil

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Abstract:

I would like to understand the Indian Migrants' experiences of African colonialism in the context of Kappirikalude Nattil (In the land of Kappiris); a Malayalam travelogue written by SK Pottekkatt in the 1950s. I also try to bring a comparative perspective of colonial experiences in the African and Indian contexts. Kappirikalude Nattil is a travelogue about Africa written from the perspective of an Indian writer in the post-independence period. The perception of concepts such as 'state' and 'nationalism' considerably vary for an Indian citizen who migrated to Africa which was still under British rule. Due to his Indian identity, his social position in Africa, and his approach to colonization are different from the Native Africans. Similarly, the tools of oppression used by the imperialist powers for colonization in Africa subtly differ from the hegemonic apparatuses they employed in India. Awareness of linguistic dominance, racial dominance, and racial discrimination plays a pivotal role in imperial oppression. Also, the colonial modes of power employed over the Indian immigrants are different from those employed over the Africans. The main reason for this is the significant class differences among immigrant Indians and differences in the capacity for political transactions and economic inequality. The difference can be

seen in the general life scenarios of Malayalees, Tamils, and Gujaratis in Africa. According to Homi K. Bhaba's mimicry theory, the attitude of Indian immigrants towards African natives confuses British imperialism and results in a hybrid culture. This reading will give you a better idea of the defenses adopted by the British government against Indian immigrants to strengthen their colonial power.

Keywords: Hybridity, Mimicry, Colonialism and Hegemony

Travel has been indispensable to modern man since the beginning of mankind. Humans continue to require travel for daily needs, survival, and entertainment. Travelogues are also very popular in literature because they relate to life. Here we will discuss the famous Malayalam writer S K Potekatt's travelogue titled *Kapirikal Nattil*. This work describes the experiences of an author visiting Africa within a few years after India was freed from British colonial rule.

Sankaran Kutty Kunjiraman Pottakkatt (14 March 1913 – 6 August 1982) was an Indian writer of Malayalam literature and a politician from Kerala, India. He was also a great traveler among the Keralites and wrote many travelogues for the people who have been unacquainted to the outside world. He was the awardee of the Jnanpith Award in 1980.

The author's journey to Africa in the 1950s is depicted in nine chapters such as "On the African Soil", "Beira", "In South Rhodesia", "The Victorian Falls", "The Indians of East Africa", "From Blantyre to Dodoma", "Looking Back at Nyasaland", "Swahili", and "The Indian Bwana." The travelogue is originally written in Malayalam and

translated into English by Radhika Menon with the title 'In the Land of Kappiris'. The most distinctive thing that makes this work different is that the author traveled to another British colony immediately after his country became independent from the British occupation. For this reason, it will be interesting to understand how the observation and attitudes made by the writer and other citizens of a post-colonial country will be about people suppressed by colonialism.

By exploring the travelogue, we can have a comparison of the experiences of colonization in Indians within both India and Africa. Based on these colonial backgrounds we have to address some important questions. As citizens of an independent country, what kind of attitude did both the state and citizens of India have towards the African colony and the people of the same? And what is the marked difference between the colonial experiences of Indians in colonized India and the colonial experiences of Africans in colonized Africa?

In fact, Indians living in African colonies were socially and economically superior to African natives. Although racism on a large scale existed in Africa, compared to Africans, the condition of Indians was essentially better. Because of that, even if they were not imperialists, the Indians had psychological dominance over the Africans. But how did people who experienced the tragic results of colonization get this type of hegemonic attitude instead of the sympathy they should have when they see the inhabitants of another colony?

For this study, we can refer to the theories of hybridity and mimicry by Homi K Bhabha to understand the colonial Experience of Indian natives.

According to Homi K Bhabha's Mimicry Theory, Mimicry is an evolutionary effect of colonization. Whatever strategies the imperial powers employ to exploit the colonies, the colonies will eventually follow suit. It is to be understood that the attitude shown by the whites towards the Indians in colonial India was naturally imitated by the Indians and this influenced the attitude towards

their people in Africa. Indians are driven by the feeling that they are occupying power in Africa or even that they have hegemony over Africans. But Indians have not been able to behave completely like whites, instead, a hybrid of the colonists and the colonized can be seen in Indians. Homi K Bhabha's theory of hybridity predicts such a change. In the article *The Limits of cultural Hybridity: on Ritual Monsters, Poetic License, and contested Postcolonial purifications*, Pnina Werber argues that "the harmony of the ceremony was necessarily an ambivalent one, given the pervasive inequalities and separations between white and black. This ambivalence, the unstable meanings, the hybridity of the bridge ceremony, did not simply derive from the fusing of disparate cultural elements, each bearing its own fixed cultural meaning." (Werber 2001, p.136 *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*). Guido Pezzarossi's discovery citing Homi K Bhabha's theory of mimicry is noteworthy here. Bhabha's (1985) concept of hybridity operates from a theoretical footing that forwards a fluid, contingent, in-process conception of culture and identity that emerges from the continually hybridizing processes of the "Third Space." Moreover, Bhabha's concept of colonial "mimicry" is especially salient to the interpretations of the enabling and constraining of Indigenous or other subaltern populations' consumer strategies. Mimicry is defined as: "The desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed through an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha 1984, p. 126, emphasis in original)

The culture of hybridity among Africans can be seen mainly in costumes. In describing the town of Bulawayo, the author makes special reference to men and women dressed in European style. But it has to be said that such hybridity is generally less visible in intellectual fields than in such peripheral changes. At the same time, intellectually, such a change can be seen among the Indians of Africa. One of the main reasons for such a difference between Africans and Indians is the basic education that Indians received.

It is relevant that the British had to rely on educated Indians to keep the administration active. In this way, it has to be said that the Indian officials are also indirectly involved in the African obsession.

Now, let us check what the attitude of the Indians towards the Africans maintained. The author observes; Apart from the south Indian laborers, most of the migrants to Africa were traders from northern India and Gujarat and a few clerks from Kerala. The economic superiority of Indians, including the mercantile Gujaratis, in Africa has largely helped to improve their social status as well. It has to be said that the economic exploitation of the African natives by the Gujarati traders was largely modeled on the British Empire. One of the most interesting things is that Gujaratis had a great impact even on the dominance of language. In the course of the travelogue, the author indicates; There was even a situation where any Indian in Africa had to know Gujarati to get a job in a private school. Another thing similar to the British imposition of English is the role played by Gujaratis in making Gujarati, a language spoken in only one state in India, the language of all Indians in Africa. Here too we see signs of indirect imitation of the British occupation. Here we can see Gujaratis who are reaping huge financial profits by supplying daily necessities to the locals in their shops. Gujarati traders have been able to exploit the African locals as much as the British or even more with their trading strategies. But the author quotes the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru as saying what should be the attitude of the Indian immigrants towards the African natives: "What the Indians living in Africa should remember always is that they are the guests of Africa and therefore should not indulge in anything that is likely to be an obstacle in the Africans' progressive path towards freedom (29)". This one statement of Nehru's attitude towards the colonization of independent India is clear here. The state's position was that an Indian should be guided by sympathy for the natives and the desire for their independence, without supporting the occupying power. But the author observes that the Indian traders did nothing for the good of the Africans.

After the independence of India, it is necessary to examine what was the attitude of the whites towards the Indians in Africa. The author believes that to understand the white man's anger towards independent India, one can understand the entry process of Indians to places like Southern Rhodesia. He opined that an Indian traveler could face a prison sentence unless he had a large amount of money in hand or a recommendation from higher authorities. It can also be understood that its press media tried to create an anti-India public sentiment among the whites due to grievances about Indian influence in Africa. The author points out that the article "Indian invasion is Africa's big problem" by Noel Monks in the British-controlled Mombasa Times and another article written by J.W Patten in 'Outspan Daily' was discussed with significant importance at that time. The British were able to rule comfortably in colonial India by creating communal divisions among the Indians themselves. But the British also practiced the same politics of communal division in Africa. While in India it was mainly a division between religions, in Africa the whites tried to create communal divisions between the Indians and the African natives.

The author curiously recalls an occasion when India, freed from British rule, bravely faced Britain. When Britain asked the Indian government to send laborers to Africa to do clerical work as a matter of necessity, India took advantage of that opportunity very boldly: "A minimum salary of 30 Pawan, second-class ticket, first-class accommodation and equal status with the whites. If there is a willingness to allow all this, we will think about it" (Pottekattu, P.123, In the land of Kappiris).

What we have done so far is look at the interrelationship between the Indian people of Africa, the British, and the African natives through the eyes of the author. But now let us try to understand the author's attitude towards the African natives. The book's title, In the Land of Kappirees, must be criticized here. We have learned that the English translation of a book written in Malayalam titled Kappirikalude Nattil was published under the title In the Land of Kappirees. The same word used in the titles of both these lan-

guages is Kappiri. Actually, in Malayalam, the word Kappiri is used as a synonym for the word caprice. Kappiri is a derogatory term addressed to blacks, generally in contexts of color or in the consciousness of purity. Here, even the author, who has experienced and seen racial discrimination, addresses the African natives with the word 'Kappiri'. It is a serious thing that the author's inner consciousness or discriminatory interest is hidden in the title of this book itself.

Indians who lived in an African colony did not feel the sympathy they should have felt for a British colony. Instead, Indians had a sort of superiority complex over Africans. According to Homi K Bhabha's Mimicry Theory, Indians were to some extent imitating the English. But without complete imitation, a hybrid culture was formed among Indians. Anti-colonial interests of the Africans were not supported by the Indian settlers in any way, as most of the Indians were not interested in governance issues or freedom struggle but were concerned only with trade and other people were clerks of the British government. But in this matter, the government of independent India had an official stance of supporting the indigenous Africans. Indians generally had a less harsh sense of discrimination against Africans than did the British. On the other hand, the influence that Indians were gaining socially and economically in the African colony created a headache for the British and it is possible to see the British's stance against it. Britain was unable to fully succeed with those small positions as it needed Indian staff for official affairs.

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Beware of Women: Analyzing the Market Literatures of Nigeria

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Abstract:

In the 1940s pamphlet literature burgeoned into a profitable industry in the market town of Onitsha, in Nigeria. As the pamphlets, also referred as 'chapbooks', were printed, and circulated in the market town of Onitsha this genre of literature came to be popularly known as Onitsha Market Literature. According to scholars like Obiechina (1973) Onitsha Market Literature is the 'literature of the mass' and it soared to popularity due to its cheap retail price and the lucidity of language. Obiechina further argues that Onitsha Market Literature represented the 'sentiments of an emergent urban culture'. The most interesting characteristics of these pamphlets was the didactic element, which dominated the thematic core of both the fictions and non-fictions, the central concern being to educate and guide the audience. The authorial intentions were sometimes clearly identified through the titles of the pamphlets; *Beware of Women*, *Why Boys don't trust their girlfriends?* *My seven daughters are after young boys*, *A Woman's Pride is her husband*; etc. According to Stephanie Newel (1996) Onitsha pamphlets presented a 'new female identity', which was a product of 'decolonization' and 'urbanization'. However, what structured this 'new female identity'? Who were the authors of these pamphlets? Were there any women authors, who were also instrumental in creating this 'new identity'?

Around the 1970s another form of 'literature of the mass' started making a mark in the urban areas of Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Zaria. However, as Kano was the lead in the production of these texts the pamphlets, produced during this period, came to be known as the Kano Market Literature. According to Novian Whitsitt (2003) Kano market literature possessed aesthetic, themat-

tic, and social similarities with the Onitsha ‘chapbooks’. Thus, like Onitsha Market Literature, did Kano Market Literature also aim at creating a ‘new female identity’? How did ‘decolonization’ and ‘urbanization’ affect the Market Literature of Kano? Therefore, through the methodology of Comparative Literature the proposed paper aims to find possible answers to the posed questions.

Keywords: Market Literature, Nigeria, Decolonization, Urbanization, Identity

In the late 1940s the production of literary pamphleteering emerged in the town of Onitsha, in Nigeria. This phenomenon became popularly known as the Onitsha Market literature due to its inception in the market town. In 1947 a local company, called Tabansi Bookshop, published *Ikolo the Wrestler and Other Igbo Tales* and *When Love Whispers*. These two were among the first pamphlets to be published in the market town of Onitsha. After these, *Tragic Niger Tales*, by Chike Okonyia, was published in the same year. Due to the instant popularity of these pamphlets the production of the pamphlet literature started accelerating. By the 1960s pamphlet literature became a notable industry. Though the pamphlet industry spread to other towns in Nigeria; like Port Harcourt, Aba and Enugu; Onitsha remained the central market of pamphlet production in Nigeria. There are many reasons which triggered the production of pamphlet literature in Onitsha. The first being the conducive location. Situated near the river Niger, Onitsha was regarded as the point of contact between the hinterland, mid-western and western Nigeria. Therefore, Onitsha attracted the European traders and missionaries, which transformed the town

into an educational and commercial hub. The contact with the missionaries led to the establishment of churches and schools. Besides this the flourishing commerce at Onitsha also led to the setting up of a Nigeria-owned printing press, which started attracting potential publishers and authors. The strategic location of the city attracted readers across different parts of Nigeria. During 1946 the government, under the control of Britain, sold their used printing presses to the traders in Onitsha, who used these discarded machines to produce cheap novelettes and chapbooks. Due to the non-existence of public library in eastern Nigeria, at that point of time, the popularity of the Onitsha Market Literature soared. The cheap retail price of the texts also augmented the popularity of this market literature.

Most of the authors of the Onitsha Market Literature were amateur writers, who were employed as school teacher, book sellers, clerks, students, journalists, traders, farmers, and artisans. For most of these authors writing was a hobby, nurtured for an extra income. Many writers chose to write in English as it was the official language of Nigeria. Perhaps the other reason to resort to English was to make the pamphlets available to the multilingual people of Nigeria. Most of the authors were not proficient in English and did not have a formal education. The contents, of these pamphlets, were structured with syntactical mistakes and spelling errors. Sometimes, the authors borrowed extensively from 18th century English literature, which made the language of the content quite archaic. However, the authors employed their best efforts to keep the diction simple as their intended audience not only constituted of the educated mass but also the semi-literate ones. The authors aimed at focusing on the social problems and providing possible solutions to it.

The themes of the pamphlets ranged from issues related to social evils, advice on morality, love, marriage, economics, local history, indigenous tales, proverbs, and even 'self-help'. These pamphlets were profoundly influenced by changing cultural habits and the conflicts between 'old' and 'new' values. A deep speculation

reveals the fact that the authors were preoccupied with the problems of the society, enmeshed in conflicting desires, values and attitudes. The authors attempted to guide the people, caught in the dilemma of social changes. There were different authorial intentions, which could be contextualized through these pamphlets. Some authors intended to educate the masses concerning the social changes and prepare them to make the best out of the changing situations, while others simply focused on providing entertainment to the audience.

However, an interesting fact about Onitsha Market Literature is that it hardly records the contribution of any women authors. The works of very few women writers were published. The book *Market Literature from Nigeria: A Checklist (1990)*, which is available in British library, records the presence of only four women authors; Margaret U. Ekpo, Esther Kike Elizabeth, Miss A.I. Nwafor and Ema Brown. (Newell, 1996) However, there is no trace of the narratives produced by them. Perhaps, it is not wrong to presume that the other women authors must have used either pseudo names or just the initials of their names, due to which it has become difficult to locate them.

As already mentioned, the novelettes of the popular market literature, from Onitsha, expressed a preoccupation with 'marriage' and 'love'. Women, who were the subjects of these narratives, were structured as socially destructive. Therefore, the thematic core of the Onitsha pamphlets reflects 'deviant femininities.' Onitsha pamphlets appear as the 'literature of suspicion' as most of the themes of these narratives project the fact that women are experts in disguising their true characters. Throughout Ogali's *Caroline, the one Guinea Girl* (1960) the proverb "all that glitters is not gold" was repeated. A crude revelation of 'women's sexual guilt' reverberated through these narratives. In the novelette *Beware of Harlots and Many Friends* (1963) by J.O. Nnadozie, which is in epistolary form, men wrote to their friends about the 'evil' wives, who were accused of lacing food with poison and covering up the deed with gestures of affection. Therefore, in this narrative, the author advises the

readers to keep a close vigil of their wives. This 'masculine paranoia' has been observed in other narratives also; like *Beware of Women* (1960) by N.O. Njoku and *Beware of Dangerous Ladies* (1963) by Olusola Asani. The preoccupation to project women as deceitful; an expert in disguising their lethal nature; is a form of 'psycho literary response' to the 'urban dislocation' in Nigeria, during the period of 1950s and 1960s. Through Cyril Aririguzo's *The Work of Love* (1963) the emergent urban mentality, expressing social dislocation, can be identified. The author highlights in the narrative the change in the social mores and how it was necessary to construct a new set of 'urban moral codes.' (Aririguzo, 1963) Although Emanuel Obiechina (1973) comments that through these narratives the authors were trying to negotiate with the tensions of decolonization and rapid urbanization, scholars, like Newell (1996), counter this argument by pointing to the fact that these authors, in the name of reconstructing social order objectified women. The themes of 'love' and 'marriage' were treated superficially, whereas the dominant motif was 'female infidelity'.

Onitsha pamphlet is a product of the complex period of decolonization in Nigeria, where on one hand the colonized subjects are trying to come out of the shackles of imperialistic control but on the other hand are they are unconsciously imitating and appropriating the culture of their erstwhile masters. A complex 'masculine ideology' can be located in these pamphlets, where the artist anxiously re-invents and re-presents women to a male addressee to maintain the patriarchal control of changing social and cultural formations. This masculine dominance works through the representation of women as a 'negative sexual stereotype.' These authors created an emergent urban masculine ideology, constructing women as either promiscuous wives or prostitutes; a class of 'money grabbing beauties.' Onitsha Market Literature reflects a heightened 'insecure masculinity'. The emergent ideology of Onitsha Market literature revolves around the image of 'socially destructive' women, like, "prostitutes, money-grabbing beauties, promiscuous wives, and husbandless Highlife-dancer." Onitsha pamphlets almost appear as a body

of 'literature of suspicion' expressing a heightened masculine 'paranoia'. The author of *Beware of Harlots and Many Friends* (1963) J.O. Nnadozie lists a set of letters, written by men, accusing their wives of lacing their food with poison and to avoid this predicament, the following advices have been recorded in the pamphlet; "To see that they (the wives) are not wandering as harlots. 2. To save and free their lives from bad disease." (Nnadozie, 1963) The same masculine 'paranoia' can be located in N.O. Njoku's *Beware of Women* (1960), where he relates to his readers that their potential enemy can find ways to kill them through their wives. In this context the 'wife' emerges as the 'femme fatal'. Besides this, a number of pamphlets also focus on 'erring femininities.' Olusola Asani in *Beware of Dangerous Ladies* (1965) counsels the readers in the following manner;

"The notion of this booklet is to reveal the secrecy and the tricks of our young girls of nowadays...(because) it is not possible for a young man whether married or unmarried to live happily without at first knowing how to get rid of our modern mendacious and honey tongued girls who are squeezers of the scanty sum usually paid to my dear gentle-men as their monthly income" (Asani, 1965).

A close speculation of the pamphlets reveals a degree of tension, coupled with paranoia and therefore most of the titles as well as the content of the narratives are structured like a warning. In *An Ideal Wife to Marry* (1965) Obodiechi writes, "Beware of extremely exquisite and paragon resembling figures of attraction devoid of senses and culture because they do not always prove good housewives." (Obodiechi, 1965) To highlight his claim the author further asserts that the external beauty of the women conceals their amoral soul. The image of the 'infidel female' is recurrent in the pamphlet narratives of Onitsha. J. O. Nnadoze depicts how 'Nigerian' women are only after money. In *What Women are Thinking about Men* (1971) he writes; "Beware... they only love your wealth but not you." (Nnadoze, 1971) Scholars, like Obiechina and Newell, both point out that these pamphlets fail to fathom the socio-

economic issues which led to the rise of prostitution along with the increase in the number of cities in Nigeria.

Onitsha Market Literature also promoted the image of an 'ideal' woman, such as a 'good wife'. The narratives keep on har-bouring the virtues of an 'ideal wife' and stresses on how a sensible wife can prevent her home from becoming a squabble. But who is an 'ideal wife'? An 'ideal wife' is the one who is 'loyal to her man' and 'obedient to his commands." (Obodoechi, *An Ideal Wife to Marry*) Stephanie Newell cites that "most tension in the hegemonic masculine ideology clusters around the construction of the ideal woman." She terms this phenomenon as 'emphasised femininity.' According to her, 'emphasised femininity' is consciously promoted in mass media with a special insistence. Therefore, the image of the 'good wife' finds prevalence in the market literature. In fact, this 'emphasized femininity' almost became the 'key purpose' of Nigerian Market literature.

Although the objectification of women was dominant in the narratives of Onitsha Market literature the deviation of the same could also be found and Mrs. Chinwe Akosa's *A Woman's Pride Is Her Husband* (1962) is one such example. Like most of the Onitsha novelettes Akosa's narrative too revolves round the inculcation of the dictums of an ideal 'happy' marriage. The preface also claims that the author is a 'Nigerian married woman', whose exposure and experience in dealing with the 'difficult issues of marriage' has rendered her the 'credibility' of authorship.

A Woman's Pride Is Her Husband is divided in twelve sections. The first nine sections, like the other pamphlet narratives, highlights a specific moral, through the narration of an anecdote. Each of these sections culminates with a specific question and answer; a type of a narrative ploy to emphasize the moral. The last three sections of the pamphlets are on 'Advice'; 'ADVICE FOR SOME WOMEN WHO THINK, THAT FARMING WORK IS PUNISHMENT,' 'ADVICE TO ALL MEN' and 'ADVICE FOR YOUNG LADIES.' Although the last section of the pamphlet, 'ADVICE FOR YOUNG LADIES', is almost similar to Obodoechi's

An Ideal Wife to Marry, where he emphasises on how an 'ideal wife' should be 'loyal to her man and obedient to his commands' the narrative does not promote the negative projection of women. In the very first section of the narrative, 'OBEDIENCE IS A CHARM FOR MARRIAGE LIFE', Akosa emphasizes that a man can be wrong too; "Yes! some men are ready to blame their wives every time that there is discomfort within the family circle" (Akosa, 1962). Here the narrative highlights the fact that in a marital union only women should not be subjected to blame, the men too are responsible for the failure of marriage. This approach of Akosa is in opposition to the "emphasized femininity", which was the central theme in the pamphlet literature of Onitsha. Using different anecdotes, she has tried to validate the fact that success of marriage lies in the hand of both the partners, husband, and wife. Where authors, like Obo-dochi, state that a wife should always obey their husband, Akosa claims that a man can suffer for not listening to his wife. In the section, entitled "WHAT CAN I DO WITH A WOMAN'S DECISION?", Akosa narrates the story of Ejimke, who was haughty and disrespected his wife, Nkemakolam. He did not pay heed to her counsels. Due to this he became impoverished by gambling all his money. His son, Chidubem, on the other hand, was very sincere. His obedience to his mother made him prosper in his life. He secured a scholarship and went to study medicine, abroad. Akosa's narrative subverts the typical norms of Onitsha pamphlet literature. The narrative not only refrains from projecting the negative image of the women but also does not hesitate in accusing the men, if they are wrong. In the section on "The Unwise Couple" Akosa directly attacks the prevalent concept of 'male paranoia'. She commences this section on the note that though men are afraid to marry women, as they consider them as troublesome, it is quite imprudent to think so. According to her a relationship thrives on how "a man plays his card." To substantiate her claim she narrates the story of Udechuke and Nwaobiora and how Udechuke lamented for having paid a high bride price. On learning of her husband's misbehaviour Nwaobiora leaves him and spends the rest of her life as a spinster.

The character of Nwaobiara stands in sharp contrast to the image of women, conjured by most of the pamphlet narratives. Unlike the 'money grabbing' and 'deceptive' women characters of the contemporary male authors of *Akosa*, Nwaobiara could exert the choice to leave a relationship, which inflicted her self-respect. However, because of the failed marriage Nwaobiara received social condemnation. To highlight the fact how a man's role in marriage is extremely important *Akosa* states, "So now, it can easily be seen by every person and approved of, that a woman's pride is her husband. When a husband misbehaves, the wife gets ashamed and degraded. But when the husband lives up to expectation, the wife is proud, and she is right to do so."

In the next section, entitled „Do Women Know that Money is hard?“, *Akosa* questions the popular belief that women are only after money and to satisfy their claims men can go to any extent. To depict how pretense of men leads to deception she narrates the story of Joe and Cecilia, where the latter was tricked into marrying a man, burdened with debts. *Akosa* considers that the success of marriage is dependent on both husband and wife, where the husband should be the 'breadwinner' and the wife must fulfill the role of the 'care-taker'. However, if the wife lives in perpetual fear of the man of the house this balance is lost, leading to the general 'melancholy' of the family. (*Akosa*, 1962) Another very important section of this pamphlet is 'Happy Living.' Here, *Akosa* narrates the story of Okpaku, who was barren. Although she received the social banter for her condition her husband stood firm by her side. Many advised the couple to sever the relationship, so that they could move ahead, remarry and have children, their love and respect for each other, helped them to sustain their relationship. In due course of time Okpaku gave birth to twins. *Akosa's* deft approach to the issue of bareness is a response to the society, which hurled accusations on women for the inability to bear children.

In the section on 'Advice to All Men' *Akosa* emphasizes on the importance of being sympathetic and helpful to the wives. It is only in the last section of the pamphlet that *Akosa's* approach aligns with

the approach of her contemporary male writers, as she stresses on how women should be obedient to the men. Despite the conclusion, the narrative *A Woman's Pride Is Her Husband* (1962) has remained significantly different from the narratives of the male authors. Akosa tried to counter the popular notions about women, where they were repeatedly represented as negative. Throughout the narrative a third person omniscient narrator keeps on deploying the failure of men to secure a marital union. Akosa's *A Woman's Pride Is Her Husband* (1962) tried to alter the general perception of women, through the subversion of the popular misconception about women.

Akosa's literary approach finds a reflection in the narratives of Kano Market Literature. Around the 1970s another form of popular literature started making a mark in the urban areas of Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Zariya. However, as Kano was the lead in the production of these texts the popular literature, produced during this period, came to be known as the Kano Market Literature. As a literary phenomenon, its aesthetics were similar to Onitsha chapbooks. The difference being, Onitsha literature was written predominantly in English, whereas Kano market literature was written in Hausa. Apart from language there was also another major difference between Kano and Onitsha Market literature. The authors of Kano market literature were mostly women.

The thematic approach of Kano market literature is quite like the 'chapbooks' of Onitsha. The novelettes of Kano market literature expressed concern about 'love' and 'marital relationships.' Hence, these novelettes were known as *Litattafan Soyayya* or the Book of Love. The Soyayya authors expressed social concerns through problematizing love and marital relationships. Besides this the authors also attempted to provide possible solutions to the problems concerning socio-cultural ruptures. However, Soyayyan literature has left a trail of controversy since its inception. It has earned the contempt of the society; in which it was located. Many critics have condemned Soyayya to be preoccupied with 'love' and 'marital relationships' and have disparaged the way purdah system,

coercive marriage and polygamy have been treated. The authors were allegedly criticized for misleading the youth, especially the women, as they were the major readers of Soyayyan. In fact, critics went to the extent of accusing this literary form as instrumental in promoting 'sexual promiscuity' and 'youthful disobedience' in 'conjugal relationships.' (Whitsitt, 2003) However, the authors assert that their main motive was to 'instill moral behavior'. To clarify their agendas most of the authors included a preface to their novelettes, which provided a thematic overview of the narrative, revealing the didactic elements of the novel. Authors expressed a degree of social responsibility in providing moral directions to youth, 'confused by volatile social climate.' (Whitsitt, 2003) Though both male and female authors address the problems of gender relations the works of the women authors provided a better insight to the social problems concerning women. The narratives of these female authors record the family politics, navigated by the women of the society. Some novelettes depict the politics of conservative families, preventing women's education and promoting coercive marriage, whereas others explore the psychological turmoil of women, caught in polygamous relationships. This approach is binary opposite to the pamphlets of Onitsha Market Literature.

However, in the works of the Hausa women authors an attempt to combat the social restraints can be identified. These authors have even tried to negotiate with the tensions, arising from religious traditions. They have tried to criticize forced marriage and polygamy and have regarded these practices as un-Islamic. Within the arena of Sharia or the official Islamic Law, the practice of *itjihad* prevails, which permits the followers of Islam to alter the rules of Sharia. Therefore, the Hausa women writers' critique of corrupt religious practices is not a criticism of Islam, rather an attempt to reform the society. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu is one such Soyayya writer who has attempted to extend social criticisms, by remaining within the purview of Islam. Her narratives espouse the welfare of women. She emphasized on the importance of education and how it would help in ameliorating the position of women in the society. In

the novelette, *Burdurwa Zuciya*, translated as *Young at Heart* (1987), she fiercely attacks the practice polygamy, regarding it the as the “the pastime of men who have shamelessly deviated from its religious application” (Whitsitt, 2003).

However, there were also Hausa women authors whose espoused ideals were completely in opposition to Yakubu. Bilkisu Ahmed Funtuwa, one of the most popular Soyayya writers, represents a conservative tone. She claims that marriage of coercion and polygamy are a part of ‘Hausa female’s living reality’, therefore through her narratives she tries to offer measures to cope with the complexities within the fold of polygamous relationships and problematic marital liaisons. According to her, women themselves are to be blamed for their ‘emotional misery’, which most often results from envy. Women can even be happy in a polygamous relationship if they devoutly follow religious precepts and are able to love their husbands. Although sharply different in approach Futunwa, like Yakubu, upholds the importance of education. In most of her narratives the protagonists are highly educated, with promising careers. *Ki Yaar da Ni* (1997 approx.) or *Agree With Me* explores the complexities of a polygamous relationship between Ismail, Aisha and Biba. Ismail and Aisha are happily married, each of them having lucrative jobs. Aisha undergoes nursing training and secures a job as a midwife. She excellently balances her household, consisting of four children and her job. However, her conjugal life is brought to a standstill when Ismail decides to remarry. Biba, the new wife, brings tumult to the peaceful household. She disrespects the senior wife and continuously plots and connives. This attitude, however, earns the contempt of Ismail, who eventually decides to divorce her. Biba undergoes a ‘self – evaluation and religious re-birth’ (Whitsitt, 2003). Aisha counsels Ismail to refrain from divorce, making him aware that it is considered as a ‘distaste’ in Islam. Ismail brings Biba back to the family; peace and order is restored once more to their household. *Ki Yaar da Ni* is almost like a dictum, providing guidance to cope with polygamy. In the course of the narrative when Aisha expresses her concern regarding Ismail’s

decision to remarry, one of Aisha's aunts reminds her to respect the Islamic practices. She addresses how polygamy is not just a custom but also right of men, sanctified by religion. Hence, Ismail becomes an embodiment of a responsible husband, despite taking the decision to remarry.

In another novelette, *Allura Cikin Ruwa* (1994) or Needle in Haystack Fatunwa explore *auren dole* or the concept of forced marriage. The protagonist Asiya falls in love with Aliyu, who father condemns the liaison as Asiya's father was a poor messenger. Asiya is married off to Aminu, a western educated neighbour, who initiates the marriage proposal to save her family from social disgrace. An extremely bereaved Asiya fails to accept the marriage initially, but Aminu's love and support gradually changes the dire situation.

Unlike Futunwa, Yakubu takes a very different stand. She categorically attacks *auren dole* or forced marriage as one of the 'cultural misunderstandings' of Islam. *Auren dole* has been the center of debate in the Islamic communities for a long time. According to the Islamic tenets marriage is considered as a liaison between the bride and groom. The consent of each is equally important. However, traditional practices have prevented women from negotiating the marriage completely by herself. Usually it is the father, who takes the decision on behalf of the bride. Whitsitt states, "Islamic law, practiced by the Hausa community, has distinguished in matters of marriage between a bakirah ('young unmarried girl') and a thayyibah ('a widow' or 'a divorcee'), stipulating that a bakirah is required to have an appointed guardian" (Whitsitt, 2003). The Qur'an does not prescribe the intervention of any guardian in the marriage negotiations on behalf of either an unmarried girl or a widow or divorcee. The intervention of wali ('ward') was a part of pre-Islamic practices, which later included in the larger corpus of Islam, in the Hausa community.

Although Yakubu's derision of polygamy and *auren dole* has invoked the contempt of the conservative scholars, it did not deter the author from composing a text like *Who Will Marry the Ignorant Woman* (1994 approx); a narrative revolving around the pro-

tagonist Zainabu, who transcends the social constraints, through the help of education. Yakubu regards education as the only possible resort to alter social oppression. The narrative emphasizes the function of education for the welfare of women. Zainabu's successful career enables her to liberate herself from any male security. Therefore, besides venting her condemnation of forced marriage and polygamy, Yakubu emphasizes the importance of education in altering the social oppressions.

Like Akosa, Yakubu and Fatunwa, tried to focus on the agency of women. However, Yakubu's approach is more radical than the other two women authors, mentioned in this paper. A comparative study of Kano and Onitsha Market literature deploys that in Kano market literature the women writers made prolific appearances and were given freedom to uphold and speak for the feminine agency and the fact that *A Woman's Pride Is Her Husband* (1962) is among a few preserved and recoded pamphlets, written by a woman author, shows the degree of marginalization which the women writers faced in Onitsha Market Literature.

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Dialogic Reading of African Literature in Bengali: A Study from Bangladeshi

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Abstract:

Translation is always dialogic as it requires dialogues between two different languages, cultures, texts and authors and literature is usually defined by its content and its attachment with the realities out of which it emerges, not by its language. Modern African literature has reached the international readership mostly in the English language even though French and Portuguese languages have become a very considerable media of it. Africa, with its more than two thousand languages, can be comprehensible to a huge number of monolingual, bi-lingual and multilingual readers of the world through translation in the language of the local readership. In Bangladesh the majority of readers are mostly monolingual. So, to be comprehensible to the Bangladeshi readership African literature requires to be translated into Bengali. Many prominent translators have translated and are still translating a considerable number of African literary texts. But it is noticed that the speed and impulse which are invested in translating a European or American or even Latin American literary text are not employed in translating an African literary text. It may be because of the lack of communication with African cultures and languages and the linguistic limitations to negotiate with the creoles and pidgins used in African literary texts or even colonial legacy. Besides, translation is never apolitical. It re-creates through intertextuality and negotiations between two diverse cultures and languages. Interaction today is possible to a remarkable extent through the internet and hi-speed communication media. But in a postcolonial situation in the context of neo-colonization and crony capitalism, economic realities and psychic boundaries deeply impact the process of fortification of the

dialogues between two diverse cultures, inevitable for creative translatability of these phenomena. How the translators respond to the synchronic and diachronic contexts of the source texts is important for the re-creation and at the same time authentication of the translated texts. This paper seeks to critically explore the factors related to the reading of African literature in translation dialogically in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Bilingualism, Dialogic, Heteroglossia, Dialogues, Translatability

Bangladesh is basically a monolingual country and almost all the people, with some exception of the ethnic people living particularly in the hill tracts, communicate in Bengali. English is a second language here but because of the compartmentalization of the local society side by side with the rise of corporate economy, a global phenomenon, learning of English language with a view to using it in everyday enterprises is confined to a particular class of people who, of course, financially far ahead of the majority of the people, have a firsthand exposure to international community. Besides, the nationality or national consciousness that worked behind the formation of the Bangladeshi nation is mostly based on linguistic identity. In 1952 this nation started a movement for Bengali language as its state language and subsequently this Language Movement geared up the people and led them to independence. Historically Bengali lies in the borderline between Bangladeshis and the other. For expressing internal emotions and describing external experiences especially Bengali, not any other language with significance, serves as the unique language in Bangladesh. Hence, literature in the English language has become a reading for a considerable

rably small section of readership here. In this connection, for the majority the only gateway to world literature is translation, translation from English to Bengali. African literature in English is now finding an access, though very small in quantity, in comparison with English or Latin American or American literature, into the university-curricula the average readers mostly depend on translation into Bengali. At present Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Elechi Amadi, Nuruddin Farah, Tayeb Salih and many other major African litterateurs are being read even by the average readers in translation into Bengali. The interest of the Bangladeshi readership in African literatures and cultures originates from the common fate related to the colonial hegemony and it is undeniable that "Like a great part of Bangla literature, African literature grows out of the trauma it experienced in its encounter with the colonial enterprises" (Hossain, 2022, p. 253). Besides, development of cyber technology is now enabling the Bangladeshi readership to know more literary, cultural and historical realities of Africa than before. For centuries Africa had been a construction of Europe and European narratives presented Africa with significant distortion to portray the African as subhuman beings with a view to justifying their exploitative colonial enterprises. Africa was a repository of slaves and wealth for the European colonizers. Distorted image of Africa was always being constructed by Europe to justify its exploitative mission of plundering Africa. The outer world could know about Africa only what Europe wanted to let it know. But due to the development of internet facilities, diplomatic communication and mercantile activities among the countries especially after the independence of African countries from colonial rule by 1960s, the world is now able to look at Africa through the eyes of the African authors and their narratives. As a result, African literatures and cultures have started to occupy a noticeable space in the reading of Bengali readership like many other parts of the world. Some seminal authors also have access to the curriculum of our universities. Some universities have introduced comparative literature departments and they are teaching

African literatures and cultures there side by side with Latin American, Caribbean and South Asian literatures.

True, a considerable quantity of African literature is at present available to the readers in Bengali translation. But the question arises— how far is it possible to have a taste of the essence of an African text in Bengali translation? Another question, in this connection, arises about the role of the translator. For ensuring authenticity of an African literary text in translation and evading translation into object of sentimentalization and garnering considerable attention of the readers, what should be the role of a translator? It is irrefutable that translation is a kind of re-creation and if African texts are re-created in translation, then a translator is to be immensely competent to bring about a successful negotiation between the source text and the target text because it is inevitable for ensuring an authentic comprehensibility of the ethnographic and ethnological conditions that work as stimuli behind the creation of a source text. Besides, translation is mostly influenced by the mindset of a translator and social realities with which he consistently communicates and develops dialectical affinity. In this connection, Wole Soyinka's apprehension can be rightly mentioned. He apprehends that in postcolonial situations translation may have a chance to be manipulated by the biases and racism borrowed from the colonial legacy (Dey, 2020, p. 645). But translation has got some immensely positive aspects that invite the readership to peep into the regions of meanings of the source text that may not be discovered in its original language because translation is a "transfer from one language to another [and] reveals the interdependence among languages and their various ways of expressing the same thing" (Augst, 2012, p. 132). Maintenance of this totality of meaning is a challenge for the translator. In this connection, Jaques Derrida asserts that "the translation will truly be a movement in the growth of the original which will complete itself in enlarging itself" (Derrida, 1985, p.188). As translation is a growing process it does not always follow the source text faithfully because if it is done the target text will conspicuously lose its

authenticity since the variation of languages brings about variation of ideas. This loss of authenticity obviously tells upon the source text, but at the same time it recreates the source text in the way which opens up a new dimension of meanings. In this connection, the most crucial task is done by the translator because he places himself in the juncture and negotiates between the source text and the target text and makes the readers acquainted with a new system of ideas that does not deviate the source text from the target text much. He must also ensure readers' access into the truth, that is, the true taste of source text. In this connection, a translator does this challenging job by maintaining a radical fidelity to the meanings of the source texts more than to the individual works. Khaliqzaman Elias in his translation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People* has been successful to a great extent in doing this job. While reading his translation readers feel like reciting the original texts because of his close and intensive knowledge of Achebe's mind and location in his indigenous cultural realities. It is possible for Elias because he is a professional translator and his extensive study of African literatures and cultures enables him to do so. Kazal Bandyopadhyay's translation of Wole Soyinka's drama *Kongi's Harvest* also deserves equal acclamation for his excellent capacity of bringing about the aforementioned negotiation between the cultures of Africa and that of Bangladesh.

As translation is the gateway to ethnographical and intercultural understanding a translator should develop his affinity with this phenomenon. It immensely contributes to the transculturation process through which a community leads towards transformation. Here lies the power of translation. Actually, translation, according to Tullio Maranhao, "...can refer to not only linguistic but also cultural and inter and intra-semiotic systems" (Maranhao, 2003, p. xi). It is because a translator writes not only what a creative writer writes, but also what a creative writer means. To grasp the meaning of the creative writer a translator cannot but possess the capacity to bring about ethnographic negotiation with the context in which the source text is produced. This capability enables a translator to

understand the translatability of the source text and in such circumstances he may avoid being branded, as in the word of Italian critic Benedetto Croce, 'a traitor' (Das, 2003, p. 1). To obtain authenticity of a translated text a translator must be a reader first and then a writer. Hence, translation is known as a 'reader centred' task (Das, 2003, p. 101). But the difficulty that a translator of African literary texts in Bangladesh encounters is his limitation in comprehensibility of a huge number of pidgins and creoles and it poses a difficulty to the translators. For example, while translating Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* an translator encounters a lot of pidgins almost in every sentence. In this case, it is really difficult for him to select the appropriate words and grasp the implied meanings in Bengali. It is one of the reasons why African literary texts are not widely translated in Bangladesh. But many of African literary texts have been produced in indigenous languages, for example, Sotho, Kiswahili, Bantu and other indigenous languages. Hitherto, almost all the source texts from African literatures that have been translated into Bengali are written in English. Texts of African literatures in indigenous languages still remain out of the initiatives of the translators because of their inaccessibility into those local languages. Thus, translation presents a fragmentary picture of African literatures and cultures to the Bangladeshi readership.

Besides, translation is never impeccable and it has many reasons to be manipulated by the biasness and topographic stance of the translator. For example, Sanskrit epic poet Valmiki's *Ramayana* throbs with the spirit of chivalry but while Krittibas Ojha, a Bengali poet translated it into Bengali he discarded the heroic spirit of the epic and imposed tragic intensity and humility, very common characteristics of the Bangalees, upon it. Critical readers accuse Krittibas and claims that his Rama is different from Valmiki's Rama. Hence, translation is may have the chance of being manipulated by the translator's geographical, cultural and linguistic location. The spirit of self-expression and social rebellion functioning in the confluence of cultural and political elements are prone to politicize translation. For example, if the history of the subcontinent is inves-

tigated critically it is found that “[T]ranslation became political during the colonial period” (Das, 2003, p. 103). The first de-facto Governor General of Bengal Warren Hastings took initiative to translate *Dharmashastra* from Sanskrit to Persian by the local pundits and from Persian to English by some English scholars with a view to fortifying their hegemony upon the natives after knowing their epistemology. *Bhagavad Gita* was translated by Charles Wilkins in 1774 and many seminal books of this subcontinent were translated into English to enslave the natives epistemologically. Kalidasa’s *Sakuntala* was translated into English by the Asiatic Society established by William Jones, the first Orientalist in true sense, to take Oriental epistemology into their grip and impose their intellectual and epistemological hegemony upon the local people. This politics of translation worked with extensive impact in all the colonies of the European colonizers. The tone and voice of the translators were imposed upon the target texts and distort the source texts with a view to creating a vacuum into which the colonial discursive texts penetrated. Even in the situation of postcoloniality, the task of translation of a foreign text is still going on recklessly. Now the West has become the nucleus of the power-structure and corporate economy. Hence, with corporatization of economy and the triumph of capitalism which directly control the publication industry, in the Third World countries a desire behind the act of translation works among the translators to be blessed by the favour of the West. In contrast with Europe and America, Africa cannot offer these allurements or facilities and consequently, the speed and impulse that are found in the translation of a European or American text, are not found in the case of translating an African text. This disposition emanates more from economic and political realities than from psychological disposition. True, translation is to serve as a bridge that ensures transmission of information between two different cultures. But as the colonial hegemony is solely annihilating, not accommodative, the translation of the texts of the colonizers served the purpose of the power-structure one-sidedly, not the purpose of the natives or the target readers. As a

result, the local texts in local languages have a potential risk of being led to the periphery or margin. In this connection, a translator has to do a mammoth task while selecting the source texts for translation. He should take care lest he should turn into an intellectual slave.

Again, ideological location of a translator affects the act of translation to a certain extent. His role as a mediator or communicator gets impacted by his location in the target culture. Translators of the Global South or Third World countries cannot deny the global hegemony of English. It occurs due to their growth out of the unequal power-relation between the First World and the Third World. To challenge this power-structure and hegemony translators must fortify their positionality as a mediator between the texts of the Third World countries and those of the First World countries. It is difficult but not impossible to challenge the insidious discursive practice of the hegemony of English as one of the major lingua franca of the First World texts. It cannot be overcome by culture oriented approach because it enables the translator to evade 'negative stereotyping'. In this connection, Bandia "...discusses African writing in European languages and argues that translation of their works requires a source culture oriented approach which takes particular care to avoid 'negative stereotyping' in the transfer into the colonizer's language..." (Baker, 2008, p. 140). As English is an overriding language, understanding the viability of other languages, and above all, due to its close relation with the power-structure, it grasps the focus of attention of the translators. Accordingly, inevitably in Bangladesh mostly the texts written in English are usually chosen for translation into Bangla. European and American texts get priority for translation because of their hegemonic status in world literature. In competition with the literatures, African literatures lag far behind because being stereotyped by the colonial framework of mind. African literatures in indigenous languages are not able to draw considerable attention for translation. Only the writings produced by a handful of writers, such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ben Okri, Sembene Ousmane,

Ama Ata Aidoo, and many other writers who write in English are lying in the foci of the translators of Bangladesh.

Besides, it's undeniable that African colonial and post-colonial literatures are basically political literatures. Ngugi's stance against the post-independence Kenya's government is uncompromising. This position is metaphorically reflected in all his writings. Wole Soyinka has also been doing the same thing throughout his career. While approaching these writers for translation, the translator must cherish the same ideology. Otherwise, the target text will be doomed into failure in tone and truth content. Cultural location of both the source texts and the target texts contribute to the task of creating stereotypes for the context of the source texts and they significantly control the attitudes and approach of the target readers and consequently, it may derogate the source texts. These stereotypes and translation patterns tend to domesticate and dehistoricize the source text because

[T]ranslation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures. The selection of foreign texts and the development of translation strategies can establish peculiarly domestic canons for foreign literatures, canons that conform to domestic aesthetic values and therefore reveal exclusions and admissions, centers and peripherals that deviate from those currently in the foreign language (Venuti, 1998, p. 67).

True, the act of translation of a text of African literatures requires the translators' intimate study of the situations related to the realities, such as cultural atmosphere, political realities, historical experiences, aesthetics and moral values, the absence of which fails to bring about a fruitful negotiation between the source text and the target text and this failure acts as a block to the readers' approach to the target text. True, readers spontaneously respond to a translated text when they are able to develop communication with it. Here lies the task of a translator and he is to overcome all the

barriers on the readers' way to communicate with the target text. A competent translator knows this job well. Topographical biasness of a translator may affect his work and cause displacement of the source text. It is true that a translated text is a different one as it borrows the translator's personal approaches and sometimes biasness. But the breach between the source text and the target text must be kept at the minimum level so that the readers may not be deprived of having an opportunity to have a peep into the essence of the source text. In many of the translated books it is found that to impress the readers very often translators impose their own linguistic patterns, local dialectical elements, linguistic and aesthetic elements upon source texts. It has a conspicuous chance to derogate the source text to the level of domestication that undermines rather than valorizes the source text's 'truth content'. For example, Khalequzzaman Elias, a very well-known and widely recognized academic and translator in Bengali language, has put up vernacular language of a particular region of Bangladesh where he was born, into the lips of the character of some of the stories from Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War*. He may have done it to exhibit the similarities between the marginalized people of two different cultures and places and bring the target text closer to the target readers. But this domestication process cannot evade the risk of causing the source texts to lose its genuine color and flavor emanated from the indigenous aesthetics and values out of which it emerges. Moreover, domestication in the translation process tells upon the universality of the source text.

Another remarkable phenomenon that is commercialization of the project of translation is now playing a dubious role. It is stimulating this project and at the same time it is encapsulating the literature of the source text into a limited framework. Thus, translation has a very fatal limitation, especially in the age of corporate economy when it has been totally commercialized. Consequently, a common tendency is found among the translators to translate the best sellers or prize-winning books. As soon as an author wins Booker Prize or Pulitzer Prize or Nobel Prize, his/her masterpieces

are translated almost overnight. Target readers also show a disposition to read only those books in translation that belong to the majority culture. This disposition is more political and economic than intellectual as in this way the prize winning author is presented among the target readers as a representative author while a huge number of author of the prize winning author's literature remain out of the cognition of the readers. Thus translation deliberately silences the voice of the unheard and unread. Psychologically interpreted, it can be considered to be an impact of the colonial legacy and the corporatization of the market. Besides, most of the books which are translated into Bengali are originally in English language which promotes cultural reproduction which works "in the interest of the dominant class, rather than in the interest of the oppressed groups that are the objects of dominant policies" (Macedo et al, 2003, p. 14). Books in indigenous languages of the minority cultural groups do not usually get considerable attention. As translators have to depend on the publishers and the publishers as investors cannot but consider financial benefit, they cannot overcome the hegemony of English language because best sellers and prize winning books are mostly available in English. But bestselling books are not always best literary texts and thus the readers may have the chance of developing wrong ideas about the literature to which the source text belongs.

In Bangladesh most of the readers are monolingual. They can read and write mostly in Bangla. So, African literary texts in translation have a tenuous economic status. As the market is the first factor to be considered by the publishers, they do not want to take the risk of losing their investment. As a result, they want the best-selling authors to be translated. Bestselling authors have already reached the mass readers through various media and when they are translated they are widely accepted by the monolingual readership. On the other hand, less familiar books are not usually being translated commercially even though they may be authentically and artistically of higher value and quality. If translated, even the translators know that they cannot occupy a permanent space in the spec-

trum of existing literary canon, rather they enjoy "...the status of domestic ephemera, passing with the changing interests of the broadest possible audience, falling out of print when sales diminish" (Venuti, 1998. P. 124). This stance is common throughout the world and Bangladesh is not an exception. Professional publishers are not ready to publish the less familiar authors and as such, only the popular and prize-winning African authors are translated in Bangladesh. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ben Okri, Sembene Ousman, Amos Tutuola, Christopher Okigbo and a few others are translated into Bengali. But there are many other seminal authors who write in Portuguese, French and indigenous languages and they are powerful in content and style. But due to the corporate attitude of the publishers and even of the translators they remain out of the knowledge of Bangladeshi readership. This politics of both the publishers and the translators creates a linguistic and cultural stereotype which gives an air that African literary canon is limited and it is revolving only around political subject-matters. A huge and variegated canvas of African literature covering aesthetics, folktales, myths and romance remain out of the queries of the readers of Bangladesh as the present trend of translation project is offering a fragmented picture of African literature.

Further, for translating African literary texts a translator needs to know that correspondences between the source language and the target language produce meanings which are always plural because both the source text and the target text or translated text are the derivatives which "consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials..." and a source text is a repository of many semantic possibilities (Venuti, 1995, p. 18). Translation of a source text becomes successful in retaining its essential aura of semantic possibilities if the translator possesses the capacity to accommodate all these dimensions of meanings. In this connection, translators like Shamsuzzaman Khan, Kabir Chowdhury, Syed Shamsul Haque, Asad Chowdhury, Kajal Bandyopadhyay, Khaliqzaman Elias and a few others have achieved accolade in translating the poems of Senghor, Christopher Okigbo, Chinua Achebe and many other African poets.

Besides, a good number of translators are showing interest in translating a handful of folktales, speeches, dramas and novels. All their translations manifest the authorial voices of the source texts. Their translations have achieved viability to a great extent because of their capacity to bring about a correspondence, not always with physical contact with African culture and languages, but with their extensive and sincere study of Africa with all its diversities. Venuti, in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* claims that translation is a site in which a cultural other is manifested. But it is also true if the translator can bring about intertextuality between the self and the other, then the distance between the source text and the target text can be overcome to a considerable extent.

True, the study of African literature into Bengali is not new in Bangladesh. Rabindranath Tagore wrote his famous poem 'Africa' after Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in October of 1935. Buddha Dev Bose composed a famous poem named 'Chayachanna Hey Africa' (Trans. 'Shadowed Africa'). Both the poets with great compassion depict Africa with all its wealth of cultural diversity, ethnographical resource and geographical spectrum. In 1968 the then Bardhaman House, now Bangla Academy published a periodical named *Parikraman*. It was edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman and three valuable essays on African literatures were published in this periodical. Hasan Azizul Haque, Ahmed Humayyun and Safdar Mir reflected on various pros and cons of African literature and its future (Hossain, 2022, p. 235). Their focus of delineation fell mostly on political aspects, such as Africa's colonial experience and its response to the advent of colonial enterprises. Veteran author and linguist Suniti Kumar Chattapadhyay composed several essays in Bengali on African culture and ethnographical aspects of Africa. All these authors, poets, translators have drawn a considerable amount of interest of the Bangladeshi readership to African literatures and cultures.

To promote the study of African literatures in Bengali curricula of the universities of Bangladesh are including African literary texts though in comparison with English, American or even South

Asian literatures it looks impoverished in quantity. The canvass of selection of literary texts must include not only fictions and dramas but also Africa's orature which is the repository of African belief system, aesthetics, values and epistemology and the study of African literature without it is never complete. Inclusion of a few fictions and dramas of some major African authors truly presents a fragmentary picture of the diverse spectrum of African literatures to the readers. It gives the readers a very poor and liminal conception and thus they run the risk of falling into the pit of ideation that African literatures do not have many things deserved to be studied.

But with the rise of global communication and the increase of cyber technology Africa has started to draw significant attention from Bangladeshi readership. With a view to making Bangladeshi readership acquainted with African literatures and cultures in Bengali in 2014 **Centre for Studies in African Literatures and Cultures, Dhaka** was established in Dhaka. It is working to inspire the study of African literature and cultures in Bangladesh. Its regular periodical *Africar Alo (Light of Africa)* publishes translated short stories, essays, book reviews and interviews of African authors. Young people are now becoming more and more interested in African literatures and cultures and many of them are translating fictions, interviews, dramas and short stories and getting them published in journals, little magazines and periodicals. It is hoped that if they are patronized, African literatures in translation will go a long and remarkable way in Bangladesh. It will hopefully contribute to the mutual development and enrichment of both the literatures, African and Bengali literatures.

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**Plurality in Literary Reading:
A Comparative Study of the 'Goodreads' Reviews of
Moustache and *Mama Africa***

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Abstract:

The paper tries to address the plurality of 'literary reading' through a comparative analysis of the Goodreads reviews of *Moustache*. Inspired by Derek Attridge's idea of the 'event of literature', the paper considers a literary 'work' as an event performed in a reader's relation with the 'text'. The same 'text' can be read as different 'works', and each review is about a particular reading which is a 'work'. The differences among these works attest to the plurality of literary reading. Additionally, the paper refers to Attridge's type/token distinction to elaborate on the plurality of the reviews. Also, Maurice Natanson's idea of the 'temporal horizon' of reading helps to explain the commonalities and differences among the reviews. Similarly, each reading is singular as it happens through the 'complicity of a background' (Merleau-Ponty). Apart from the reviews, the paper also analyses the interviews of the author and the translator to see how the understandings about the same 'text' can vary considerably according to the differences in the 'works'. The larger scope of the paper is to present the platform of Goodreads as a nostalgic space that reminds the academics in literary studies about the 'joy of reading literature' which stands in contrast to the 'pleasure of analysing literature'. The openness to pluralities embodies the joy of reading, and then the reader transcends the theoretical endeavours to decode 'a fixed meaning'.

Keywords: Event of Literature, Temporal Horizon, Goodreads, Type, Token

As a textual practice, 'literary reading' has been defined and conceptualised in multiple ways. However, outside academia, literary reading is commonly understood as a joyous activity. And each reader had their own niche in their favourite books – because each reading is a performance of a singular world that is full of new understanding and realisations. So a single text is read in a thousand ways by different readers. The academic approach to literature, on the other hand, is understood as equipped with theoretical analyses, generalisations, and pattern-seeking. And often, the academic reading of literature is designated as a profession, devoid of aesthetic pleasure, performed by a respective specialist in theory. So each theorist competes to decode 'the authentic' and 'actual' meaning of the text. Now, is it possible to reconcile these two worlds demarcated by the distinct approaches to literature? In other words, can the academic structure – which in this case the literary studies departments – accommodate the common reader and her perception of reading as a pleasurable activity constituted in the plurality of meanings? Only a large-scale project with careful consideration of the nuances in different modes of reading will be capable of addressing these questions. However, this paper attempts to address this question from the specific vantage point of literary reviews with a special focus on the 'Goodreads reviews' of the novel *Moustache*.

To begin with, is there a specific framework that accommodates the plurality of literature? If we are trying to describe 'what is a literary work' and 'what does a literary work do', do we have a description that accommodates the plurality of readings as well as the uniqueness of each reading? The first part of the paper is an attempt to form such a description from the existing scholarship in the area. The following part evaluates if the specific description is capable of accommodating the plurality of readings/understandings in Goodreads reviews. Different readers review the same novel differently on Goodreads – and a description of a literary work should be capable of accommodating those differences.

Addressing the first question 'what is a literary work?', the paper argues that literature could be described as an 'event'. So what does 'event' mean in this context? According to Derek Attridge, literature 'comes into being' only in the reader's interaction with the literary work. According to Attridge, a literary work 'comes into being' as an 'event': "we can't identify the work with any particular embodiment in a physical object.... The literary work comes into being only in the event of reading" (Attridge 2015). The 'event of reading' is performative; i.e. it is an act performed by the reader. But we usually use 'work' to refer to the material form of a book (a printed book for example). However, Attridge uses these terms differently. We cannot identify the 'work' with the physical form of a book and the 'work' does not have a material existence; it exists only in the reader's relation with the text that is reading. Whether it be a PDF or a printed book, we cannot call it a 'work'. Instead, 'work' is realised in the act of reading when the reader enters into a specific relation with the text. A 'work' does not exist before the reading; instead, the reader performs a 'work' in the reading. The same book can be read differently by different readers. That is to say that the same book can be read as different 'works' according to multiple perspectives and ways of reading.

Attridge also talks about 'text', which can be any arrangement of words that exists prior to the event. That means the 'text' does not need an event to come into existence. Instead, a reader enters into a relation with the 'text' and performs it as a literary 'work'. In the context of literature, a text can be read as multiple works. For clarity, throughout this paper, I use the term 'work' to refer to a literary work that exists in the interactive event of reading. Also, I use 'text' to refer to any written expressions in language that exist outside the interactive event of literary reading. Also, the word 'literature' is used interchangeably with the 'event of literature'.

The type/token distinction by Attridge will also be relevant to the context of this paper. A text is a 'type' which can have multiple 'tokens' in the form of different works. 'Type' is an abstract idea which refers to the text and 'token' is realised in a particular reading

of the text. Different readings perform different 'tokens' from a single 'type' of text, and the 'type' is an abstract concept which ceases to exist in the absence of tokens. The possibility of innumerable 'tokens' refers to the plurality of potential readings. Each Goodreads review by a reader is a response to the particular 'work' performed by the reader. That means each review is a response evoked by a particular token of the text (type).

Before proceeding to the comparison of different Goodreads reviews, let us have a brief introduction to the novel. The novel *Meesa* (2018) is originally written in Malayalam by S Hareesh, and Jayasree Kalathil translated the work to English with the title *Moustache* (2020). In the novel, protagonist Vavachan belongs to the Pulaya community, a lower caste group in Kerala. At the beginning of the novel, Vavachan gets a chance to play the role of a police officer in a drama. His appearance in the drama with a large moustache terrifies the upper caste audience. As a result, Vavachan is banished from the community for refusing to shave. He becomes an outcast, wandering in swamps and deserted areas. The story takes on a surreal edge as Vavachan's moustache grows and covers the earth like a thicket. He becomes the bane of the upper class and the government officially forms a commission to hunt him down. As the government officials attempt to track Vavachan, the story unfolds with strange and thought-provoking events.

The character of Vavachan is nuanced. A reader can argue that the character is an archetype of the oppressed and down-trodden. Can we understand the character as a lower-caste hero who resists the caste equations? Or does he transcend/reverse the hierarchies in the creation of an alternative social structure? Can we say that the hero exhibits epic qualities in his fight with the cast-ridden system? Each of these perspectives could be one reading among different readings which embody different perspectives on the central character. And a book review website is a place where these multiple perspectives coexist and converse. Also, book reviews are understood as subjective opinions of respective readers in contrast to critical analysis which looks for generalisable theories

and 'the meaning' in the work. A critical analysis could impose a subaltern identity on the hero and 'prove' the claim by using instances from the text. Whereas a book review does not claim the actual meaning of the text. Instead, in most cases, a book review admits that the review is from a particular perspective which coexists with other reviews. So the practice of book reviews, as in the case of Goodreads, inherently embodies the plurality of readings. Here I am attempting a comparative analysis of different 'Goodreads' reviews of the novel *Moustache*.

Some reviews contain a direct assertion of the multiplicity of readings and perspectives. A review from the user id Chitra Ahantem (2020) emphasises the plurality of meanings: "So then, is the book about the social and caste system? Or about the socio-cultural history of the Kuttanad region? Or the hardships faced by people in a region faced by yearly floods and hard labour? Is it about the lack of agency for women... *Moustache* is all of these and more..." Most of the reviews on Goodreads mention the issue of caste, the representation of women, and the portrayal of the landscape. The overlap in the themes means that most of the readers have a common interest in certain themes.

The overlap in the reviews could be explained in terms of the shared nature of the 'temporal horizon'. Maurice Natanson introduced the idea to refer to the reader's consciousness of the past which gets enacted in the event of reading. The concept is about "Bringing forth the past and charting the associations that reading unleashes" (Natanson, 1998). A shared horizon of knowledge including a shared sense of the past can result in common understandings and common 'readings'. However, the possibility of commonalities does not limit the plurality of readings. Any reader can have an understanding that is different from 'the common understanding' of a particular novel. That is to say that different 'works' of 'text' can have common elements, and despite the common elements, a new work can present a completely different perspective.

For example, most of the reviewers comment that the novel is focusing on social issues. This can be considered as an understand-

ding that is common to different 'tokens' of the text. However, a reader can also have a reading which undermines the social relevance. For example, the user 'Kidliomag' (2020) comments on the book: "Book totally focused on the social issues like gender roles, caste based politics, rich-poor dynamics and different communities belongs to Kerala". Many other reviews also included similar comments about the 'total focus' on social issues. However, do all readers agree with the novel's focus on social issues? Not necessarily; as 'Chinar Mehta' (2021) says, the novel could be read as a fairy tale as well: "That said, it was still a book I would recommend to someone who, above all, likes STORIES, especially those that read like fairytales". The emphasis on the fairytale aspect of the novel is a departure from the social focus mentioned by other readers. Another reader with the username Kelvin has a satirical take on the excess of fantasy in the work: "pure example for writer on weed;)... a fiction – fantasy rather". We could argue that these readings or 'tokens' disrupt the possibility of a single and authentic understanding.

Another academic exercise is to impose categories and create patterns about different readings. For example, a 'theorist' could say that women read a particular novel in a particular way. The readers are categorised based on their gender identities and then their readings are arranged accordingly. In the case of previous reviews, let's see if it is possible 'to categorise' the readers into two; as those who focus on the social aspects and those who focus on the elements of fantasy. Such an approach will be problematic because each reader in the category of 'readers who mentioned social realities' reads the respective social representations differently. The same applies to the category of readers who read the novel as a fantasy. For example, many readers disagree with the way the novel has portrayed women. Anyhow, as each reading is different from the other, the reader's understanding concerning the women characters in the novel also varies. A Goodreads user 'Praveen' (2021) says that "some of the parts can be a hard read too" because "the horrific rape of Seetha or the many scenes that represent toxic

masculinity, with the author presenting it with a detached eye". Whereas 'Amanda' (2021) opines that calling the novel 'anti-woman' would be an "understatement" because "The female characters in the book rarely have any sort of developed personality, and most (all?) of them faced one or both of two ends: rape or murder". In contrast to Praveen's claim that the toxic masculine representations are limited to certain parts of the novel, 'Amanda' comments that sexism is present "throughout the narrative". Considering that the user name 'Amanda' could be a woman, can we make a general argument that all women dislike the novel because of the sexism that is present 'throughout the narrative'? The argument sets an a priori rule that all women by definition of their gender identity will read the novel similarly. However, despite the shared identity as women, each 'woman reader' is situated in a singular context which is different from other 'women readers'. Hence reviews by female readers differ considerably in their response to the novel's representation of women. For example Ritu (2020), in her blog 'Bohemian Bibliophile' talks about the issue: "The lack of agency for women and the way abuse and rape is depicted in the book is disturbing. Although I did not have an issue, some might struggle with the cultural aspects of the book." For Ritu, the 'sexism' of the novel is understood as a 'disturbing' 'cultural aspect'. However, does the singularity of reading imply that each reading is totally distinct from other readings?

First, a reader reads a text in a context of ideas and perspectives as Merleau-Ponty says; we could perceive things only "through the complicity of a background" (Ponty, 1973). Though each reader is situated in a unique world of ideas and perspectives, certain understandings are shared among different readers. For example, a set of readers who attend the same feminism course will have a shared understanding of gender issues and sexism. However, each reader will also have perspectives and ideas that are different from other readers. The differences in perspectives along with the shared understandings constitute a singular 'background' for each reader. And the 'background' of perception is not static; so when

the same reader reads the same work for a second time, she is reading the work differently because the background is different from the first time. It is interesting to contextualise these differences in a conversation between the author of *Moustache* S. Hareesh and translator Jayasree Kalathil. Referring to the aforementioned discussions about the rape of Seetha and the assertion of toxic masculinity, Jayasree Kalathil says:

This story can't be told in sanitised terms.... *Moustache* is a masculine world with atrocious people doing atrocious things. But it is never gratuitous. Hareesh's entire project in *Moustache*, as I read it, is to unearth the toxicity of masculinity that flourishes within patriarchal systems of power and expose its impact on women, Dalits, and nature (Susan, 2020).

Kalathil's take on the issue could be viewed as a reflection of the translator's limitations in tackling the sexism of the narrative. However, Hareesh has a different perspective on the character of Vavachan: "Vavachan rapes a woman. He also lives through bad times; he is a man of contradictions" (Susan, 2020). For Hareesh, the emphasis is on the portrayal of Moustache as a round character with contradictions and complexities. This tendency is obvious when he says "my pleasure lies in hearing and telling stories.... Leave the characters to their own whims" (Susan, 2020). Despite both Kalathil and Hareesh having a 'shared understanding' of the novel as a result of their mutual interactions, they considerably differ in their 'readings' of the novel. The difference in the readings would attest to the 'background' of perception which is singular to each reading.

The second novel considered in the paper is *Mama Africa* (2019) by T.D. Ramakrishnan. Unlike the previous novel we discussed, *Mama Africa* is not yet translated from Malayalam to English. So all available Goodreads reviews are written by the Malayali readers of the novel. The plot revolves around the protagonist Tara Vishwanath who is an African author of Indian origin.

A reader can find the novel as a soup of fictional, surreal, and historical elements. Also, a reader can yield a comparison between *Moustache* and *Mama Africa* in terms of the nature of the protagonists, elements of fantasy, and the exploration of geography. The reviews of *Mama Africa* also refer to the differences in 'readings'. A comment from the Goodreads user id 'Aswathi Babu' (2022) claims that the women protagonists by TD Ramakrishnan, including Tara Vishwanath, are symbolic of courageous women. However, in the opinion of 'Nandakishore Mridula' (2019), Tara is comparable to the 'damsel in distress archetype of characters from early Malayalam movies. In different 'tokens' of the text, the same character is understood differently.

Apart from the comments on the protagonist, the readers also have different takes on the style of writing. 'Deepak V' (2019) praises the author's writing style in the novel *Francis Ittikora* but criticises the style of *Mama Africa* because 'it has come down to the level of a pulp fiction'. He also criticises the depiction of historical incidents in the novel as they resemble Wikipedia entries in terms of language and style. Whereas 'Hareesh Kakkanatt' (2021), who gave a five-star rating for the novel, exalts the author's writing style which made him feel the setting including the weather of Kilimanjaro mountains. 'Dr Jeevan KY' (2020) agrees that he felt like trekking the mountain of Kilimanjaro while reading the novel. However, 'Sanu Mayyanad' (2022), who rated the novel with a single star, shares a long review pointing out the historical and stylistic contradictions in the novel. Also, he argues that the protagonist Tara was inspired by the protagonist from Madhavikkutti's *My Story*, which also carries notable contradictions. Conclusively, we can say that multiple 'works' of the novel *Mama Africa* embody remarkable differences. And our understanding of literature should be capable of accommodating these pluralities and differences.

The paper was an attempt to demonstrate the possibility of realising the plural nature of literary reading through the comparative analysis of the book reviews in Goodreads. The analysis of the reviews will help in understanding the nature of 'literary

reading'. As a practice, literary reading is an event in which the reader performs the 'text' as a 'work'. As a popular medium for literature enthusiasts, Goodreads reviews might help students of literature to rethink the role of theories. Like a review, any theoretical reading is also presenting a perspective among a multitude of possible perspectives. And there is no 'correct reading' or 'authentic meaning'. Perhaps, like this, we the students of literature can figure out a way to reconcile with the lovers of literature within us.

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Pandemic Imaginations

Writing in a Time of Epidemic

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Abstract:

Prima facie, so far it has been and still is impossible to offer a proper study of the literary manifestation of covid19 – the epidemic is not quite over yet; one doesn't have yet an historical perspective of it; writing, and moreover publishing, require time.

However, there are early sprouts of writing on covid19. We shall focus on Dana Freibach-Heifetz's book, *In the Desert of Things* ("Numbers, Deuteronomy"), which was written in Hebrew during the first two months of the epidemic (2-3/2020).

The book is composed of 113 fragments in various genres, which spread a fan of voices, sights and feelings of life under the epidemic – from everyday details (e.g. the engagement with food) to more cultural and philosophical layers (like concepts of inside and outside), combining realism with a world of dreams and fantasy. These micro-stories create a collage of images that captures the new reality. The book was published in two versions: one is only textual, and the other includes 36 color photographs by the artist Yoram Kupermintz, that create a rich dialogue with the texts.

The paper examines the relation between the stylistic characterizations of this book – the form of fragments, various genres, and the combination of the texts with visual images – and its nature as a book which was written right in the eye of the Covid's storm. Furthermore, it exposes the thematic means that literary writing in a time of epidemic can use, in order to confront the trauma of such

an extreme experience: myths; fresh glance at daily life, humor and fantasy; alongside a critical examination of the ars-poetics of such a writing.

This paper is a rare collaboration of the author, who is also a philosopher, and a literary researcher. Together, they aim to bring new perspectives of literature under Covid 19 in particular, and life in a time of epidemic in general, and the unique attributes it brings.

Keywords: Epidemic, Fragments, Genres, Trauma

One can talk about trauma, and perhaps also about disassociation. About the unbearable and the unresolved. Fear of collapse (whether conceivable or not). The ability to contain. Defenses. Their breakdown. Survival versus extinction (what survives? what becomes extinct?). Subversion and reconstruction. Regression. The attempt to convert psychosis into neurosis. Either way, reality evades the stubborn attempt to understand it. What good would words do.

But at certain moments the need to talk is felt, and of all things, in terms of standing at the threshold of a black hole.

And then of falling into it.¹

This passage from Dana Freibach-Heifetz's book, *In the Desert of Things* ("Numbers, Deuteronomy") not only contains short and fragmented sentences, and uses many periods, as if the speaker is short of breath, but also generates a fast pace that fuels anxiety. The

¹ Dana Heifetz, *In the Desert of Things* (Tel-Aviv, 2021), №56. The translation of fragments from this book is by Shir Freibach.

text staccatos “Collapse. Breakdown. Extinction. standing at the threshold of a black hole”. Freibach-Heifetz's book was written in February and March 2020, In the midst of the first wave of COVID19, when no one knew how it would change the world, and millions of people were quarantine. This book was thus one of the first to confront the trauma of the pandemic.

The book is composed of 113 fragments in various genres, encompassing a range of voices, sights and senses of life during the epidemic that range from everyday details (e.g. eating) to more cultural and philosophical concerns (like the concepts of inside and outside), and combines realism with the world of dreams and fantasy that portray the **archetype** of a plague. The book was published in two versions, one of which includes 36 color photographs by Yoram Kupermintz that create a rich dialogue with the texts.

This talk examines Freibach-Heifetz's text to articulate the relationship between the stylistic features of this book – such as using fragments, different genres and points of view, the combination of texts with visual images – and its thematic components, with the fact that it was written dead center in the eye of COVID storm.

(A) Style

Trauma is our starting point, and more specifically: an experience of an ineffable split in reality.¹ Trauma theorists such as

¹ Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra all consider that the structure of experience and the pathology of events cannot be fully assimilated by the psyche, and are repeatedly replayed in the mind's eye. See the works of Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Geoffrey Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies", *New Literary History* Vol, 26 (1995), 537-563; Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Robert Eaglestone, "Knowledge, 'Afterwardness' and The Future of Trauma Theory", *The*

Dominik LaCapra, Shoshana Felman, and Cathy Caruth have examined the power of literature to deviate from realism through devices such as retrospection, deconstruction and reconstruction of memory, repetitions, and fragmentation.¹ When a theorist such as Stef Craps maintain that "trauma theories often justify their focus on anti-narrative, fragmented, modernist forms of pointing to similarities with the psychic experience of trauma", he means that when critics talk about trauma in literature they tend to refer to literary modes that disrupt the "conventional mode of representation, such as can be found in modernist art."² Specific narrative techniques, usually adhering to notions endorsed by post-structuralism and deconstruction, are thought to be the most potent ways to communicate trauma.

Another key component of theories of trauma representation is the relationship between trauma and graphic vision. Judith Herman noted that "traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; rather, they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images."³ As she points out, "the ultimate goal [...] is to put the story,

Future of Trauma Theory (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2014).

¹ Fragmentation and the deconstruction of realistic literary norms drive LaCapra's reading of Borowski and Morrison, Felman's reading of Albert Camus' works, and Caruth's reading of Resnais and Dorfman. In this sense, it is not surprising that the literary theory of trauma has evolved through the writings of poststructuralists and deconstructionalist writers such as Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard.

² Craps, "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory and the Global age", *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 45-62, esp. 50.

Craps reads Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* to show that "literary realism, which does not derive its haunting power from the convention of turning unspeakable suffering into broken, traumatized speech," can express traumatic expression as well (Craps, "Beyond Eurocentrism", 57). Roger Luckhurst shares this criticism when he discusses texts and cultural forms of trauma narrative. Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 82-83.

³ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 38.

including its imagery, into words", but obviously many texts that delve into trauma use visual, realistic or imaginary snapshots.

The first poetic device implemented in *In the Desert of Things* ("Numbers, Deuteronomy") is fragmentation. The book itself is a collection of fragments. However, some of the **fragments themselves** are written in a fragmented, disassembled style as **lists** of actions, objects, feelings, concepts or imperatives that express the incomprehensible nature of the experience and its absurdity. The fragment we cited earlier, is a good example; and more so is the next one:

The archives still hold some copies of the pasquinades that were posted at that time in the streets of cities and villages. They read:

Solidarity in the community is crucial now more than ever (nobody wants to be alone).

You are requested to do. To hang up to ensure to remain to safeguard to organize and to sing.

And especially: to not stop.

The current time is challenging.

Each and every one of us must demonstrate social responsibility.

We join the call: possibilities. Adjust ourselves. Be ready.

A new era summons widespread global possibilities.

An important educational lesson that teaches agility and adaptability to changing needs in an age of uncertainty.

A huge opportunity for leveraging.

We are doing all we can. Standing together in these difficult days. Assisting as well as receiving ample support.

We shall not give up!

Life goes on!!!¹

¹ *In the Desert of Things*, #20.

This fragment mimics "erasure poems" where the author takes a text (in this case, an email sent by the dean of the college where she teaches) and deletes words from it, mainly conjunctions, thereby produces a new, **defamiliarized** text.

Lists and catalogues also reflect an attempt to **hang onto** acts and objects when causal or rational explanations fail to produce satisfactory responses. Putting them in a list eliminates any type of hierarchical relationship and assigns an **equal** value to them all. This intensifies the loss of meaning and priorities in the extreme situation of a plague, by turning them into nonsense.

Another poetic technique that expresses the traumatic nature of this experience is the merging of genres. The book is characterized by a mixture of genres that includes prose, poetry, documentary and contemplative texts. It also takes different points of view in that the fragments are written in the first, second or third person, in the singular or the plural. All these different nameless voices are juxtaposed, creating a collage of images, thoughts, feelings and micro-stories. This multiplicity is designed to reflect a reality which cannot be conceived as one coherent story.

In terms of the visual aspect of the text, the book is a dialogue between the texts and Yoram Kupermintz's photographs. Kupermintz is a multidisciplinary artist, who has held dozens of exhibitions in Israel and abroad. Kupermintz suffers from PTSD from the 1973 War, whose horrors left a profound mark on his artistic work. The book emerged from a poetic dialogue between the author and the artist, and once the text was written, 36 out of hundreds of photographs were selected to complement the text by adding various layers of meanings – ironic, painful, tender or yearning – that demonstrate the comforting power of beauty to confront the pandemic.

(B) Themes

Covid 19 has caused huge losses all over the world. These range from the loss of daily routines, the loss of personal freedom of movement, human companionship and intimacy, and the death of loved ones. These losses are embodied in the fragments of this text but are combined with other, less tangible contexts of loss, such as the loss of meaning and sensemaking, especially as transmitted via cultural institutions and schools which normally provide value, sense and comfort in difficult times but became yet another black hole during the lockdowns. Psychology was rendered speechless (as seen in the opening fragment), and philosophy is dying, as have new age pursuits such as astrology, numerology, pagan rituals and Zen meditation.

These have been replaced by myths and tales that correspond to helplessness and despair such as the doomed Greek mythological characters Sisyphus and Kasandra or the pessimistic book of Ecclesiastes. The title of the book itself in Hebrew: "במדבר דברים" ("Numbers, Deuteronomy") traces an ancient, exhausting journey that expended many lifetimes before the Hebrews reached the promised land.

In such a disastrous time, comfort can be derived from simple things. First and foremost, from a fresh glance at daily life, which has suddenly become so precious. This is illustrated by a bowl of soup, the flora and fauna around us even when reduced to the bare minimum, the routine of housework, music, manifestations of human solidarity.

Often, these everyday events are described from a new, somewhat humoristic perspective, such as the shortages of toilet paper:

Did you ever think about the splendor of toilet paper?
The unadulterated whiteness.
The softness.
The generosity with which it puts itself at your disposal.
The compassion with which it gathers unto itself all
your filth so that you will be able to go on with your
affairs, clean, unperturbed.
The magnanimity with which it accepts the
ungratefulness of being discarded post-use, without ever
being contemplated by anyone.
Did you ever think what will happen when all the toilet
paper in the world is exhausted?¹

It is shocking to compare the pandemic to the horrors of the Holocaust. However, Ruth Bondi, a Holocaust survivor showed how humor in the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto, helped cope with extreme situations. She says:

In humor there was consolation, a momentary victory over reality, a touch of illusion, a trace of freedom. Humor helped the inmates hold out as long as they could, to maintain the integrity of their personalities, to cast off fear, to chuckle instead of giving in, to disguise the dread, to view the present as temporary, a bridge to tomorrow.²

Humor is a way to face reality and transform the trauma into a bearable picture. Fantasy is another source of comfort. Quite a few fragments describe fantastic places or elements, which alongside escapism also create an effect of estrangement that reflects people's

¹ *Ibid*, #10.

² R. Bondi, R. C. Naor, *Trapped: Essays on the History of the Czech Jews, 1939-1945*. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2008), p.89. See also: Liat Steir-Livny, *Is it OK to Laugh About It?: Holocaust Humour, Satire and Parody in Israeli Culture* (London & Portland: Vallentine Mitchel, 2017).

feelings during the plague, such as imaginary places like North Pangea and the Kingdom of Lumaria, or being kidnapped by aliens who take their captives to a new paradise.

Last but not least, much comfort can be found in writing. There are quite a few references to ars-poetics in the book, including constant doubts regarding its very possibility and value, and repeated statements like "there's nothing to say about it". Nevertheless, the book was written, and a certain number of fragments express optimism regarding the act of writing, such as the one that appears on the cover:

Out of me writing on and on, the world reverses to its dawn.

I write garden, and a garden grows and rises up from the ground. Its paths spread before my feet.

I write man, and he emerges and comes around the bend and runs towards me to embrace me.

I write mountains and rivers and sky and sea. And behold, mountains and rivers and sky and sea.

I write bustling streets, cafes crowded with people, concert halls in whose spaces music is playing, theatres on whose stages words are spoken and dancers twirl. And they rise before my eyes and their sounds fill my ears and their movement sends currents which tremble my body with thousands of tiny vibrations.

I write: I.¹

Thus, the ability to imagine and write what one imagines in fact has a godlike power to **recreate** the lost world destroyed by the pandemic. It enables the writer to recreate **herself** as an artist, perhaps even as a human being.

These poetic means do not negate the trauma, but treat it with aesthetic distance, often creating the distancing that is necessary in

¹ *In the Desert of Things*, N°108.

such circumstances. They do not make a moral judgment – no one is guilty or responsible for this traumatic event – although the book does suggest some ethical ways to behave in such circumstances and relate to them; from this aspect, the book can also be seen as an essay on the human condition.

(C) Conclusions

Can we discuss writing in a time of pandemic when COVID19 is not over? Can we say something meaningful without a proper historical perspective?

In our talk we focused on one example: Freibach-Heifetz's *In the Desert of Things*. We showed how the fragmented text aims to cope with the trauma. We discussed the variety of juxtaposed points of view and genres that result in a text about the trauma that is universal, perhaps archetypal, but at the same time very personal and intimate, while meticulously resisting the temptation to provide a coherent account of the pandemic which would betray its dissociative nature. We demonstrated how the text offers a picture of life during COVID and the use of humor, fantasy and myth. In its writing, the text confronts these traumatic events that are still upending our world.

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Global Plague, Local Pain: Mourning the Tragedy of Covid

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Abstract:

The recent pandemic, originating in China but eventually spreading to every continent, highlighted the connections and tensions between the global and local, the collective experience and individual suffering. These tensions between the generic and the particular animate traditional dramatic tragedy. This paper therefore draws on the key features of Aristotle's ideas of tragedy – hamartia, anagnorisis, catharsis – to attempt to “read” the tragedy of Covid. Our responses to the global pandemic both conformed to traditional tragic practices and also deconstructed them. But this resistance to tragic pattern and intelligibility positions the Covid event paradoxically in line with many tragedies, both dramatic and historical, in our past. Ultimately, it is argued, the tragic tradition carries a moral and political force. Setting individual events within a wider pattern of narrative has the merit of making intelligible what seems particular. It makes it recognisable and therefore grievable.

Keywords: Covid, Tragedy, Hamartia, Recognition, Mourning

In June 2022, I went down with Covid for the first time in more than two years of the pandemic. I suffered the usual symptoms of those who have already been safely vaccinated: sore throat, headache, fatigue, slight fever. Lying on the sofa I thought how strange it felt that the virus which had damaged the world economy and closed down country after country, from China to Europe, from New Zealand to the USA, had somehow settled now in my own throat. There could be, I reflected, no more graphic an illustration of the global/local nature of the pandemic, the coming together of the general and the particular, than the intimate feeling of harbouring the world's first truly global plague in your own tonsils.

According to Elaine Scarry, understanding another's suffering is as challenging as accessing a "deep subterranean fact" or an "interstellar event". Pain marks the crucial demarcation between an intimate form of knowledge and an estranging bewilderment. "For the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that 'having pain' may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to 'have certainty'", she observes. "For the other person it is so elusive that 'hearing about pain' may exist as the primary model of what it is 'to have doubt'" (Scarry, 1985, pp. 3, 4). She goes on to elaborate these distinctions. The sufferer finds that physical pain not only cannot be expressed but also shatters language, reducing the sufferer to some prior state which might be considered more immediate and intense than anything accessible to verbalised cognition. Meanwhile the person who witnesses that suffering in another individual is brought to confront his or her necessary distance from that experience and his or her inability ever to fully inhabit or know it on a rational or expressible level. And yet that act of witness can also be an act of imagination as well as of doubt. Pain unmakes the world but attempting to imagine another's pain remakes it.

Scarry's observations on pain, language and the act of witnessing go to the heart of what is at stake in the tragic tradition. Drawing on Sophocles' play *Philoctetes*, Scarry herself considered the relation between agony and language, the reduction of Philoc-

tetes to incoherent cries when the pain of his infected foot becomes more severe. But on a wider level, the distinctions she identifies between experience versus explanation, or between sufferer and witness, are central to thinking about both tragedies on the stage and also the tragic crises of our times. For tragedies like traumatic events “simultaneously defy and demand our witness”, according to Cathy Caruth (Caruth, 1996, p. 5). They appeal to our capacity for compassion, for pity and fear when witnessing the suffering of another (Halliwell, 1987, p. 44). Yet at the same time they remind us that we can never fully share that suffering and indeed that there might be degrees of troubling pleasure or at least fascinated curiosity and enjoyment in the very act of viewing the experience of another (Strindberg, 1998, pp. 57-58; Nuttall 2011). Tragedy thus demarcates sharply the experience of the individual from the collective, the local from the global, the immediate from the abstract, while appealing to just such a human capacity to cross such boundaries through sympathy and imagination. Indeed, as George Eliot put it at the end of *Middlemarch*, which rethought tragic representation in the new “medium” of the novel, “the growing good of the world” is partly dependent upon small acts of sympathy and compassion, on the “unhistoric acts” of recognising that other ordinary people have an “equivalent centre of self” to our own (Eliot, 1965, pp. 896; 243). So tragedy, I contend, is traditionally the form in which societies register their sense of grief, responsibility, collective compassion and individual relief at survival and through which they seek a kind of moral wisdom. It is the form in which they express their desire for explanation and their bewilderment at not knowing, while potentially “remaking the world” through their sympathetic act of watching.

The tragic genre has identifiable structures in which to pattern our experience and thereby seek to express and understand it. Set out by Aristotle in his attempt to rationalise and make intelligible the dramatic tradition, the expected features of tragic plays have become well-known in the way we think about the definition of the literary or dramatic form. But these features are also evident in our

everyday experience and identifiable in the global and local phenomenon of the pandemic. There is the issue of the cause of – or responsibility for – the catastrophe that ensues, encapsulated in Aristotle’s notion of *hamartia*. There is the playing out of the crisis or catastrophe through narrative which constitutes a form of explanation, or what might be described as the tragic plot (Aristotle’s injunction that “well designed plot-structures ought not to begin or finish at arbitrary points, but to follow the principles indicated”).¹ And then there is the expectation that the play should conclude with the act of recognition, or *anagnorisis*, implicitly both on the part of the protagonist and the audience. The experience of the Covid pandemic conformed to these Aristotelian features but also re-wrote them. We can thus use the expected features of the tragic genre to try to “read” the tragedy of Covid but we must also simultaneously attend to their deconstruction as tropes for understanding. And, indeed, in that deconstruction Covid paradoxically follows a recognisable trend in tragic drama, that of defying witness and shattering the rules and patterns for expressing suffering.

Hamartia of plague

Tragic plots revolve around the moment when the hero makes the wrong choice or what Aristotle calls the *hamartia*, sometimes wrongly translated as fatal flaw. There is then a very limited period of time between deed and consequences. As soon as Macbeth kills the king, he is damned and unnatural signs of turmoil, such as horses eating each other, follow that very same night. But in certain tragedies there is actually a considerable time lapse between transgression and consequence and indeed it is hard to pinpoint exactly the moment of *hamartia*. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, Oedipus has killed his father and married his mother years before the play begins

¹ *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p. 39, chapter 7.

with his journey towards discovery. And even then, those fateful decisions to murder and to marry were arguably not the first tragic choices in the story but were preceded by Oedipus's journey to the oracle at Delphi to find out his parentage, and that was in turn preceded by his parents' tragic choice to seek to destroy him at birth. There's also a case to be made about the tragedy of minor characters, those caught up in the tragic plot, as victims, collateral damage, unwilling participants. *Hamartia* can be dispersed across multiple parties, or indeed one person's *hamartia* can cause tragedy for many people. Agency and responsibility in tragic drama are highly complex, reflecting our continuing sense both of our culpability in world-changing situations and also our inability fully to control them.

And yet the consequences of the Oedipal *hamartia* are evident in the plague that form the opening crisis of the play. Imperceptible at first, the infection has spread inexorably as the pollution and incest at the heart of the city's government has festered undetected. Plague is thus cause and consequence of the play's action, both the source and the symptom, both the immediate catalyst and the longer-term environmental context for the catastrophe that ensues. Plague in tragedy functions, therefore, as a moral litmus. Angry Apollo shoots his plague-filled arrows down on the Greeks for ten days at the beginning of the *Iliad*. Mired in stalemate conflict, disease is a sign of moral corruption in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Pandarus sets the tone with his "whoreson phthisic" and "rheum in [his] eyes" and he infects the whole camp, making their sick bodies now and in the future a sign of wider social sickness:

...If you cannot weep, yet give some groans,
Though not for me, yet for your aching bones...
Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
And at that time bequeath you my diseases.¹

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, 5.3.104, 107; 5.11.31.17-18, 23-24. *The Norton Shakespeare, based on the Oxford edition*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997), pp. 1905, 1910-11.

Characters in tragic drama become sick because they have neglected to confront a sin at the very core of their community (*Hamlet's* “something is rotten in the state of Denmark” leaving ambiguous whether that rottenness is located in the ghost’s appearance or in the prince’s “wax[ing] desperate with imagination”).¹ Even Creon in *Antigone*, responsible for leaving his dead nephew unburied and allowing his niece to be buried alive, is told the news that the altars in his city are being polluted with the pieces of Polyneices’ unburied body dropped by birds.² Sin is leading to disease and pollution. Human *hamartia* creates the conditions for sickness and infection.

The origins of Covid were somewhat opaque and so inevitably conspiracy theories quickly developed to fill that gap. It’s more comforting for people to be given explanations or even secret plots behind world events than it is to acknowledge the role of accident, unpredictability and lack of human control. Conspiracy theories work a little like tragic fate, with the lone conspiracy theorist similar to the soothsayer deciphering the riddling oracle. The truth is to be found hidden beneath the surface and it is somehow reassuring to the theorist to find confirmed their pre-existing distrust of the authorities that supposedly protect us. So, while the general consensus is that the virus emerged in the wild meat or “wet” markets in Wuhan, suspicion focused upon the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where bat coronaviruses are studied, and specifically the human tampering with different strains and proteins of viruses known as “gain of function” research (Dance 2021). Could a super-virus, artificially created in the lab, have accidentally escaped into the community? Was this the Frankenstein-like consequence of interfering with nature, made all the more insidious and powerful because of the efforts to deny it and hush it up? China had delayed

¹ *Hamlet*, 1.4.67, 64. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 1684.

² Teiresias to Creon: “Sickness has come upon us, and the cause / Is you: Our altars and our sacred hearths / Are all polluted by the dogs and birds / That have been gorging on the fallen body / Of Polyneices”: *Antigone*, translated by H.D.F. Kitto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 35, lines 1014-18.

the quarantining of Wuhan until the 3rd week in January, although “Patient Zero”, a 70-year old man, fell ill on 1st December (Honigsbaum, 2020, p. 133). Similarly, Oedipus’s miasma festers and spreads because it has been hidden, “pollution inbred in this very land”, as his brother-in-law Creon says.¹ And for conspiracy theorists any denial is only interpreted as a cover-up, proving all the more powerfully the plots of our rulers.

But you don’t need conspiracy theories about lab leaks to interpret Covid-19 as a consequence of our worldwide environmental hubris. Transgressing further and further upon the wild, whether exploring in the bat caves around Wuhan or selling wild animals like wolf cubs and crocodiles at food markets there or chopping down the rainforest in the Amazon, we are perhaps even more guilty of trespass in the twenty-first century than Philoctetes was when he stepped into the holy sanctuary of the goddess Chryse and was inflicted with an unhealable wound on his leg as punishment. Zoonotic diseases – viruses that leap from animals to humans, the spread of infectious diseases between species – are only going to increase with environmental destruction and have not come without warning from veterinary ecologists. Indeed, according to Mark Honigsbaum in *The Pandemic Century*, even at the time of the first SARS outbreak in 2003 scientists could see that “the consumption of exotic sources of protein, urban overcrowding, international jet travel, and the growing interconnectivity of global markets presented” the perfect conditions for a rapidly spreading worldwide plague (Honigsbaum, 2020, p. 136). Natural equilibriums are being upended by human activity and will only get disordered with climate change. In Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses sets out the classic Early Modern beliefs about the “discord” that follows if you disrupt the moral and political order and “take but degree away”:

¹ *Oedipus the King*, translated by Oliver Taplin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 18, line 97.

When the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny?
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth?
Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture. O when degree is shaken,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick.¹

One might see an entanglement of environmental, political and moral disorder lying behind the “sickness” of Covid-19, “diverting and cracking” the “unity and married calm of states” around the world.

In a further tragic irony, of course, the environmental hubris that arguably caused the pandemic has harboured and bred further disasters in its wake, like the festering curses of the Furies. Covid has produced vast quantities of waste products: piles of PPE to be burnt; discarded masks; the plastic vials of testing equipment and vaccines (Mah, 2022). Meanwhile the brief hiatus in air travel, which some thought might have a positive impact on global carbon emissions, seems to have been forgotten quickly with flights in 2023 expected to reach almost 2019 levels.² Covid only distracted attention from the climate emergency; it didn’t mitigate it at all.

Narratives of Covid

Aristotle famously pointed to the importance of the tragic plot. Every tragedy should have a beginning, a middle and an end; well-constructed plots should not end in random. Tragic narratives are

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.109-110; 1.3.94-103. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 1847.

² “Covid-19 Air Travel Recovery”, *OAG: Flight Database and Statistics*: <https://www.oag.com/coronavirus-airline-schedules-data>. Accessed 20th January 2023.

formulated to order, explain or understand inexplicable catastrophe and suffering. They attempt to name the unnameable, combining memory, commemoration, dramatic storytelling and feeling to powerful effect. Homer might create the large epic poem describing the siege of Troy, but Greek tragedies were made up of “large cuts taken from Homer’s mighty dinners”, finding within the large tragic event, little tragic stories of different individuals caught up in that wider conflict (Athenaeus, 1969, p. 75). One might, in this context, think of a comparison with “reading” the tragedy of 9/11, where the whole catastrophe was triggered by those planes flying into the World Trade Center but contained within it there were multiple tragic narratives: individual choices and lives lost on that day as well as individuals affected by subsequent events happening in the name of 9/11 (Wallace, 2019, pp. 21-28). But just as in tragic drama where events exceed the neat Aristotelian structure and its expectations, so the need to impose a narrative pattern upon events as a form of explanation or comfort is so often thwarted by our experience of excessive, inexplicable suffering, injustice or chaotic violence.

The tragic plot of Covid was arguably an algorithm. There was the trackable time lag between infection, presentation of symptoms, hospitalisation, and death. There was the R number (rate of infection) which, when it rose above 1, indicated the exponential spread of the disease. The pandemic could be understood statistically or even as a graph. We were told in the early days to practise “social distancing” in order to “flatten the curve”. We were reduced, accordingly, to statistics and patterns. But individual fear was exacerbated by the sense that no graphs or predictions seemed able to control the future. Country after country closed down, air travel ceased, stock markets crashed. Mary Shelley’s prophetic novel *The Last Man* (1826) envisaged just such a global pandemic, an “invincible monster”, moving inexorably from Asia to the West and eventually wiping out the human race:

Nature, our mother and our friend, had turned on us a brow of menace. She shewed us plainly, that, though she permitted us to assign her laws and subdue her apparent powers, yet, if she put forth but a finger, we must quake. She could take our globe, fringed with mountains, girded by the atmosphere, containing the condition of our being, and all that man's mind could invent or his force achieve; she could take the ball in her hand, and cast it into space, where life would be drunk up, and man and all his efforts forever annihilated (Shalley, 1994, p. 232).

Nature, for Shelley, thus takes on ambiguous force, both protecting and annihilating us. On the one hand, the algorithms and statistics of Covid amounted to an instance of Timothy Morton's *hyperobject*, dwarfing the human scale of comprehension (Morton, 2013). But on the other hand, we could read them as society's attempts to understand and contains the virus, an Aristotelian tragic pattern which was then overwhelmed by the even greater *hyperobject* of the pandemic itself.

Covid exposed the incommensurability of global statistics and individual stories. As epidemiologists pointed out, the virus behaves with scientific objectivity, immune to politics and morals, however much politicians might want to wish it away or manipulate it for political ends. Covid doesn't understand national borders, as many quipped at the time. And yet the pandemic revealed the divisive nature of our current politics, the inequality of our world and the very different experiences of individuals suffering its consequences. We only have to look at the disparity of access to vaccines between the wealthiest countries and the Global South, or indeed, in Britain, the mortality rates of the middle or upper classes and the poorest in the country, those workers on the frontline, those of ethnic minority background who were disproportionately affected by Covid. There was a tragic incommensurability between science and politics, between the seemingly inexorable spread of the virus and the stories we tell. Dr Stockmann, in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the*

People, is adamant that the scientific truth behind the contamination of the town's Baths is paramount and simple, only to find that the politics and economics of the town complicate the urgency of his message. "As a doctor and a man of science, you regard this matter of the water-supply as something quite on its own", says the editor of the local newspaper to him. "It probably hasn't struck you that it's tied up with a lot of other things". The poison, the editor goes on to elaborate, is due to the "swamp that our whole community is standing rotting on" (Ibsen, 1960, pp. 25-26).

As the pandemic unfolded, readers turned to plague literature from the past to try to make sense of their experience. Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* helped to reframe the experience of lockdown. Camus's *La Peste* spoke to the early forms of denial and repression associated with an infectious disease running rife through a community and the futile efforts of individuals to avoid their demise. But mostly what became apparent was that pandemic literature itself is haunted by the past, by the traces of traditional culture through which it tries to make sense of catastrophe. Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel, *Station Eleven*, does this most strikingly, depicting the impact of a devastating global virus through the experience of a group of travelling players who survive and perform Shakespeare and classical music. The beauty and "spell" of Shakespeare reminds both actors and audience of the value of culture and briefly allows them to escape their current horror through the memory of former "elegance":

A few of the actors thought Shakespeare would be more relatable if they dressed in the same patched and faded clothing their audience wore, but Kirsten thought it meant something to see Titania in a gown, Hamlet in a shirt and tie (Mandel, 2014, p. 151).

But besides beauty, Shakespeare also offers reassuring examples of precedent to characters in Mandel's novel. Plague closed the theatres several times in Shakespeare's day and *A Midsummer's*

Night's Dream's Titania, queen of the fairies played by one of the protagonists, Kristen, speaks both of the pestilence of 1594 and of the futuristic one of the novel (approximately, 2040), as well as 2020 when the novel enjoyed an even greater popularity: "Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain, as in revenge, have sucked up from the sea contagious fogs" (Mandel, 2014, p. 57). Yet, besides *Station Eleven*, one can see examples of retrieving fragments from the past to "shore up against the ruin" of catastrophe in Ling Ma's novel *Severance*, in which the main character takes photos of New York steeped in the canonical tradition of street photography. Referencing William Eggleston, Stephen Shore and Nan Goldin, Ling Ma's protagonist seeks to continue to make sense of her city within the long history of photographic witness even as Zombie-like horror of the plague takes hold of the world and reduces its victims to a terrifying fog of dementia, erasing them from within (Ma, 2018, pp. 193-195).

Even the extremely bleak *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, which also attracted more readers during Covid, draws upon biblical syntax, setting catastrophe within a religious apocalyptic tradition (McCarthy, 2006; Noble, 2020, pp. 98-106).

Corrupting tragedy, plague narratives both follow the genre and constantly modify it. Indeed, disease deconstructs and eradicates existing reliable structures whether they be physical bodies, society's law and order or even narrative patterns related to literary genre. At the beginning of *Station Eleven*, the actor Arthur Leander collapses and dies on stage halfway through performing *King Lear*; the curtain is brought down and the production closed. But the memory of the play and its extended, torturous, spiraling plot structure ("He hates him much / That would upon the rack of this tough world / Stretch him out longer") continues to haunt the whole novel, from the enigmatic, attenuated father/daughter relationship between Arthur and Kristen, to the unexpected acts of kindness between strangers (like the servant tending to Gloucester's blinded eye: *King Lear* 3.7.110-111) to the unravelling of character and identity under pressure ("it

was becoming more difficult to hold on to himself”).¹ If Lear exceeds its tragic structure through its “overliving” (Wilson, 2005, pp. 113-128) and its dramatisation of the paradox “the worst is not / So long as we can say ‘this is the worst’”, so *Station Eleven* evokes and exceeds even that precedent, eroding the human dimensions of tragic plots through the erasure of catastrophe.²

As the Chinese are discovering with their ongoing difficulties of easing out of lockdown, it is hard to declare that Covid is over and that the pandemic has run its course. There is no simple narrative pattern to the disease but rather it runs through peaks and troughs, the graphs dipping and spiking but no longer a feature on the nightly news. “Is this the promised end?”, Kent asks in *King Lear*, on seeing the horror of the aged king walking onto the stage with his dead daughter in his arms. “Or image of that horror”, is the reply from Edgar, pushing back once again that promised satisfaction of a conclusion.³ With Long Covid still affecting 2.8% of the UK population and 7.5% of the US population but the news agenda now moved on to the war in Ukraine, the global energy crisis and economic hardship, the pandemic is a forgotten, unresolved tragedy, like Ling Ma’s *Zombie Limbo*, without the necessary recognition or memory as I will go on to explain (O’Mahoney, 2023).

Recognition or non-recognition

Recognition (ἀναγνώρις) is one of the key features of tragedy, according to Aristotle. This marks the moment, both for the character and for the audience, when potentially everyone realises that no man should be considered blessed until he sees his last days. For philosophers like Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler, the recognition of “precariousness” or our “common human vulnerability” becomes one of the beneficial wisdoms of tragedy (Nussbaum,

¹ *King Lear*, 5.3.312-314. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2552; *Station Eleven*, p. 194.

² *King Lear*, 4.1.28-29. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2527.

³ *King Lear*, 5.3.262-3. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2551.

2003, pp. 10-26). When we see the protagonist of tragedy is a “man like ourselves” (Aristotle), when we respond to the face of the other, we can be opened up to “what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself” (Butler, 2004, p. 134). But recognition in Aristotle carries the double sense of the discovery of the unknown and the identification of the already known, so in tragedy it can entail both the process of acknowledgement (Butler, Cavell) and also the reinforcement of existing categories (Markell, 2003). Aristotle argued that the “change from ignorance to knowledge”, which the act of recognition entailed, provoked both pity and fear that could be solidified into bonds of friendship or enmity.¹ Tragic fear, then, could provoke hostility, or at least, according to Patchen Markell, reinforce and perpetuate structures of inequality, subordination and dominance, making the world “intelligible” by “stratifying it” (Markell, 2003, pp. 1-2).²

Traditionally in tragedy, with recognition comes the time of lament. We think of Theseus in Euripides’ play *Hippolytus* taking the gathered pieces of his son’s dismembered body “in [his] arms”, or Creon with his son Haemon at the close of *Antigone*.³ Or Lear with Cordelia at the end of *King Lear*. At the close of that play, Lear might not be said to fully “acknowledge” his daughter’s separate existence, according to Cavell, or to achieve real recognition of his situation (Lear dies in an “ecstasy” of hope, observed AC Bradley) (Bradley 1905:291) but at least he experiences the non-verbal, non-rational consolation of touch:

Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!⁴

¹ *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p. 43, chapter 10.

² For a more extensive discussion of the ambiguity of tragic recognition, see Jennifer Wallace, “Photography, Tragedy and Osama bin Laden: Looking at the Enemy”, *Critical Quarterly*, 57.2 (2015), pp. 17-35.

³ *Hippolytus*, translated by James Morwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 79, line 1432; *Antigone*: p. 43, lines 1261-69.

⁴ *King Lear*, 5.3.308-310. *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2552.

Tragic recognition takes bodily rather than intellectual form, as characters absorb the information slowly. Pain and loss have to be felt along the heart, as the chorus sing in Robert Fagles' beautiful translation of the *Oresteia*:

We cannot sleep, and drop by drop at the heart
the pain of pain remembered comes again,
and we resist, but ripeness comes as well.

(Aeschylus, 1979, p. 109)

Only the through drip-drip of shared grief can we be said to reach some understanding, to “suffer into truth” as Fagles puts it, his translation of *pathei mathos* in the Greek.¹ The phrase means some sort of relationship between suffering and learning, although exactly how suffering leads to learning or how the two words are connected grammatically or philosophically is precisely what tragedy explores.

But Covid lockdown rules meant that people were unable to mourn. Elderly parents quarantined in care homes could only wave through a window. Those dying from Covid in hospital were attended only by hospital staff while families were forced to say goodbye to their relatives over Facetime, an experience I had with my own dying father. The last view many Covid victims would have had were of unknown nurses and doctors in full PPE. Medical masks, the sign – as Birgit Dawes has argued – of the very risk which they serve to prevent, “dissolv[ing] ... the boundary between identity and alterity”, also became like tragic masks, hiding individual identity in some larger ritualistic and performative collectivity, which tokens both a common vulnerability and a distancing fear (Dawes, 2021, p. 7). Those dying of Covid were and at the same time were not *recognised* in the tragic sense. Indeed, the double sense of estrangement and need for the acknowledgement of the human face was encapsulated in the decision by some hospital nurses and therapists to attach pictures of their unmasked faces to their chests, so

¹ Fagles, p. 109, line 179; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 18, line 177.

that they could be “seen” in printed, laminated form while their actual faces were obscured in alien type masks, goggles and plastic visors (See figure 1) (Asmelash and Ebrhahimji, 2020). Representation was more recognisable than the surreal reality of the crisis.



Figure 1

Memorial Wall stretches between Westminster and Lambeth bridges along the River Thames in London directly opposite the Houses of Parliament (Figure 2). Red hearts were painted all along it and families from across the country come to claim a heart and write the name of their loved one lost to Covid. It is demotic, haphazard and uncontrolled, and even now it is unclear how long it will be permitted to remain. But



Figure 2

it follows a tradition of displaying the dead for lament and witness that goes back to Greek tragedy. Like the bodies rolled out on the *ekkyklema* in the theatre for the chorus and the audience to mourn, the wall's hearts, which stretch as far as the eye can see, force a public recognition of the more than 150,000 lives lost in the UK,

partly because of the wrong decisions or *hamartia* of the government opposite. This, it seems to me, is the British tragic site of Covid.

Generic intelligibility and the question of catharsis

According to one interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, his notion of catharsis marks the crucial break between the experience of tragedy in the world and the aesthetic enjoyment of tragedy in the theatre. If catharsis is translated as purging or "washing us free of the emotions", then the implication is that the spectator is detached from what is viewed and that he or she exploits that spectacle for therapeutic effect. This allows us, as Brecht believed, to leave the dramatic performance entertained, satisfied and ready to continue ordinary life unperturbed and unchanged (Brecht, 1964, p. 181). But if, on the other hand, catharsis is translated as purifying or "washing the emotions", then the implication is that watching tragedy doesn't detach us aesthetically from the suffering but rather it makes us more sensitive to future watching.¹ Catharsis in this case becomes more immersive and participatory – a process that we all collectively go through. The global pandemic might seem amenable to the second notion. While we cannot make sense of it yet, we might feel our continued sympathetic witnessing of it make us more attuned to thinking about it in the future.

The experiences of Covid are, in many ways, unthinkable and un-representable. They are hard to fathom partly because they are so recent; they have scarcely had time to settle from event into narrative, from experience into knowledge. They also have often removed individuals from the picture, making the pandemic seem not understandable on a human scale. This crisis, we might say, has *disfigured* our imaginations. It has removed the individual figures

¹ *The Poetics of Aristotle*, p. 37, chapter 6. See Halliwell's commentary on this passage: pp. 89-90. The literal alternative translations from the Greek "δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν" (1449b) are my own.

that make compassion possible – or it literally has prevented the natural processes of grief and mourning.

Yet, through the exploration of *hamartia*, dramatic plot and forms of recognition and lament, we can project the human scale back into the inhuman, global disaster. Thinking about our contemporary world involves a tussle between figural interpretation and disfiguration (Harries, 2007, pp. 103-114). Tragedy can be thought of as a figurative and figuring way of seeing, both in the sense of reminding us of the figure in history, with his or her own feelings and desires, and also in the Erich Auerbach sense of reading one historical event in light of another (Auerbach, 1959, p. 53). Setting individual stories into a wider, traditional pattern of narrative or theatre has the merit of making intelligible what seems particular. It makes it recognisable and therefore grievable.

Of course, despite Aristotle's analysis in the *Poetics*, tragic dramas are not strictly patterned. Classical tragedy acknowledges its own blindspots and resistances, and frequently does not conform to, or confine itself within, the pattern. So, reading the experiences of the pandemic now, *figuring* them again, in the tradition of tragedy is by no means to order them. But it is to pay attention to the wider narratives of our times and to think about the attempts to make week-to-week events intelligible through that patterning. This might be the start of action, informing and revising the structures of feelings and ideas of tragedy that respond to social disorder and recuperating a sense of what we all share, what we hold generically in common.

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Chinese Influences on Modern and Contemporary European and American Literature and Literary Theories

Song of the Dark Ages: Brecht in Exile and “Chinese Role Model”

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Abstract:

A close reading of the 20th-century German writer Brecht's works on Chinese elements, themes and subjects during his exile (1933-1947) shows that the “Chinese role model” had an important influence on Brecht's artistic creation and thinking about his life during his exile. The substance of Brecht's relationship with Chinese culture remains to be examined in depth. Using comparative literary methods such as figurative studies, this paper divides Brecht's references to Chinese culture into three specific ways: creative translations of the “exiled poet” Bai Juyi, imaginative manipulations of the “Chinese wise man” Lao Tzu, and the creation of *The Good Man of Sichuan*. Put the three together for investigation, we can not only see Brecht's courtesy to Chinese wisdom and recognition of Chinese culture, which is constantly developing and deepening. It could also be used as a mirror to further explore its underlying motivation, so as to see how Brecht completed his thinking of survival and art by learning from foreign oriental culture during his 15 years of exile life, which also represents the survival path of the German generation of exiles in that dark era.

Keywords: Bertolt Brecht, the dark ages, “Chinese role model”, Exile literature

1. Songs for a Dark Ages: Brecht and China in Exile

“In den finsternen Zeiten
Wird da auch gesungen werden?
Da wird auch gesungen werden.
Von den finsternen Zeiten”.
– Bertolt Brecht

This is a poem written by Brecht in 1939 when he was forced into exile in Denmark, fleeing persecution and massacre by the Nazis. The poem is from Brecht's *Deutsches Lied* in *Svendborger Gedichte* (1938-1941) (Brecht, 1967, p. 641), and the dark ages in the poem refers to the Nazi dictatorship in Germany (1933-1945). The rise to power of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933 was an unprecedented catastrophe for German culture, and German literary figures, artists and thinkers were the first to be expelled and persecuted by the Nazi dictator. When Brecht saw the violent rule of the Nazis in Germany, who oppressed and brutalised people, he chose to use the only tool he had, language, to fight against this inhuman rule: “It is precisely because of the rule of the dark ages that one must sing at the top of one's voice in order to oppose it” (Knop, 2018, p.392). For this reason, like his literary contemporaries, he had to go into exile to escape persecution by the Nazis. This article uses the term “songs of the dark ages” to refer to the artistic works Brecht produced during his exile in the dark ages, in order to better consider the connection between his literary work and the transformation of his life from the perspective of “exile and art”.

How to find a source of living water that never runs out of art in difficult times, to find the truth that people live together, Brecht chose to anchor his vision in the exotic East, in distant China. During his exile, he produced numerous literary and artistic works on Chinese elements and Chinese themes, such as the essays *Über die Malerei der Chinesen* (1934), *Über das traditionelle chinesische Drama* (1935), and *Verfremdungseffekte in der Chinesischen Schauspielkunst* (1936), which provides insight into how Brecht first developed an interest in Chinese traditional theatrical arts.

Revising translations of poetic works such as *Sechs chinesische Gedichte* (1938) and the long poem *Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking* (1938), as well as the plays *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1939), *Gute Mensch von Sezuan* (prepared in 1930 and completed in 1942), *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* (1944-1945) and others. In all of this, it is no wonder that the Korean scholar Song Yunyao claims that: “Brecht, as a playwright and poet, could be called the Chinese Brecht” (Brecht, 2015, p. 21).

The question is, why were all of Brecht's iconic artworks created in the dark ages? According to Jan Knopf, a German expert on Brecht, there is only one conclusion: “Brecht stole his artworks entirely from the troubled times” (Knopf, 2018, p. 428). And why was Brecht so fond of China in these dark times? There is more than one answer. Hans Mayer, a close friend of Brecht's, said of Brecht's relationship with Chinese poetry, “Brecht's later poetic output would have been unthinkable without a Chinese role model” (“chinesische Vorbild” ¹in Deutsch) (Mayer, 1971, p.131). The “chinesische Vorbild” to which Mayer refers primarily signifies the influence of the linguistic and meaningful aspects of Chinese poetry on Brecht's poetic artistry.

In fact, the “Chinese role model” for Brecht was not just a formal aspect of his poetry. A closer reading of the texts on Chinese elements that Brecht composed during his exile shows that the influence of the “Chinese role model” was deeply rooted in his poetry, drama and even his literary views, and that the connotation of the “Chinese role model” extended to Brecht's creative borrowing and absorption of Chinese culture and thought. This reference could be concretely demonstrated through the creative retranslation of the “exiled poet” Bai Juyi, the imagined “Chinese wise man” Lao Tzu, and the creation of *The Good Man of Sichuan*, which is informed by Chinese opera.

¹ The German noun “Vorbild” corresponds to the Chinese term, which can mean role model, exemplar, paragon, prototype, or blueprint. In this thesis, it is used in the sense of “role model”.

2. Creative retranslation: Achieving psychological resonance from Bai Juyi

In 1936, while in exile in London, Brecht decided to set up the exile magazine *das Wort* (*Words*), which was published in Moscow. In 1938, issue 8 of the journal published Brecht's *Sechs chinesische Gedichte* (Brecht, 1938) Brecht, who did not know Chinese, based his translation on the English translation of *170 Chinese Poems* (1918) by the British sinologist Arthur Waley (Waley, 1918, pp. 104-168).

These six Chinese poems are the first and only version of Brecht's Chinese poems to be published publicly during his exile.¹ Three of these six Chinese poems are from Bai Juyi (*Die Decke*, *Der Politiker*, and *Der Drache des schwarzen Pfuhls*), and if we look at the 12 Chinese poems that Brecht translated during his lifetime, seven are related to Bai Juyi. In 1950, Brecht published three more sets of Chinese poems in *Versuch*, Vol. 10, and said of Bai Juyi in preference: "His poetry is simple in wording but exceptionally careful and earnest" (Brecht, 1950, p. 10).

It would seem that of all the Chinese poets, Brecht was most fond of Bai Juyi. So what was Brecht's image of Bai Juyi? Why did Brecht translate a poet from exotic China during his exile?

In Brecht's translation, Bai Juyi is, firstly, an exile from the underclass, and secondly, his poetry is accessible in its content and form, which dares to satirise the times. It is clear from Brecht's translation that he did not follow Wiley's English translation entirely; in his writing Bai Juyi was "born of a poor peasant family" and his poems were "sung in the mouths of peasants and horsemen", written in "on the walls of village schools, monasteries, and ship's

¹ The citations in this text are drawn from *Gesammelte Werke 9 Gedichte 2* published by Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt in 1967, hereinafter abbreviated as "GW9". The original sources of the six Chinese poems are as follows: *Die Freunde* (GW9, p. 618); *Die Grosse Decke* (GW9, p. 618); *Der Politiker* (GW9, p. 619f); *Der Drache des schwarzen Pfuhls* (GW9, p. 620f.); *Ein Protest im sechsten Jahr des Chien Fu* (GW9, p. 621); *Bei der Geburt eines Sohnes* (GW9, p. 684f.)

cabins”, and “if tyrants and sycophants had heard his poems, they would have looked at him with disbelief and changed colour” (Brecht, 1967, p.424f). As can be seen, Brecht's particular emphasis on Bai Juyi's class status – from the lower classes and loved by them – is at odds with the description of Bai Juyi in Wiley's English translation: “his father was a second-class magistrate's assistant” (Waley, 1947, p. 105) and his poems were sung by “kings, princes, princesses, noblewomen, peasants and horsemen” (ibid.110-112). In this regard, Tan Yuan points out that:

Brecht is careful to create for his readers a great poet from the poor, always on the side of the oppressed and constantly criticising the ruling class, even going so far as to subtly manipulate the content of his biography (Tan Yuan, 2011, p. 106).

This artistic approach is closely related to Brecht's role as a “true socialist” – he was sympathetic to the underclass, concerned with social reality, and skilled in class analysis, which allowed Bai Juyi to enter Brecht's vision of translation and even rewriting.

In the poems *Die Grosse Decke* and *Der Drache des schwarzen Pfuhls*, Brecht emphasises Bai Juyi's political satire as a sympathy for the underclass and a bitter satire of the ruling class, respectively. The poem *Die Grosse Decke* is about Bai Juyi's wish, when he sees the frozen people in the city, for “Antwortet: Eine Decke, zehntausend Fußlang/ Die die ganzen Vorstädte einfach zudeckt” (Brecht,1967, p.618).

No doubt, Bai Juyi's wish to “shelter the cold people of the world” was in line with Brecht's state of mind during his exile, witnessing and suffering the cruel persecution of his countrymen by the Nazi totalitarian rulers. Brecht himself was a man who needed “a quilt to keep him warm”, but his concern for his country was evoked in Bai Juyi's poetry, and his humanitarianism was evident: even though he was persecuted and exiled, he wanted all the victims to be sheltered.

Brecht's focus on Bai Juyi as a “poet in exile” was mainly there for the spiritual resonance. In his poem *Ueber die Bezeichnung Emigranten* (1937), Brecht uses the word “exil” to describe himself

and his exile contemporaries: “We are in fact the deported, the exile” (Brecht, 1994, p. 81). His poems written in exile *Besuch bei den Verbannten Dichtern* (*Interviews with Exilic Poets*, 1938) speak of poets such as “Ovid, Voltaire, Heine Ovid, Voltaire, Heine, Bai Juyi and Du Fu” are among the famous “poets in exile” in the history of world literature (ibid. 35-36). Brecht saw himself as one of these great poets, expelled, uprooted from his homeland and forced into exile. From the ancient kingdom of poetry, China, Brecht saw that “Li Bai went into exile at least once, Du Fu at least twice, and Bai Juyi at least three times” (ibid. 455). The image of Bai Juyi as an “exile” is not only seen and repeated by Brecht, but for the exile Brecht is able to gain a spiritual and emotional bond with it, which in turn confirms that in the history of world literature, the only way for all great poets to find the the light for the future truth in the darkest of times is to go through exile.

3. Dare to imagine:

Pursuing spiritual transcendence from Lao Tzu

Although Brecht's exposure to Chinese culture first began with poetry and was so fond of the “exiled poet” Bai Juyi, he was “most interested in Chinese culture, especially Taoism” (Zhan Xianghong & Zhang Chengquan, 2016, p. 333). Already in 1925, before his exile, Brecht had shown an interest in Lao Tzu, the founder of the Taoist doctrine. He had already briefly described the story of Lao Tzu's writing of the *Tao Te Ching* in *Die höflichen Chinesen*. In 1938, while living in exile in Denmark, Brecht again wrote a narrative poem directly named after Lao Tzu, *Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking*, which is one of the best known entries in his exile poetry collection, *The Svendborg Poems*. In the poem, Brecht refers to Lao Tzu as “the old man”, “the wise man” and “the master”, emphasising firstly that Lao Tzu was a Chinese wise man with an open mind, and secondly, giving a specific account of the reason for the wise man's departure: “The

Master was forced to stay away from the hustle and bustle. Because goodness in the state has returned to decline and evil has returned” (Wei Maoping & Ma Jiabin, 2002, p. 283-285). It is clear that the wise man was forced to stay away from exile because of the poor state of society. And the life of this wise man in exile was very difficult: “The old man was barefoot and dressed in torn clothes. There was only one wrinkle on his forehead, and it seemed that success had not taken care of him” (ibid.). These descriptions are largely consistent with the archetypal story of Lao Tzu's journey west from the Hangu Pass, and this rewriting suggests that Lao Tzu has officially entered the textual vision of Brecht's exile.

Brecht turned this short story into a narrative poem in the form of a question and answer session, and added a cow and a child servant as a surrogate for Lao Tzu (Wei Maoping & Chen Hongyan, 2015, p. 157). However, on his way out of the Pass, Lao Tzu took with him a “pipe” and “white bread”, both of which were European specialties. One could dare to speculate that perhaps Brecht in exile was the very image of the “white bread entrance” and “pipe in hand”, after all his 1940 book *In Exile* mentions “a box with smoking utensils and brass ashtrays. / Draped with a Chinese scroll painting of a ‘sceptic’” (Brecht, 1987, p. 194), which, as such, is rather like a self-portrait of Brecht: like Lao Tzu, he was forced to leave his homeland and walk in exile, often in the same difficult circumstances.

In this imagination and processing, Brecht also realizes that Lao Tzu, a wise man once revered in China, would also go into exile, and thus finally chose to “move around the black pine and go into the deep mountains”. There is no doubt that “reclusion” was the final destination of Lao Tzu's life, and Brecht did not rewrite it, suggesting that he was in agreement with Lao Tzu's final choice. As 1938 was the most difficult period of Brecht's exile, the re-entry of Lao Tzu into Brecht's vision at this time undoubtedly has an important meaning of spiritual self-help and inner transcendence: deep in the lowest valley of the dark times, why would Brecht not want to “escape from the world” like the wise Lao Tzu in order to achieve self-transcendence? Thus, in another of Brecht's poems in

exile, *Poems and Songs*, he writes a poem entitled *An die Nachgeborenen* (1938): “Ich wäre gerne auch weise./ In den alten Büchern steht, was weise ist:/ Sich aus dem Streit der Welt halten und die kurze Zeit/ Ohne Furcht verbringen/ Auch ohne Gewalt auskommen/ Böses mit Gutem vergelten” (Brecht, 1967, p. 723). The “alten Büchern” (ancient book), “Sich aus dem Streit der Welt halten und die kurze Zeit” (free from the world) and “Ohne Furcht verbringen” (living a life free from fear) here seem to correspond to a reference to the *Tao Te Ching* and the idea of “inner transcendence”.

The life experiences and attitudes of the Chinese wise man Lao Tzu brought Brecht a new kind of inspiration. Unlike the psychological resonance and inspiration he received from Bai Juyi at the beginning of his exile, this is a spiritual revelation of self-transcendence that Brecht received from the wise Lao Tzu during the most difficult period of his exile. In the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu considers the Tao to be the origin of the world. And if one wants to escape from the distractions of this reality and return to one's origin, one can find inspiration in Lao Tzu. This is why Adolf Reichwein (a German sociologist who was a persecuted exile at the same time) pointed out that:

The Tao Te Ching thus becomes a bridge to the East for modern man. who now, after all the noise of this mechanical world, needs to return to his origin, and Lao Tzu taught him to overcome the superficial world in the Tao. The cry for a return to the origin of life in our time has an answer there (Reichwein, 1923, pp. 9-10).

4. Let go experiment: seeking inspiration for “Verfremdung” from Chinese opera

The Good Man of Sichuan is a creative experiment by the exiled Brecht in his theory of “Verfremdung”(defamiliarization or alienation), and a renewed attempt to assimilate Chinese culture.

Knopf argues it is because “the allegorical form of *The Good Man of Sichuan*, which is not commonly understood, may offer the possibility of an experiment in letting go” (Knopf, 2018, p. 393). Brecht himself notes in a small quote after the play, “*The Good Man of Sichuan* is the twenty-seventh attempt” (Brecht, 1985, p. 153). The Chinese elements embodied in the play are evident not only in the arrangement of characters and locations, but also in its clever borrowing of the artistic techniques and performance forms of traditional Chinese opera.

Firstly, in terms of form, *The Good Man of Sichuan* draws on the “wedges” of Yuan opera. Old Wang, a water seller, who assumes the role of “wedge”: to introduce the main text or to supplement it. Wang opens with a full page and a half of “monologues” in which he introduces himself:

I'm a water seller in Sichuan province. It's a tough job for me! When there is a shortage of water, I have to go far and wide to collect it, and when there is no shortage of water, I can't earn a penny. Besides, our ‘Land of Heaven’ is too poor and too miserable (Brecht, 1985, p. 3).

The opening monologue of *The Good Man of Sichuan* draws on the Chinese Yuan opera's technique of “announcing oneself”, in which Lao Wang gives a brief account of his identity as a water seller who has descended to Sichuan in search of a good man. Whereas in traditional Western drama the identity and experiences of the characters are mainly presented through dialogue and the development of the plot itself, Chinese opera characters often “announce themselves” when they appear on stage, introducing their identity and background and recounting the “antecedents” to the plot of the play. Therefore, Yu Kuangfu points out that: “this is a prominent narrative feature of Chinese opera, and it is also commonly used in Brecht's plays” (Yu Kuang-fu, 2001, p. 267).

Secondly, Brecht often includes singing in the body of his plays. “Singing is an important part of the art of Chinese opera, so Chinese opera consists of a strong lyricism” (Zhang Li, 2004, p. 124). For example, in the third section, “Evening in the Park”, when Shen

De and Yang Xun are on a date in the rain, the author instead arranges the old Wang, the water seller, who sings a song; The Song of the Water Seller in the Rain: “I’m selling water today, the rain is pouring down; to sell some water, I’m running down a long street, now I’m shouting: ‘I’m selling water! But no one cares and no one buys the water by drinking and drinking’” (Brecht, 1985, p. 49).

The inclusion of these songs not only adds to the lyricism of the play, but also tends to “loosen” the structure of the play, as Brecht’s ultimate aim is to break the Aristotelian emotion “Einfühlung”, in favour of the “Verfremdung” of emotion, and thus to realise his “Epische Theater” in order to distinguish it from the Aristotelian “Dramatisches Theater”.

Finally, one of Brecht’s most significant references to Chinese opera in *The Good Man of Sichuan* is his ingenious use of the “mask” prop and his use of the female character Shen De as a woman dressed as a man to move the story forward. In the play, Brecht arranges for Shen De to play two roles, being Shen De when she is the good guy, and wearing a mask when she becomes her evil cousin Cui Da: “Shen De comes out with Cui Da’s mask and clothes in her hand and sings ‘It’s hard to fight a good man who is a god...’” (Brecht, 1985, p. 65).

Shen De changes her clothes and “dresses up as a man” to become Cui Da. It is particularly like the creative appropriation of the theatrical performance technique he had seen in the Soviet Union, where the master Mei Lanfang changed his clothes and make-up to become a “man dressed as a woman”. It is no wonder that Brecht’s wife, Helen Weigel, said: “The blood of Chinese art is in Brecht’s theatre” (Brecht, 1990, p. 9).

Of course, Brecht found useful elements in Chinese opera and performance forms for his theory of “Verfremdung” and “Epische Theater”, and therefore experimented with plays containing Chinese elements, such as *The Good Man of Sichuan*, which were not essentially Brecht had a Chinese complex, as he once said: “It is not easy to recognize the effect of defamiliarization in Chinese opera as a moveable technique” (Brecht, 1990, p. 198). Thus, for Brecht Chinese opera is only his way of achieving the “Verfremdungseffekte”(defamiliarization-effect), breaking the illusion of the tradi-

tional theatre stage, breaking the emotional resonance of the audience, and thus provoking them to think and reflect on real life as a valuable form of theatre creation to draw on.

Conclusion

While Brecht drew on the ideology and culture of his “Chinese role models”, he also continued to reflect on his own experience of exile, and one might even say that the two were essentially isomorphic. In the early days of his exile, Brecht was inspired by his creative retranslation of the exiled poet Bai Juyi and was brave enough to engage in social reflection and criticism. In the darkest moments of his exile, when the Nazi forces in Germany were becoming more and more rampant, Brecht was able to save himself spiritually and achieve inner transcendence through his imagination and processing of the wise man Lao Tzu. The final publication of *The Good Man of Sichuan*, after fleeing four countries, shows that Brecht's reference to “Chinese role models” has shifted boldly from individual characters to the art of Chinese opera. As a theatrical experiment based entirely on Chinese settings, characters, places and even forms, Brecht was not motivated by a particular Chinese complex, but rather in the service of his theatre theory of “defamiliarization” and in the service of German society at the time.

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The Wu Wei (inaction) Thought of Daoism and its Influence on German Literature in the 1920s

Taking *Siddhartha* and *The Magic Mountain* as Examples

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Abstract:

The thought of Wu Wei (inaction) is an important part of Daoism. In the aspect of governing the country, it means that the monarch should not act rashly but should try to reach the realm of “when you need do nothing, there is nothing you cannot do”. In terms of individual behaviour, it contains the thoughts of transcending opposites, conforming to the laws of nature and complying with Dao. Using the method of influence studies, this paper will study how Chinese culture, especially Taoist thought, influenced German literature and thought in the 1920s in terms of social history and academic trends. Then, using the method of reception studies, this paper will take Hesse's *Siddhartha* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* as examples to explore the cultural factors and psychological logic behind the two different manifestations of Daoist "Wu Wei" thought in German literature in the 1920s.

Keywords: Daoism, Wu Wei, German literature, Hesse, Thomas Mann

I. Germany and Chinese Culture in the 1920s

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was an important stage in the modern history of Germany. Through the Second Industrial Revolution at the end of the 19th century, Germany rapidly completed its transformation from an agricultural to an industrial country and became a capitalist powerhouse in one fell swoop. Along with the country's rapid transformation and rapid progress, Germans' national enthusiasm, racial consciousness, cultural self-confidence, as well as the momentum of colonial expansion were on the rise. Around the outbreak of World War I, German society, like other warring nations, was caught up in the fervor of war. Some intellectuals even declared that "the Great War will finally put an end to the cultural struggle between Germany and Britain and will put heroic Germany on top of the world" (Meng, 2012, p. 214). The course of the war, however, was a major disappointment to the Germans. Faced with the devastation and the defeat of the war, Germany was inevitably plunged into social unrest and economic crisis.

Faced with a sharp turn in the country's fortunes, the intellectual community was even more plunged into an unprecedented cultural uncertainty. "While the victorious countries could look back with satisfaction on their culture, which had proven its legitimacy by the war, Germany, as a defeated country, had to painfully review its cultural traditions" (Wei, 1996, p. 330). At this time in Germany, old values began to disintegrate. European civilization, which symbolized the light of humanity, began to be questioned, and the question about connotation of German nationhood and national spirit was constantly raised.

In the 1920s, Germany (Weimar Republic) gradually entered a period of relative stability, known as the "Golden Decade". The domestic economy gradually recovered, and the "Weimar culture" flourished. In the face of social change and cultural uncertainty, various ideas and "isms" blossomed in Germany. During this period, the Republic became a "testing ground for multiculturalism".

"Whenever the generally aggressive European spirit reached a warlike, military climax and began to change abruptly, there came from the East a calming, inward-looking and enriching wave of spiritual thought" (Wilhelm, 1973, p. 166). At this time Germany needed to examine and reflect on itself, and the spirit of the East was precisely "inwardly inclined". Thus, the eyes of the German intelligentsia once again turned to the East, especially to classical Chinese culture. Its attitude toward China and Chinese culture also changed from the previous "Yellow Peril" theory, and began to try to engage in intercultural dialogue and learning, trying to find a way to the light for Germany and even Europe.

The first scholar who played an important role in the "Oriental fever" in Germany during this period was Richard Wilhelm. As far as he was concerned, the so-called East meant almost China. Because Turkish-Arabic culture in general belonged to Western culture, Indian culture had lost its substantively spiritual life. Therefore, the "East" to which the Western intelligentsia turned referred to a large extent to classical Chinese cultural thought. During his stay in China, which coincided with 22 years of dramatic change in Germany (1899-1920). Richard Wilhelm studied Chinese culture extensively and translated almost all the important classics of ancient Chinese philosophy. By the end of the 1920s, he had translated and published in Germany: *Analects* (1910), *Dao Te Ching* (1911), *Lie Zi* (1912), *Zhuang Zi* (1912), *Mencius* (1916), *The Great Learning* (1920), *I Ching* (1924), and *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* (1928). Through his translations and research works, Chinese culture and philosophical thought were widely disseminated in Germany and the West, thus exerting a profound influence on the entire social trend of thought.

Through Wei Lixian, the image of China in Germany changed completely (Bauer, 1973). "For the German people, he became the interpreter of the ancient Chinese sages. Thanks to his remarkable and understandable translations, the quotations of the ancient Chinese sages became a real household name in Germany. In these times of despair and inner division, anyone who found refuge in the

writings of Confucius and Lao Tzu would have respected him as a gifted translator" (Wilhelm, 1956, p. 123). German intellectual and literary circles in the 1920s were generally exposed to Chinese culture.

II. German Literature and Daoist "Wu Wei" Thought in the 1920s

Among the richness of Chinese culture, the Daoist idea of "Wu Wei" received particular attention from German writers in the early 20th century. The Daoist concept of "Wu Wei" appears mainly in *Dao Te Ching* and *Zhuang Zi*. In *Dao Te Ching*, the word "Wu Wei" appears 14 times and refers mainly to the way of ruling by emperors or sages, i.e. "ruling without doing anything". In *Zhuangzi*, the word "Wu Wei" appears 43 times and enriches the meaning of "Wu Wei" to a certain extent. Of the 43 "Wu Wei", only 13 are used to refer to the basic methods and principles of ruling by emperors or sages, while the remaining 31 are mainly used to refer to the behavior of personal cultivation or the realm of the Dao (Wang, 2005).

In 1915, the famous writer Alfred Döblin published the Chinese novel *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lung* (The Three Leaps of Wang Lun), for which he won the Fontana Prize. In 1919, Krabond published his book *Triad*, in which he expressed his admiration for Lao Tzu and directly praised the ideological principle of "Wu Wei" in many chapters. In the same year, he adapted the *Dao Te Ching* and completed the poem *Lao Tzu*. It can be seen that the German literary works that incorporated the idea of "Wu Wei" in Daoism during this period were mainly "reproductions" of Chinese literary works. They usually adapted Chinese stories and literary works to convey their understanding of the idea of "Wu Wei". The German literary works that absorbed the idea of Daoism's "Wu Wei" during this period were mainly "reproductions" of Chinese literature, i.e., they were adapted from Chinese stories and literature to convey their understanding of "Wu Wei".

By the 1920s, there was a general shift in the way the idea of "Wu Wei" was presented in literature. In such literary works as Tolle's *The Masses and the Man* (1921), Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924), Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922), and *Steppenwolf* (1927), the Daoist idea of "Wu Wei" was already integrated into the traditional themes and non-Chinese backgrounds. Most of these works are about the choice and the path of redemption in the face of the spiritual crisis of the times. The writers wrote about Eastern culture, often with the aim of exploring the future direction of German and even European civilization. In these works, the ideological meaning and presentation of "Wu Wei" can be roughly divided into two types: some writers identified the core of the idea of "Wu Wei", that is, that one should follow the laws of development. They took it as the highest wisdom and guiding principle of life. They even integrate the idea of "Wu Wei" with other philosophical and religious concepts, showing a kind of humanistic concern beyond religion and culture, such as Hesse's *Siddhartha*; some writers still held a Eurocentric attitude (although they might not have realized it) and summarize the whole Eastern civilization with the characteristics of "backwardness" and "irrationality". They interpreted "Wu Wei" in terms of "old-fashioned". It can be seen that while they actively paid attention to Eastern culture and tried to learn Eastern philosophy, they subconsciously rejected foreign cultures, such as Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*.

(I) The *Siddhartha*

The novel "*Siddhartha*" is divided into two parts. The first part is based on the legend of the Buddha's self-torture, while the second part tells the story of Siddhartha's other path of practice. *Siddhartha* is a rich and noble Brahmin. But he was distressed because he had not found "himself", so he started an ascetic practice to seek the path of the eternal "self". Three years of austerity did not produce the results Siddhartha expected, so he left his friends and the Buddha behind and went on his own to begin another kind of practice. He wandered around the busy city, met famous prostitutes and became a rich merchant. Then he understood that the only way

the prodigal son and the rich man in him could die was to first experience worldly life and taste desire. After his epiphany, he went to the river. The river and the boatman, Vishudeva, are the representatives of "purity and inactivity". The river's surface is unperturbed but it is all-encompassing and flows eternally. The boatman, Vishudeva, spent his entire life gazing at and listening to the river. His figure is just like Lao Tzu. In the end, by listening to the river, *Siddhartha* achieved the realm of "unity of heaven and man" and completed his search for the "self".

In a letter to Helena Welty, Hesse said: "The end of *Siddhartha* is more akin to Daoist philosophy than to Indian influence" (Hesse, 2001, p. 28). Siddhartha's path to unity is based on an epiphany of the meaning of "Wu Wei". We can find the Daoist thought throughout the novel's plot: Through the forcible action, we cannot seek true knowledge or know ourselves. Only by following one's own rhythm and the laws of development can one achieve the state of "nothing to be done" through "doing nothing".

In *Siddhartha*, the Daoist idea of "Wu Wei" is integrated with Indian Buddhism. It is the way of "Wu Wei" that helps Siddhartha achieve soul enlightenment in his Buddhist practice. As Hesse said, "For a long time I have been working on something like to this, wrapped in an Indian veneer, originating in Brahman and Buddha and ending in the 'Dao'" (Baand, 1986, p. 158). In the novel, Siddhartha took the sound of "Om" as the starting point to trace the self, and then discovered that "whether it is meditation, or detachment from the body, or fasting and breath-holding, these practices of escaping from the self are only a brief break from the pain of the self, no more than a brief paralysis against the pain and absurdity of life" (Zhang & Yu, 2010, p. 300). After "enlightenment," he rejected dogma and focused on the experience of oneness. He realized the wisdom about harmony by the method of "Wu Wei". The realm of Brahman, which Siddhartha eventually reached, has unconsciously evolved into the world of the Dao.

Hesse himself attached great importance to and actively absorbed the culture and philosophy of the East, and the ideas of

Daoism were often seen as the highest inspiration in his novels. But for Hesse, Eastern wisdom was not the end of his search for himself, nor was it the only solution to Europe's spiritual crisis. What he sought was a kind of love that transcended all religions, "the common denominator of all human piety and good deeds" (Hesse, 2000, p. 287). Hesse once said: "In my *Siddhartha*, it is not knowledge, but love, that occupies the highest place... One could see these as a return to Christianity and as a truly Protestant trait" (Hesse, 2018, p. 72). Thus, the story of *Siddhartha* is the Buddhist path of practice on the surface, but at its core the Daoist search for "Wu Wei", and in general the Christian search for the "New Evangelization". The question he explored through "Wu Wei" is the way out of the spiritual crisis in the West.

(II) *The Magic Mountain*

The Magic Mountain tells the story of a German university student, Hans Castorp, who visited his cousin at an alpine lung sanatorium, but contracted lung disease and spent seven years on the "Magic Mountain". The "Magic Mountain" is inhabited by people of the leisure class from all over the world. There was the unconventional, free-spirited Russian woman Madame Clawdia Chauchat, the ignorant, flirtatious Mrs. Stel, the learned "defender of European culture" Lodovico Settembrini, and the Jewish Naphta who scoffed at European civilization and order. Hans lived in the circle of life where East meets West. The clash and conflict between East and West was categorized in Thomas Mann's writing as a conflict between reason and irrationality, health and disease.

The book reads: "According to Settembrini, there are two principles in the world that are often in a state of resistance. These are power and justice, tyranny and freedom, superstition and wisdom, the principle of conformity and the principle of constant change, that is, the principle of progress. People call the former the Asian principle and the latter the European principle. Europe is the land of rebellion, criticism and change, while the Eastern continent embodies the spirit of purity and immutability. There is no doubt as to which of the two forces will prevail, and it is only by the power

of enlightenment that victory can logically be achieved" (Mann, 1991, p. 211).

Settambrini relentlessly attributed power, tyranny, superstition and conformity to Asia and justice, freedom, wisdom and progress to Europe. He regarded the course of world development as a struggle between these two forces, and foretold the triumph of the "principle of progress". He also added, "But before this can be achieved, that Asian principle of servility and conformity must be defeated once and for all..." (Mann, 1991, p. 212).

The Eastern culture, which symbolizes "irrationality", refers to a large extent to China. Settambrini went on to say: "Hey, no, I'm European, Western, and your program is purely Eastern. Easterners are afraid of activity. Lao Tzu has this teaching: Pure inactivity is more beneficial than anything in heaven and earth. If all people in the world did nothing, there would be peace and happiness on earth. Then you will have what is called divine fellowship" (Mann, 1991, p. 529). Thomas Mann himself once said, "Settambrini is sometimes even the author's sounding board" (Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1984, p. 790). It is clear that in the work, the idea of "inaction" is not only related to the "fear of activity" "immutability" and "inaction", but even represents the core of the whole "irrational" culture of the East.

The author conveys the curiosity and exploration of a new generation of young people about the East through Hans's love for Madame Chauchat, but also through the mouth of Settambrini, who arbitrarily dismissed the backwardness of Eastern civilization, especially the misinterpretation and unrelenting criticism of the idea of "Wu Wei". This reflects the views and opinions of many thinkers and literary scholars of the time, as Wilhelm once said, "Although people play a clever game of promises, they still fundamentally regard China as a second-class black country; although people try with all their strength and all their means to arouse the demand for European culture in non-European countries, it is only for the better sale of this purpose, which has to do with the European cultural-psychological structure" (Wilhelm, 1973, p. 191-192). "Europe

forced the world to accept the imperialist principle of power by which it ruled," and at the same time, because of "the primitive instinct of each cultural circle to scorn the alien as barbaric" (Wilhelm, 1973, p. 192). Even though the German spiritual world turned to China again and again, many writers and thinkers spoke of Chinese literature or culture with a certain sneering tone and condescending attitude. What is hidden behind this is a subconscious instinct to reject alien civilizations (Wilhelm, 1973, p. 197). At the end of *The Magic Mountain*, the World War I began, and Hans, feeling that he has been "asleep" on the "Magic Mountain" for seven years, resolutely set out for the front. "On the battlefield, Hans was looking for the signposts, but he was blurred by the obscure light. Is it east or west?" (Mann, 1991, p. 1013). In the face of this question of the times, Hans was at a loss. The author does not see the answer either. However, the author's complex attitude permeates the plot of the novel. Faced with the decline of the West, the author looks to the East, but subconsciously rejects foreign civilizations. In the novel, "Wu Wei" is equated with "irrationality", which is the imagination of Thomas Mann and other European writers about the East, and also the obscuring of Eastern culture.

III Conclusion

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Europe was in a period of change in its socioeconomic structure and a period of transformation of traditional thought. Germany experienced rapid development, rapid decline, institutional change and post-war reconstruction in just a few decades. Faced with the chaotic social reality and the spiritual crisis of traditional civilization, the German intellectual community and thought circles began to "lean inward" and "turn eastward". In the 1920s, Germany was filled with the spread and practice of multiculturalism, and the translations of the scholar Richard Wilhelm were widely disseminated, which immediately set off an "Oriental fever" in German intellectual circles.

Among the richness of Chinese culture, the Daoist idea of "Wu Wei" was of particular interest to German writers in the early 20th century. By the 1920s, it had already been incorporated into traditional German literary themes and representations of non-Chinese contexts. Most of these works were about choices and redemption from the spiritual crisis of the times, and the writers drew on Eastern culture and embodied it in their works, often with the aim of exploring the future direction of German and even European civilization.

In these works, the ideological meaning and embodiment of "Wu Wei" can be roughly divided into two types: the first one, the writer explored the "non-delusional" core of the idea of "Wu Wei" and takes it as the highest wisdom and guiding principle of life. For example, in Hesse's *Siddhartha*, "Wu Wei" not only serves as a key element and core for finding true knowledge, but the author even integrates the idea of "Wu Wei" with other philosophical and religious concepts, showing a kind of humanistic concern beyond religion and culture. "Wu Wei" serves as a path that leads to the ultimate beyond religion. At the end of this path lies the "Tao", "God" and "Brahman". The difference between them is no longer important, what matters is the realization of love and the unity of the self. Other writers still harbored a Eurocentric attitude, covering the entire Eastern civilization with the characteristics of "backwardness" and "irrationality", and interpreting "Wu Wei" in terms of "conformity". For example, in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, the idea of "Wu Wei" becomes a generalization symbolizing the irrational civilization of the East. This search for Eastern wisdom and the incomplete cognition of Daoist thought constitutes the inner tension of the text, showing us the contradiction of the author's desire to seek new methods of salvation and his inability to get rid of the Eurocentric mentality. Different writers' interpretations of Chinese cultural thought are surely closely related to their personal experiences, but the writers' ideas and the themes of their works are also inseparable from the overall trend of the times. The different interpretations, expressions and views of the idea of "Wu

Wei" in *Siddhartha* and *The Magic Mountain* reflect the two different attitudes of the literary and intellectual circles during the "Oriental fever" in the German intellectual circles in the 1920s. In the face of ancient Chinese philosophy and culture, whether admired or criticized, German literary scholars actively considered how Western civilization could be regenerated and revived. They showed the paths and provided references for the integration and transcendence of Chinese and Western cultures. At the same time, their works also provided implications for exploring how Chinese thought can be effectively disseminated and actively dialogued.

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Translation and Identity Formation in Transcultural Communicating Practice – Chinese Heterotopia in Kafka’s ‘the Great Wall of China’

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Abstract:

In this paper, I analyse the representation of China in the twentieth – century in the prose and poetry of two modernist authors through the textual tensions among utopia/ dystopia/heterotopia, specifically Franz Kafka’s ‘The Great Wall of China’ (1917) and Ezra Pound’s *The Cantos* (1885 – 1972) and *Cathay* (1915). Drawing on Foucault’s concept of heterotopia as a way of thinking about space in real and imaginary terms, as well as its political implications, I consider the two writers to translate China into utopias/heterotopias for their own identity formation. This approach allows my paper to make observations about the poetics of each author, the modernist reception of China in terms of cultural translation, and the translatability of Chinese thought in terms of intermediality. This paper identifies the atemporality in both authors’ approach to China, revealing the dispassionate identification of Chinese and Jewish culture in Kafka versus the subjective identification of real and imaginary China in Pound. I analyse the gaps between the superimposed factual plane and imagination, in order to examine how they translate, accept Chinese culture and philosophy in the horizon and crisis of modernity, how they speak of ‘China’ (textual China) for the aim of mirroring the self, how Chinese philosophy is transplanted as medicine (Pound) for the modern European spirit. Drawing on a broad range of research, this paper synthesises and brings into dialogue scholarship on hermeneutics, aesthetics, and cultural studies in several different languages. I propose to reinvigorate utopia’s inherently critical nature as critical utopias, heterotopia and meta – utopia being involved as emanations. The

synthesising remarks that compare Kafka with Pound will show that they are both conducting comparative studies, transcultural interpretations; they both reject unifying views of identity, and both accept Chinese poetics, philosophy in a formal and spiritual sense.

Keywords: Kafka, Heterotopia, Utopia, (Cultural) Translation

I. Discursive formation of utopia/dystopia/heterotopia

In this essay, I analyse Western representations of China in the twentieth-century through the textual tensions among utopia/dystopia/heterotopia, specifically Franz Kafka's 'The Great Wall of China' (1917). I consider that Kafka translates China into utopias/heterotopias for his own identity formation. I analyse the gaps between the superimposed factual plane and imagination, in order to examine how he translates, accepts Chinese culture and philosophy in the horizon and crisis of modernity, how he speaks of 'China' (textual China)¹ for the aim of mirroring the self. I propose to reinvigorate utopia's inherently critical nature as critical utopias, heterotopia and meta-utopia being involved as emanations. Via the displacement of (premodern) China as a concept, his heterotopia represents, contesting reality. My analysis will show that he is con-

¹Looking back to early modern Europe, China functioned as an ideal society for its well-ordered governance, respectful reception which contributed to the formation of Enlightenment political theories (Brandt and Purdy, 2016). The conceptions are both favorable (Leibniz) and negative (Montesquieu, Hegel), the negative providing archetypes to the Chinese images in Kafka's case, where the 'textual China' (Tautz, 2016, p.119) crucially functions via translation. The romantic conviction, the Orient Other is foreign yet familiar to the self in terms of symbolising a lost golden age that could be regained (Prager, 2014, p.128), relates the deep-seated utopian impulse to the history of Orientalism.

ducting comparative studies, transcultural interpretations; he rejects unifying views of identity, and accepts Chinese poetics, philosophy in formal and spiritual senses.

As a genre, utopia generally refers to an imaginary place with a vision of good society, embodying nuanced alternative societies. Dystopias dominated as a utopian genre in the twentieth-century specifically in the 1930s (Sargent, 2010, p. 29), projecting a vicious yet actual facet of our real existence and attacking capitalism. Having its fount in utopias, Foucault's heterotopias refer to existent spaces or effectively actualised utopias where incompatible spaces are juxtaposed, reflecting the normality and the abjection and being expected to have transformative potential to our real society; or to literary spaces, a 'non-place of language' disturbing people, in which (even less apparent) syntax is destroyed (Foucault, 2002, p. XVIII-XIX). Foucault's concept 'heterotopia' is not well established. Nevertheless, we can get fruitful interpretations with existing elucidation. Overarchingly, the Foucauldian heterotopia is a spatial term, in which domain we shall unfold the introduction. Foucault promotes this concept to showcase relational cultural spaces that interact with one another. He focuses on marginalised areas in dominant society to expose the center-peripheral relation at a spatial level. After Foucault's assertion, the twentieth-century is an 'epoch/age of space', spatial study occasions a 'reassertion of space' (Tally, 2017, p. 2).

I accentuate two central points before the detailed elaboration. One is heterotopia's relationship to utopias, and the empathic imagination thereof. Foucault differentiates heterotopia from utopia. Notwithstanding, heterotopia manifests affinity to utopia. Jameson effectively relates utopia to the impulse of its actualisation – utopia is 'the task for the future' (Jameson, 1977, p. 3). Utopia is never an idealistic fancy but embedded with political implications. Heterotopia refers to contemporaneity, the simultaneous co-existence of heterotopias and normal spaces, highlighting otherness and the alternative. Utopias have the ultimate impetus, while heterotopias can be considered very virtual, not revolutionary as Foucault hopes, and even has been confined within the literature. Trying to

tackle the problem that the less established idea 'heterotopia' is both real and imaginary, Knight accentuates heterotopia's literary origin in Foucault's terminology (Knight, 2017). The other, although this paper contends that heterotopias are not as critically powerful as utopias, it argues that writers' employments of heterotopias can effectively surpass the limit of the terminology.

This paper discusses specifically literary heterotopias in the light of Kafka's story to elaborate how textual heterotopia is constructed in literary works as literary deployments to produce a counter-discourse with political and representational connotations. The thrust of the paper is how the concept of heterotopia can be useful in examining artistic responses to contemporary and historical spaces that tackle queries of personal and cultural identity, and realistic values of these constructed heterotopias in terms of evocating effective responses, like reader's contemplations, thus causing a cognitive reformation through new ways of imaging spaces.

Kafka's text can be considered as a practice of *poiesis* (Aristotle)¹, referring to creating and making, as opposed to the mimetic mode: Kafka's China lives on the peripheral edge of time and space, symbolising an enclave infused with Taoism. He expects writing as a cultural practice to have political capacities. Through his self-conscious translation, reception, appropriation, and variation of Chinese culture and philosophy play crucial roles in their identity formation and my inquiry into his modernist cultural anxiety. My analysis will suggest the results of his identity-seeking: Kafka embodies the rejection of continuative and unifying views of identity, and his identity arrives in no place; China may not be the ostensible true homeland.

Literary spaces help to overcome confinements of a given cultural actuality (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, p. 8) and create relationships of intimacy, in the first place. The exotic spaces² in modernist

1 Aristotle et al, 2002, pp.xi-xxx.

2 The 'exotic' can be an implicit criticism of Weber's identification of rationalisation and intellectualisation as essential characteristic of modern Occidental culture (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, p.6).

texts have been positively interpreted as contesting and recoding of the relationship between the exotic and the familiar (*ibid*, p. 2), resonating with the mechanism of Foucauldian heterotopia and literary configurations to be discussed. Kontje's 'German Orientalisms' describes German writers' oscillation between identifying with Europe and the East (Kontje, 2004, pp. 2-3), highlighting the Oriental literary geography's role in national identity shaping. While a 'nonoccupational imperialism' reflected in colonial discourse and imagination's power of constructing the self is accentuated, and German's prevailing search for identity and Germanness as a result of their failures in the desire of nation and the intertwined desire of empire is contended (Zantop et al, 1998), Kafka, with a destabilised, composite identity, excludes himself from a single mold, either of the scholarly or western hegemony¹.

Simon (1996) identifies a cultural turn in translation studies, noting that translation is a process of re-writing and cultural creation within a social-historical context, instead of merely a bridge between cultural entities. Contextualising chosen texts indicates the verification of the collaboration of translation theory and spatial theory concerning utopias, namely thinking about translating China into a postulated utopia/heterotopia. I have chosen Kafka because he does transcultural literary practice in the modernist era, a historical period that denotes a shared crisis of modernity and the search for identity. He self-consciously and self-reflectively conducts cultural translation. Translating and writing represent pivotal themes rather than merely a medium for him, through which variations in cultural reception ensue, the writer's identity is shaped, and his subjectivity of reconstructing culture emanate. Despite the ubiquity of tension between utopia/dystopia in the chosen work, the question of conceiving utopia/heterotopia as a stylistic strategy of cultural

¹ Kafka deals with diverse Orientalisms, such as Zionism, Jewishness; the Orient also means Palestine, Egyptian (middle-east) (Brunotte et al., 2014), Slavic culture. Buber appropriates Taoism to reinterpret Judaism as an Orient culture (Librett, 2016, pp.82-183). Benjamin argues, Kafka's works are the battlefield of Judaism and Taoism (Goebel, 1997, p.6).

translation by the writer has received little attention. I consider utopias as self-critical, possessing inherent dialectics containing imperfection, conflicts, referring to the ultimate utopian impulse. I set up 'critical utopias', reinvigorating utopias' innate critical nature.

Spatial analysis of the chosen writers' texts has emerged from scholarships yet occupies a minor position. The dynamics among utopian tensions scrutinised through the lens of translation to examine its relationship with modernist identity has not been thoroughly and comparatively studied. Thomas More coined 'utopia', containing 'ou-topia (οὐ-τόπος, non-place) and Eutopia (good-place)', to link it with ideal political system. Utopia signifies transcendent ideas which have a transforming effect on the existing historical-social order (Mannheim, 1998, p. 185). There may lie dystopian factors in apparent utopian narratives (Sargent, 2010, p. 30). In the light of Sargent's differentiation between utopianism and the genre 'utopia', I consider dystopia not as an essentialist antithesis but an inside critical tension. I borrow 'meta-utopia' to emphasise utopias' innate self-critical impetus, which I term as 'critical utopias'. In 'meta-utopia', utopia and its parody, anti-utopia, enter into an inconclusive dialogue; meta-utopia solicits for reader's critical participation into the dialogue (Morson, 1981, p. 111/142). Utopian literary criticism is prone to be captive to science fiction, therefore, the ways in which the writers form their identities through utopias in the modernist context have yet to be explored.

Heterotopia, also derived from 'utopia', first appears in *The Order of Things* (1966), then gets its developed form in 'Of Other Spaces'¹ (1967). Drawing on Borges's quotation of a fake 'Chinese encyclopedia', Foucault proposes that knowledge built on Western order of reason exposes the limitation of Western thought, because there is no unified classification standard. It shows the impossibility of 'space' (where 'their propinquity would be possible'), because fantastic and real animals that are linked, overlapped, cannot find a common locus for residence (Foucault, 2002, pp. XVI-XIX). Fou-

¹'Different Spaces' is my version.

cault considers both utopias and heterotopias as emplacements that 'suspend, neutralise, or reverse¹ the ensemble of relations that are designated, represented, or reflected by them'; both are linked yet variant with all the other places (Foucault, 1998, p. 178). Heterotopias are distinguished from utopias: utopias are unreal, embodying perfected or inverted society; heterotopias are actual places, realised utopias, designed into institutions, in which 'the real emplacements within the culture are, simultaneously, represented, contested, and reversed², spaces that are outside all places despite being localisable' (ibid). Below are six principles of heterotopias:

1. Every culture establishes heterotopias with diverse forms and properties, e.g. heterotopias for people of deviant behavior (from the norms);
2. a society can make a heterotopia operate in a very different way;
3. heterotopia can juxtapose incompatible emplacements in a single real place;
4. with temporal discontinuities (heterochronias), e.g. accumulation of time, libraries;
5. simultaneously being isolated and penetrable by an open-close system;
6. a space of illusion that denounces all real space, emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as more illusory; a heterotopia of compensation, a real space as perfect, well-arranged as ours is disorganised (ibid, pp.179-184).

The literary heterotopia's 'impossibility' of thinking refers not to the fantastic, provided it is marked out, but to the indeterminacy between the fantastic and the actual. Social heterotopia denotes an in-between spatiality of actuality and places outside all the places. Both the requirement of an emphatic imagination, and the intersection between language and real space, hark back to utopia's characters. Foucault endows utopia with the unreality of passivity, but he homogenises utopia; he rather refers to utopianism. Foucault

¹Footnote 15.

² Six verbs in footnote 14/15 will be used to designate utopia/heterotopia's function.

signifies heterotopias as 'self-enclosed' (ibid, p.185), a traditional technique of utopias that has been interrogated and subverted. The self-negation and critical power in original utopias should not be obliterated; the latent utopianism of dystopia, as it is particularly pertinent to the twentieth-century west, should not be overlooked. Thus, I figure heterotopias as an emanation as dystopias in the utopian tradition, and argue for the recuperation of utopias as 'critical utopias', spaces endowed with critical self-reflection, embracing the two emanations.

II. Kafka's China heterotopia as an enclave with spiritual dimensions

Based on spatiality, namely utopia/dystopia/heterotopia, the gaps or understated gaps between symbolised China and known China, and between imaginary and the author's actual spaces will be scrutinised. I shall show how Kafka's interactions with the concept of China engender his literary deployments and affect his self-reflection on literature and translation as a process of either being or cultural transformation.

The multicultural factuality of Kafka submits his literature to an appropriate Foucauldian interpretation. In a broad sense, all the cultures constitute a world of heterotopias, because heterotopias describe a landscape of the coexistence of multiple cultures¹. For another, Kafka's stylistic ambiguity, discontinuities, which resist being fully deciphered, renders its literary space a heterotopia. The utopias/dystopias in the present text contain their opposites, tensions which render themselves a meta-utopia. Meta-utopia's 'hermeneutic perplexity' evoked by incompatible, heterogeneous materials (Morson, 1981, p.50), applies to Kafka's narrative paradoxes, and makes an analogue with heterotopia. So, heterotopia and meta-utopia sometimes overlap, functioning in utopia/dystopia with superimposed planes. The unfolding of the Chinese-box-like text

¹ All are the first principle.

spatialises the richness, ambiguities, and mythical colour of the novel's value orientation. The ambivalent faces of the oriental other mirror and conjoin the fragmented western self. I will analyse the paradoxical variety of nested interrelations in 'The Great Wall of China', and grasp the mental dimension. 'China' is chiefly evoked as a form but infused with Taoism.

A figure to help clarify how things are to develop is shown below:

Figure. Foucault's heterotopia VS Kafka's Great Wall of China

1. Diverse cultures	Southeast 'we' and purported northerners, whose coexistence transcends language (Rojas, 2015)
2. Disconnectedness	Textual disconnections, specifically an inserted independent 'An Imperial Message'
3. Juxtaposition of incompatible places	Double Empires of 'China' and Austria-Hungary; 'Chinese' nation and Jewish nation; literary/textual heterotopia of Chinese culture and real heterotopia of Hasidic/Yiddish culture
4. Temporal discontinuities	Empire of an unknown era, which is out of time and self-enclosed
5. Opening yet one is constrained when entering	Participation in constructing the Wall renders the peoples bewildered about their institution; Kafka's text itself, creation of heterotopia
6. Confusing and blurring the fictional and factual spaces; or heterotopias constructed by the sign system	Piecemeal structure for, supposedly, protecting against the northerners; self-referential text-based knowledge; meta-textuality

I shall analyse in detail how Kafka's heterotopian version of utopia deploys paralleled planes. It is pivotal concerning reading Western texts and their identity crises through writing on 'China', which through its broader structures can begin to piece together fractured identities, approaching the meta-utopia I am referencing firstly in terms of the literary entity.

The superimposed textual 'China' and actual Habsburg Empire represent a heterotopic aspect: heterotopia juxtaposes emplacements that are incompatible (Foucault, 1998, p.181), so it represents the 'ensemble of relations' that define the 'irreducible', 'non-superposable' emplacements (ibid, p. 178). In this story, 'China' is simultaneously an emblem of enchanting fantasy denoting a sense of community and solidarity (building a wall of nation), namely utopias, and an epitome of dystopias which reflects an actual world of the impenetrable confusion, ignorance of true knowledge, and chaos. Each utopia/dystopia is the superimposition of textual China and Kafka's factuality, which essentially constitutes inscrutability and unintelligibility. Focusing on dystopias, the Chinese are working in futility, because the fragmented Wall cannot fulfill its commitment to protecting the people; the Chinese suggest no individual will against the inefficiency of this inexpedient manipulation, because of the obedience to the postulated high command, and the blind nationalist optimism; they cannot get any truth about the construction or the Emperor; the truth is blurred, people do not doubt about any received knowledge (Kafka, 1946, p.89). The signifier, 'China' Empire, primarily stems from fantasy, since Kafka never visited China. The dystopias exhibit the Orientalist tropes from the accumulation of othering in textual China. For instance, Voltaire and Hegel said Chinese emperor ruled Chinese with his own universal will, a paternalism which infantilises the people (Germana, 2017, pp .155-156); this occasioned cultural stagnation (ibid, p. 21).

The heterotopia with the factual plane of the Habsburg Empire neutralises the orientalist ignorance, obedience of Chinese people. Kafka's Austro-Hungarian Empire constitutes the actual plane of

factuality. Kafka wrote this story when his interest in Zionism rose and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was torn apart by the war (Kontje, 2013, p. 62). Emperor Joseph was sanctified as the Austria-Hungary unity embodiment by the Habsburg myth (Shedel, 1990). Joseph is perceived as father of and gained allegiance from his peoples (Unowsky, 2005, p.7). The Orientalist tropes of loyal people, the patriarchy signifying dystopia are neutralised, because Joseph's image symbols the common identity (ibid, p.2) and peace for a super-national unity. Another textual source of Kafka's 'China', Dittmar's¹ travelogue, describes the Chinese as dirty; the emperor as the symbol of national unity (Goebel, 1997, p.67). The suggestive congruence between Chinese and Jewish nations constructs the analogous planes. Kafka saw poor living conditions and a 'lack of hygiene' in the constricted Jewish shtetls (Metz, 2004). His grieved description of the Jewish emigrants: waiting for the bread, spreading something 'edible' (Kafka, 1999, p. 191), is reflected in the Chinese at the 'thronged side street' 'munching the food' (Kafka, 1946, p. 90). As the two nations, Ch'ing and Austro-Hungarian Empire are rendered an implied specious analogy for their allegedly similar decadence. The point is the frontier between the imagination and the actual planes is rendered indecisive. Moreover, being highlighted of its textuality, this heterotopia suspends the referentiality of orientalist tropes² and the relationships behind them. The naming of 'legend', 'parable' by the narrator when relating the story of the Great Wall of China and the accentuated textual, mediated knowledge of the northern Other (Lemon, 2011, p. 125), reveal the unreliable and self-othered status of the narrator. Also, heterotopias are real and mythic(al) contestation of the space we live in (Foucault, 1998, p. 179), applies to Chinese legend and Austro-Hungarian myth.

Kafka's China represents a temporal discontinuity (heterochronias), a break with the accepted notion about time (Foucault, 1998, p.182), which is another aspect of heterotopia. 'China' is 'heteroto-

¹ He traveled to China's corrupting Ch'ing Dynasty, writing *Im neuen* to depict Chinese geography.

² Of Chinese people. But justifiably, Kafka deploys Orientalist discourse on Jews.

pias of time that accumulates indefinitely' (ibid): the beginning/finishing of the operation are conjoined. The undefined era, alien from our real temporal experience, renders it quasi-eternal (ibid) and quasi-isolated. Temporality is abolished; the insurmountable vastness, a dramatically conceptualised space, are Orientalist deployments that cannot be concealed. The vastness does not 'neutralise' (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, pp. 149-150) the Orientalism. Kafka explicitly uses 'stagnation in Peking', '[world's] most ancient empire has not yet [developed]' (Kafka, 1946, p. 93) in a sensibly discreet narrative voice, reinforcing the Orientalist tropes. But because it is a heterotopia, it simultaneously 'denounces all real emplacements' (Foucault, 1998, p.184). The ahistoricisation is towards the temporality itself, to denounce the perpetual despotism: 'the Empire is immortal' (Kafka, 1946, p. 90), whereas people's ineffective fidelity to tottering Emperors suggests Kafka's critique of his people. As Kafka characterises his writing, 'representing general human weakness' (Eyl, 2004, p. 63), this heterotopia represents, mirrors the self no matter whether it represents known China.

If dystopias specifically manifest heterotopias, utopias embody meta-utopias besides heterotopias. For the heterotopia, first, we discern superimposed planes of symbolised Chinese community and the factual Jewish community. 'China' offers an exotic form of imaginative communication and community affinity, empowering this heterotopia to reverse, compensate the modern indifference:

'building a wall of protection, [...] Unity! Unity! Shoulder to shoulder, a ring of brothers, a current of blood [...] returning throughout the endless leagues of China (Kafka, 1946, p. 84).

Kafka's Orientalism towards Eastern Jews, too, functions to oppose modern industrial society. The emblem of this portrait of beautiful unity is arguably alluding to the Hasidic dance, where the community forms a circle with arms round each other's necks

(Robertson, 1988). This Jewish dance is rendered popular by Buber¹ in reviving, translating Hasidism to talk about Jewish identity. Hasidism² embodies organic community without being homogeneous (Robertson, 1988), for Kafka, meaning real life and Jewish tradition that should be preserved. The East-European Jewish life, the unhygienic condition mentioned in dystopias, is reversely an 'authentic' life that should be worshiped (ibid). Hasidic life, deviant from assimilated Jews', is an actual heterotopia that Kafka champions. He desires small family, for physical security. I cannot agree that Kafka is unpolitical: China heterotopia is the form when Kafka talks about the (modern) nation-state. China as a whole is a dreamy utopia of multinational unity. Why the people, with changeable nature, cannot complete the work, yet live safely, even harmoniously with the northerners? The 'wall of protection' exists from all eternity: it is never an artificial work. It provides people a sense of security, which is what Kafka longs for. What Kafka argues against is arbitrarily unifying the people, as if they can be. Kafka designates many people achieving 'a single aim' as 'wild ideas' (Kafka, 1946, p.86), which can be a critique of cultural Zionism³. He calls for faith, but also substantiality and physicality.

Kafka's dialects, specifically of simultaneously desiring, renouncing community, will become clearer from the perspective of meta-utopia. The ostensible utopia, where the Chinese are basked in a national ecstasy of unity, is 'utopia as critical utopia'. The synecdoche of body and the exclamation marks warn us of the latent dystopia of the quasi-fascist crowd. The affect circulating among people eliminates differences, having a nationalist allusion to the anti-Semitic violence (Kontje, 2013, p.63). It represents Kafka's ambiguous attitude towards the concept of 'we', as he rejects a

¹ A representative of cultural Zionism. Kafka accepted Chinese Ghost and Love Stories and Jewish Myth lectures from Buber (Kafka, 2013, esp. pp.234-240); he knew but did not like Buber's Zionism.

² Much Eastern Jewish life is grounded in Hasidism (Metz, 2004).

³ People should not be randomly integrated by a unifying thought, which is exactly the aim of cultural Zionism.

closed community where everyone faces each other (Liska, 2009, p.22). Readers feel horrified: this face-to-face moment for inter-subjective mutation incites readers' critical participation in the dialogue for self-interrogation. Looking at actual heterotopias will suggest how literary heterotopia occasions dystopias. Kafka's attitude towards East European Hassidism keeps firm and positive (Bokhove, 2004, p.54). The dance also refers to Yiddish theatre which fascinates Kafka. Theatre defies traditional Hasidic life. Yiddish theatre belongs to yet subverts Eastern Jewish tradition (Bechtel, 2004, p.199). It represents a heterotopia within assimilated Jews and the Hasidic community. Yiddish itself is dynamic, heterogeneous (Liska, 2000), thus it disturbs the established order, as a heterotopia. It is positive in two senses: organic, dialectic. The community only becomes assimilative, exclusive here. The meta-utopia with a distance of negation can only be realised in this literary heterotopia. This critical utopia contests, reverses received notions of community.

Contextualising the textual paradox with Kafka's translation of Taoism offers us elucidation of that is otherwise 'unfolding yet enigmatic' (Naveh, 2000, p. 134). The Taoist alternative, instead of the vastness, neutralises the authority. It is the people's ignorance of the Emperor, in which national identity is grounded, maintains the super-stable unity. It is 'the greatest unifying influences among the people' (Kafka, 1946, p.93). Taoist ambiguity enables this utopia: 无为而治 'Non-action as fulfillment' prevents people from clashes in Laozi's era of deceit and slaughter. The impossibility of discovering anything definite (Kafka, 1946, p.89) apparently alludes to the Tao, as in *Laozi's* first chapter:

道可道 非常道 'The tao that can be tao-ed ['spoken of']
Is not the constant tao' (Zhang, 1992, p.27).

道(Tao) contains duality, represents the complex interrelationship between thinking and speaking/language, and is usually mistran-

slated as ‘way’¹, a meaning of the polysemous 道 (ibid). The unattainability of truth is implicitly paralleled with Kafka’s modern anguish where knowledge is impossible to be acceded through parables (Naveh, 2000, p.34). The Tao that transcends language intrinsically contains language’s opposite, silence, effectively eradicating the hierarchical dichotomy. Kafka has expressed his obsession and absorption in Taoism:

‘I have read [Laozi’s aphorisms] repeatedly. [My marbles] roll from one cranny of thought into the other. [My thought cannot corral] Laozi’s glass marbles’ (Zhang, 2021).

Taoist philosophy of paradox is used as a form in this story, for a paradoxical plot and labyrinthine structure. As is said in *Laozi*,

正言若反 ‘Words that [are true] seem to be paradoxical’ (Lau, 2008, p.143).

明道若昧 ‘Tao, when brightest seen, seems light to lack’ (ibid, p.76).

The narrative paradoxes, the lack of cohesion render a heterotopia that destroys the syntax and disallows ‘the *fabula*’ (Foucault, 2002, xix). Taoist dialects in the story like, ‘avoid further meditation, [not] because it might be harmful; [uncertain] that it would be harmful (Kafka, 1946, p.84), seemingly denotes a Confucian method of appeasement. In *Laozi*, ‘Happiness! – misery lurks beneath it! [vice versa] Who knows what either will come to in the end?’ (Lau, 2008, p.106). Kafka’s intention has not been revealed but is undone.

I shall add several heterotopias that merit attention, also explaining the figure provided before. Heterotopia’s open-close principle is embodied in this Chinese heterotopia’s masonry system

¹ Kafka studies German sinologist Wilhelm’s Taoist classics. Wilhelm discreetly uses ‘Sinn’ (‘sense’) containing ‘Weg’ (way), Wort (word), λόγος (Lógos) (Xu and Wang, 2014), partly redeeming the impossibility of maintaining the original duality, which is positive for Kafka’s understanding.

and Kafka's text itself. The honored project needs qualification to participate in, yet one gets bewildered by the nebulous plan. They think they are entering, yet are excluded by the fact of entering (Foucault, 1998, p.183). They can go into the progress but never the institution. Kafka's China heterotopia also constrains people to enter: it resists defined interpretation of its discourse. When readers 'submit' to Kafka's 'rituals', they are empowered to experience being Chinese in an Orientalist way. Readers are isolated in this semi-open/quasi-enclosed heterotopia. Getting out of it, readers regain temporality. And, the lucid dream, 'you sit at your window [...] *dream* it to yourself' (Kafka, 1946, p.91), announces heterotopia's revelation and termination. It is a consolation and compensation, which promises what reality cannot keep. The Chinese compensatory heterotopia, enables the incommensurable conversation that can only be achieved in imagination. It is a meta-utopian moment requiring readers' participation, which is empowered by imaginative person-to-person communication between author and reader, whereas Emperor-to-subjects communication is impossible. It offers a mirror utopia/heterotopia. Readers are summoned to go by way of this 'virtual point' (Foucault, 1998, p.179) to identify the unreal and reflect on the self. The verb 'dream' designates a means of inefficiency which effectively transmits the imagined hearing. This resonates with Chinese poet Tao Qian's 'There is a true meaning exceeding articulation', which can only be grasped in silence (Zhang, 1992, pp.124-125). This is the central poetics of Taoism, referring to the suggestive, intuitive, silent aesthetics which is absorbed and reflected in Pound's adoption. Kafka is open to revising his cognitive structure, absorbing Taoist 'non-words' as a culture of the other. The narrator studying the comparative history of races, a self-referential figure speaking for Kafka, suggests his ethnological scrutiny and his ambition for cultural reconstruction.

III. Conclusion

The Chinese U-Heterotopia is designed by Kafka, denoting its very characteristic language. 'Meta' and 'critical' remind both the ambiguity and distance necessary to address the self-negation of a static closure of this genre. This draws the attention back to the context of utopias as the intersection between language and space. When thinking about utopia in terms of critical utopia, it shall be reborn; and heterotopia provides the genre a refreshing category. The verb 'dream' in '*dream* it to yourself' designates a means of inefficiency which effectively transmits the imagined hearing. This resonates with Chinese poet Tao Qian's 'There is a true meaning exceeding articulation', which can only be grasped in silence (Zhang, 1992, pp. 124-125). Kafka is open to revising his cognitive structure, absorbing Taoist 'non-words' as a culture of the other. The narrator studying the comparative history of races, a self-referential figure speaking for Kafka, suggests his ethnological scrutiny and his ambition for cultural reconstruction. Kafka embraces Taoism in a transcendental sense, but his conversion to Taoism is highly individual-based. He evades mental predicaments modern people are confronted with, wandering in his personal utopia of Taoist wisdom. Although speaking of national establishment, the individual and political aspects are separated in this text. People's labour devoted to Confucian rule, and Taoist freedom, still present a dichotomy. Neither does Kafka believe Chinese Taoism can be applied to redeem the Jewish nation. He emphasises the transcendental effect on the individuals, exerting oneself for ends of a grand sense of unity, in a spiritual dimension. Kafka creates meta-utopia to stand on the borderline like embracement/rejection of the community, identity/non-identity; these gaps stem from his heterotopic cultural facts. Kafka identifies himself with Chinese. I underline, Kafka denies an identification with China by asserting he wants an immediate departure: 'I am a Chinese and am going home; I would make sure of returning soon' (Kafka, 2013, p. 647).

Corresponding to the Early Romantics who associate the Oriental Other with part of the wholeness of the world concerning constitution of subjectivity (Prager, 2014, p. 132), 'China' embodies a part of wholeness and oneness. Kafka constitutes a 'new mythology' that could restore totality to the fragmented self in modernist alienation (Germana, 2017, p. 95). The other is not absolute but a mirror, through which the writers see/seek the self. The other's image is derived from the self. The writer solicits Taoist medicine for residing the mental drifting and desolation of (capitalist) modernity. The tension I analysed is the split between the writer's material/mental world and utopias. In broader structures, the fractured identities can be imagined to piece together. By creating heterotopia, he gives the wandering spirit a locus. Concerning good politics, their ideal rulers are reminiscent of philosopher-king in More's *Utopia*, where More harks back to Plato's thesis in *Republic*: nation will be happy when philosophers become kings or [vice versa] (More, 1964, p.87). In Kafka's text, the semi-sacred (conceptual) high command knows his people, who otherwise, like dust, do not possess the intellect to plan or reflect. Kafka not only superimposes planes but superimposes utopia and heterotopia. Although the indecisive frontier between actual and imagined planes blurs, utopia/heterotopia superimposition always illuminates, reflects real problems. By this, we can scrutinise things/issues in his relationships with others; how the imaginative relationships between cultural others work.

I have never eschewed interpreting the texts from the perspective of heterotopia, but all the representations are utterly still utopias, which is my central claim. I term 'critical utopias' to mean, utopia itself is critical. The concept of meta-utopia reminds us utopia is never an ineffective illusion or one-dimensional placebo, but a lucid dream that involves readers in critical dialogues. It has the capacity for any displacements in the text. Foucault affirms heterotopia's intersection with utopia, copying its mechanism, aiming to stress both the imagination and the practice. I disagree with the proposition that heterotopia is 'never intended to study the

real sites' (Knight, 2017), instead, its object is tied to 'spatial techniques' (Foucault, 1984, p. 254), technological change in reality. Heterotopia has literary roots yet is extended to focus on the relations outside, reaching an intersection. Foucault does not imbue heterotopia with the impetus to realise. As scholars argue, heterotopia does not have a negative dialectic (Johnson, 2012). Heterotopia is less actualisable than fictional; it is liberation within the text, instead of practicality in reality. In contrast, utopia is always political, in ontological (humanity's eternal utopian impulse) and effective terms; it represents, reflects reality, and is related to political transformation. Foucault prefixes 'hetero' to 'topia', correctly describing the multicultural coexistence in the modern/post-modern era. Chinese philosophies effectively prevent those literary heterotopias from overemphasising the alterity. Creating heterotopia is a way of shaping the other as well as reflecting on the self and reviving culture. Chinese 'inscrutable' harmony can still be a praiseworthy method for comparative literature.

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Colonial, Postcolonial, Decolonial and Neocolonial Experiences: Rewriting Cultural History

Post/de/colonial Strategies in Latin America's Literary and Cultural Discourses

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Abstract:

Known as one of 20th century currents of thought which greatly contributed to Comparative Literature, Postcolonial Studies caused a rupture in the discipline's main axis when they put into check its ethnocentric character, based on a center/periphery dichotomy that focused on European and non-European productions from an uneven and hierarchic perspective. By refusing to approach the literary and cultural production of European ex-colonies as extensions of what was produced in their metropolises, Postcolonial critics have shaken the basis of Western academy and have raised important questions still present in the agenda of international debates. In this paper, we examine some of these issues, and discuss the role they had in a context as that of Latin America, where the political independence from European matrixes had already occurred since the first half of the 19th century, but cultural and economic dependence is still a heavy burden.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Strategies, Latin America, Literary and Cultural Discourses

Among the twentieth century currents of thought that have contributed to Comparative Literature, Post-Colonial Studies hold a special place, due to the questioning they have developed about the ethnocentric character of the discipline. By refusing to acknowledge the literary and cultural production of European ex-colonies as extensions of what was produced in the metropolises, these studies brought about a new perspective to Comparative Literature, based on the search of a dialogue on equal footing that recognizes the heterogeneity of the subjects involved in the process of comparison and highlights important issues still present in the agenda of international debates. In this paper, we will examine some of these issues and will discuss the role they have had in a universe like Latin America's, where the political independence from European matrixes has already occurred in almost every case since the first half of the nineteenth century, but cultural and economic dependence still is a heavy burden.

In the Introduction to his *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said has affirmed that, although he does not believe "that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history,... [they are] very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure (1993: XXII). Culture and its aesthetic forms derive, he continues, from historical experience, and stories are "at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world," in addition to being "the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (XII). Literature constitutes one of the most important ways to express these perceptions and it is through its means that the daily experience of colonized peoples has been most powerfully codified. Thus, the so-called "Postcolonial literatures" have constituted a relevant category within the area of Postcolonial Studies, and such category has usually been employed in relation to literatures in English, or, more precisely, to those literary forms which have accompanied the projection and decline of British Imperialism. Imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree, Said

believes, that it is impossible “to read one without in some way dealing with the other” (84). And several other critics ratify this idea when they point to the existence of a complicity between nineteenth century colonial ideology and the emergence of English literature as an academic discipline in the colonies. As the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* say, for example, “Literature was made as central to the cultural enterprise of Empire as monarchy was to its political formations (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 4).

Fearing that direct military action in the colonies might encourage rebellions, the English administrators tried to conceal or disguise their material investments by developing a wide cultural policy which had as one of its major weapons the teaching of English literature. By presenting the English literary production as an example of uncompromised humanism, turned to the perfecting of human formation, the colonizers opposed to the negative image of domination a seductive aesthetic ideal which raised them as a model. The immediate and most hazardous consequence of this strategy was the internalization of the colonizer’s gaze and of the entire world view represented by it. The reactions to this attitude mark the beginning of Postcolonial Literature, which can be characterized exactly by its resistance to colonization and its forms of reification of the subject. Contrary to the colonial writers who exalted the colonizers’ literary and aesthetic production, and conscious of the need to change this situation, writers coming from the English ex-colonies began to produce a highly critical literature turned to deconstruct this view by denouncing the evils of colonization. This body of literature, though named with a prefix that indicated a notion of aftermath, was rather a solid reaction against colonization’s oppression and exploitation, an anti-sort of literature that had as its antagonist the previous production.

The interest this literature raised among intellectuals, both from their own locus of production and from the Western world, gave birth to an entire reflection on the issue of decolonization that has been labeled in Western universities as Postcolonial Theory, that is, in the words of Pramod Nayar, “a set of critical approaches,

ideas and critical methodologies that enable [scholars] to ‘read’ colonial/ colonizing practices and structures,” or, rather, “a complex analytical strategy that foregrounds... *difference* in the relationship – political, social, economic and cultural – between First/Western and Third/Eastern worlds” (2010, p. 4). And just as postcolonial literature challenged the Western world view by criticizing the philosophical presuppositions upon which it was based, like the binary oppositions that disregard alterity, Postcolonial Theory was turned to deconstructing European theories by means of a profound reflection upon the local element and the dialogue established between this element and Western tradition. A theory like Homi Bhabha’s, for example, emerges from a reflection about the nature of postcolonial cultural production and the different types of expressions they present. Be it in Linguistics, Philosophy or Literary Theory, Postcolonial theories always work in a subversive manner, with the aim of dismantling *a priori* formulations present in European thought and of unmasking the complexities hidden behind statements of a monist or universalizing sort, in favor of a plural and non-excluding view. They are, in short, a project turned to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and above all questioning the colonial past.

It is in this sense that Postcolonial theories have as a basic trait an eminently political character. In their endeavor to develop a reflection that might account for the differences of postcolonial literary and cultural production and might approach European tradition from a critical view that would put into check the ethnocentric nature of the traditional perspective, these theories aim at establishing a dialogue on equal footing between previously antagonistic voices and at deconstructing the hierarchic dichotomy disguised under the myth of aesthetic sacredness. The supposed neutrality of literary studies, so much stressed by Arnold in the nineteenth century and still resonant nowadays in works like Harold Bloom’s, is unveiled as a clearly ideological proposal of maintenance of the integrity and sovereignty of Europe in the face of its multiple and barbarous Others, and the dichotomic constructions like center

vs. periphery or metropolitan vs. colonized, supported by this view, are challenged on their bases, giving way to a different logic according to which the alternative, excluding element of cartesian rationalism is replaced by the possibility of an addition.

Inasmuch as the political neutrality of traditional literary studies is revealed as fallacious, so is the claim for universality which has accompanied Western thought throughout the entire modern era. In their attempt to define categories that could be generalized to all places and times, what Europeans did, consciously or not, was to extend to the whole world the categories of their own culture, thus transforming a peculiar and historical aspect into norms to be observed. As a result of this view Africa was seen by Hegel as a continent “outside history” and African literature was considered as non-existing by the European *intelligentsia* (Aschcroft et al., 1989, p. 159). The forms of African art challenged so much European aesthetic conceptions, that critics could not recognize them as art objects, thus classifying them as “exotic.” It was as a reaction to this difficulty of recognizing the Other, or rather, of dealing with alterity, proper of the colonizing project, that a Postcolonial writer such as Achebe has declared that he would like to see the word “universal” banned from any discussion about African literature “until such a time as people ceased to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe (1975, p. 13), and that a writer like Chakrabarty has affirmed that it was necessary to “provincialize” the knowledge claims of “the Europe” that modern imperialism and nationalism have made universal (1990, p. 228-47).

It was with this purpose of “provincializing”, or rather, relativizing, contextualizing, European *episteme*, associated with the violence of colonization, that Postcolonial theories took on the charge of subverting and transforming European currents of thought critically. Hence the pertinence of a remark like Leela Gandhi’s that Postcolonial Studies constituted a kind of “meeting point” or “battleground” for a variety of disciplines and theories, sometimes even antagonistic as Marxism and Poststructuralism or Post-

modernism (1998, p. 150). Postcolonial writers and critics developed a real battle for the control of the word, which initially took the form of a search for the authentic or even the autochthonous element and came to the point of rejecting the colonizer's language, but later evolved into a movement of appropriation of his language and culture. This shift from an abrogation to the appropriation of the colonizer's language, which can be represented in the British context by the well-known passage from *The Tempest*, in which Caliban switches from "unlearning English" to the project of "learning how to curse in the master's tongue" (Shakespeare, 1881, I, ii), is what marks the most recent and affirmative phase of Postcolonial production. Now, instead of the previous nostalgic and acritical perspective of wishing to return to a utopian pre-colonial past, what is searched for is a kind of creative appropriation, an intersection of colonial languages with local themes, which Homi Bhabha very adequately designated as "mimicry" (1994, p. 86).

For this Postcolonial critic, "mimicry" is the sly weapon of colonial civility, an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience. By making use of this device, the colonized gives the impression that he is observing the political and semantic imperatives of colonial discourse, but at the same time he distorts the basis of such a discourse by articulating it, as he himself says, "syntagmatically with a range of differential knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its 'identity' and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power" (1998, p. 120). "Mimicry" inheres in the necessary and multiple acts of translation which oversee the passage from colonial vocabulary to its anti-colonial usage, and as such it inaugurates, as Leela Gandhi affirms, "the process of anti-colonial self-differentiation through the logic of inappropriate appropriation" (1998, p. 150). The most significant anti-colonial writers are "mimic men," for, by mixing the European novel with local aspects, or by introducing a polyphony of local voices into the colonizer's language, they transgress the orthodox boundaries of "literariness," based on European patterns, and give birth to irrelevant and inquiring new forms.

Although Postcolonial Studies have originated in the Anglo-Saxon academic and intellectual milieu and have been devoted at the beginning to the English language world, they are no longer restricted to this context, having on the contrary produced important fruits in linguistic circuits as the francophonic, the Hispanic and the lusophonic ones. However, in each one of these spheres there are historical specificities which must always be considered. In the Anglo-Saxon context itself, there is a distinction frequently made between settler colonies, like Canada and Australia, and colonies of intervention, such as India, which express very different concerns as regards the trauma of colonization. And still within the same sphere one cannot treat on equal terms the case of the Commonwealth countries and that of the United States, which changes from a subaltern position to one of domination and comes to identify its literature in the twentieth century with the canon of European production. Moreover, within the United States, one cannot disregard the differences between the canonic production and that of the unprivileged groups that have been fighting a real battle for the conquest of the right to speak.

But the point does not stop here. There is a factor of complication in the core of Postcolonial relations which is often left aside in the discussions about the subject: it is that which Slemon has denominated as the “modern theater of neocolonialist international relations” (in Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 5). Although the critics mostly preoccupied with the issue have turned their discussion to those contexts neocolonized by the former colonizers, as it is the case of India and most of the modern African nations, cultural and economic neocolonialism has become a common trait of international relations in the twentieth century; hence Gayatri Spivak’s remark that “we live in a post-colonial neocolonized world” (1990, 166). And it is only when we take these questions into account that we can understand in its complexity a case as that of Latin America in which most of the countries have acquired independence from their European matrixes since the first half of the nineteenth cen-

ture, yet, they have transferred their process of subordination on the cultural and economic levels to other colonizing nations.

Although Postcolonial Theory had as its point of departure the reaction against colonial discourse emanated in the English-speaking world named as Postcolonial literature, it was extended in the academic milieu to include any type of discourse aimed at deconstructing relations of domination and abuse or any type of reflection that might not recognize heterogeneity or alterity, and it is in this sense that it has played a relevant role in several different contexts and areas of knowledge. Yet, due to this wider perspective, a need to distinguish or specify contextual differences has also been made evident. Thus, in Latin America, scholars who studied the long process of colonization that the continent had undergone, developed a theory which they named as Decolonialization, that is, a process whereby non-white nations and ethnic groups strive to secure freedom from their European masters. Postcoloniality as well as decolonization are used, especially in Postcolonial Theory, to describe resistance. Yet, decolonization seeks freedom from colonial forms of thinking, to revive native, local, and vernacular forms of knowledge by questioning and overturning European categories and epistemologies. For Enrique Dussel, modernity has begun in the fifteenth century with the discovery of America, and for Aníbal Quijano, European colonial domination was accompanied by an entire cultural complex known as European modernity and rationality that was established as a universal paradigm of knowledge. Thus, the most important aspect of decolonization for him is to liberate the production of knowledge, of communication and of reflection from the ties of European ideas of modernity and rationality.

This claim made by Quijano, and later endorsed by other critics like Walter Dignolo, Zulma Palermo, Rita Segato and María Lugones, among others, is present in one way or another in the strategies employed by Decolonial Theory to develop a way of thinking or a reflection that, rather than incorporating European ideas and conceptualizations, may establish a dialogue on equal footing with them. The consciousness of the need for this dialogue

comes from the old times of colonization, but it gradually gains its strength, and is expressed through different forms along the centuries, as for example when they range from abrogation to appropriation. In the field of Language and Literature, let us recall the polemics, coming from Romanticism, about the existence of an American Spanish or a Brazilian Portuguese, or the discussions about the permanence of an American baroque style which has become a kind of *modus vivendi* in the continent, and has constantly reappeared in movements such as the so-called narrative “boom” of the mid-twentieth century. Here, by way of exemplification, we will mention a few cases in which its appropriation has been particularly prominent, generating debates that are very close to those found today in the arena of Post- and Decolonial Studies.

It is well known that Brazilian Modernism had its origins in the assimilation of distinct contributions from the several European Vanguards of the early twentieth century, yet, in their process of assimilation these contributions went through a rigorous critical filter which not only mixed them together, but also modified them considerably, giving birth to a new product that kept visible traits of its former identities, but carried at the same time other elements which granted it with a different profile. Moreover, in this process, the Modernist writers also cast a critical look at the Brazilian tradition, mainly from the Romantic period – the first movement that had attempted to construct a national literary canon – and incorporated many of its aspects too, adding them to the ones above mentioned, and consequently stressing the heterogeneity of the new product. The result was an aesthetic movement with a highly distinct profile which, though marked by a preoccupation of defining an ontological identity (the notion of Brazilianess), had plurality as its basic trait. Brazil was not to them a mere Indian nation, as the Romantic writers who had portrayed the native as a symbol of nationality had idealized it to be, but rather the product of the fusion of distinct ethnic and cultural groups that coexisted in a constant tension, and this tension could usually be detected in the main works of the time. Anthropophagy, the central image of the

movement, pointed not only to the ingestion of European contributions and to the importance of the autochthonous element – it was perhaps the aspect of indigenous cultural mostly criticized by Europeans – but also to the critical assimilation of the local tradition itself, which resurged again, yet with a different face, in the new sign (Coutinho, 2000).

As well as Brazilian Modernism's concept of Anthropophagy, Spanish-American Indigenism of the mid-twentieth century, represented by figures such as José María Arguedas and Miguel Ángel Asturias, also played a significant role in relation to the appropriation of European forms and their transformation into something new, which maintained, however, several aspects of the appropriated form. Not to speak of the language alone of the novels – a mixed sort of Spanish characterized by words and expressions coming from indigenous cultures, by a special rhythm and a cadence proper of those cultures and by a very peculiar type of syntax – the form itself of these works was very different from the ones from which they had derived. And it suffices to recall as evidence the lyricism of these authors' novels, often marked by poetic constructions in indigenous languages, their circular narrative structure that breaks up with traditional linearity, and their multiple and ambivalent world view, which constantly oscillates between the Spanish and the indigenous cultural framework and is marked precisely by the unresolved tension between these two worlds. Here also the authors effected a selective assimilation not only of the language and of the various forms of European literature, but also of the very Indigenist production of previous Spanish American generations – such as that of the 1920's – which criticized the system of domination that oppressed the native peoples but did not manage to deal deeply with their culture. In the case of Arguedas and Asturias, the indigenous universe was represented from within; hence Ángel Rama's use of the term "narrative transculturation" to refer to their works (Rama, 1982).

Another clear example of this phenomenon of appropriation of European forms by Latin American writers is what happened in

the mid-twentieth century with the so-called “marvelous realism.” Having incorporated on the one hand different aspects from the European realist tradition, and on the other hand the pure magical element of fairy tales and of the Euro-North American fantastic tradition, the writers of magical realism effected a critical filter of all these contributions, and gave origin to a new expression, to a kind of plural syntagm marked exactly by the non-excluding character of the elements which compose it. Unlike what happens in the sphere of the fantastic, in which the reader is forced to choose between two incompatible systems, in marvelous realism the natural coexists with the supernatural element, and the contradiction between the two terms is no longer incompatible: on the contrary, both the realist and the marvelous codes are affirmed (Chiampi, 1980, p. 145). Thus, realist scenes like those found in the traditional Realist novels of the nineteenth century are narrated side by side with supernatural passages, and the result is a multiple, plural, and contradictory universe in which the coexistence of previously excluding elements is made possible. The dichotomic logic of alternation, proper of Western metaphysics is therefore put into check and the possibility of a different, hybrid or paradoxical logic, based on the element of addition (“and,” rather than “or”) is proposed.

The forms of appropriation have always been frequent in the literatures of Latin America to the point of justifying the statement that it is one of their most prominent traits, but it is undeniable that the Postcolonial and Decolonial theories developed from the 1970’s on had a relevant role not only in making these forms more visible, but also in calling attention to the importance of encouraging such procedures and of extending them to every type of production that has remained until then at the margin of official recognition. Moreover, they brought about a consciousness of the need to constantly contextualize such procedures to make clear the differences between the two terms of the process. Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Cuban literary production, for instance, have assimilated a series of traits from the production of similar groups in the United States; yet, they have often expressed their authors’ concern with registering their

differences, and the same can be observed if we trace a comparison between other ethnic groups in the two contexts. In the Neocolonial Latin American context, issues as that of the social class are so significant that they appear in almost every case and are frequently shown as inseparable from the marks of ethnocultural identities.

And as well as in literary production, in the field of the discourses on literature the same phenomenon may be observed. It is true that since the nineteenth century there already existed a great preoccupation with the constitution of a critical discourse based on a reflection upon Latin American literary production and with the emergence of theories that might establish a dialogue with those coming from Europe, as it is evidenced by the solid tradition of essay writing that took place in Latin America. Yet, this preoccupation has always existed side by side with the dominant practice of importing in an acritical manner the European, and more recently also North American, currents of thought and of reflecting about Latin American production with a gaze internalized from the neocolonial metropolises. It is only from the mid-twentieth century on that this ethnocentric attitude begins to lose its space, due in great part to the Postmodern *episteme*, and it is then that the role of Postcolonial and Decolonial theories become more significant. Meeting with similar preoccupations in the context of Latin America, these theories have offered great support to the tradition therein existing and have been stimulating the development of an instigating kind of “decolonized” comparativism, which, having abandoned its traditional hierarchic structure, is now in search of a dialogue on equal footing at the international level (Coutinho, 2000, p. 201-14).

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Rewrite the History of a Chinese-American Female: Narratology of *The Lost Daughter of Happiness (Fusang)*

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Abstract:

Chinese American writer Yan Geling depicts the life of a Chinese prostitute in the US society one hundred years ago in her novel *The Lost Daughter of Happiness (Fusang)*. By analyzing the narratology of the novel, this essay discusses the issues of male gaze as well as Orientalism in the perspective of postcolonial feminism. The resistance against the dominating male-Western narration in US history prevails between the lines. In the first chapter of her work, Yan evokes readers' identification with her heroine in their cognitive experience by adopting the tactics of second-person narrative, which puts the reader at the site of an objectified Asian female. The trick turns the table on readers. Being different from the readers of American history books that record Chinese prostitutes, the readers of Yan's novel are no longer the subjects of giving judgement. Instead, they are forced into a shocking illusion of being judged with nude body by an authority. And with the superimposed points of view, Yan intentionally keeps the superimposed underpainting of male gaze and Orientalism, and re-superimposes a new perspective to fight against those stereotypes of Asian females. The combination of first and second-person in *Fusang* creates a mutual gazing space by constructing an opposition between "you" and "I". This opposition serves as the prerequisite for the inversion of their subject-object relation and the communication between them, and finally "you" and "I" manage to communicate in the visual space. In these ways, Yan rewrites the cultural history of Asian-American females by substituting "history" with "herstory".

Keywords: *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, postcolonial feminism, second-person narrative, superimposed points of view

Introduction

Fusang (also called *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*) is a novel written by Chinese-American writer Yan Geling. In this novel, she depicts the life of a Chinese prostitute in US society one hundred years ago, whose name is *Fusang*. By analyzing the narratology of *Fusang*, this paper discusses the issues of the male gaze, as well as Orientalism from the perspective of postcolonial feminism.

The extensive adoption of the second-person narration is one of the most prominent narrative features of *Fusang*, which is rarely found in common novels dominated by first-person and third-person narrators. Even in the modern age, where narrative techniques are constantly innovating, the novels with second-person narratives are still on the fringes of the mainstream. However, Yan Geling brought visual features into her text with the second-person narration. She implied the visuality of second-person narration in *Fusang* in an interview. She said there was a vibe when she adopted the second-person narrator “you” during the writing of *Fusang*, yet this vibe faded away as soon as she shifted to the third-person narration. In explanation for her failure in third-person narration for *Fusang*, she said, “I failed to create an image when writing... I could not write anything without an image in my mind’s eye” (Liu and Yan, 2021, p. 88-95).

In fact, Yan Geling's reflections on her writing process suggest the unique visuality of the second-person narrative in *Fusang*. Through the second-person narrative of the first-person narrator, the author imparts pictoriality to the text. With the reader's misappropriation of the position of the narratee and the subsequent self-correction, readers are placed in the visual imagination of both the subject and object of the gaze, producing a fantastic superposition of psychological cognitive states. This double gaze with racial and gender bias is also based on the second-person narrative: through the use of the second-person “you”, Yan Geling brings the multiple perspectives converged in the visual narrative layer into a common focus, making *Fusang* the visual center of the narrative. Subsequently, Yan Geling places the perspective with the value judgment of

the narrator "I" on top of the perspective of historians and characters, thus reshaping the image of the heroine and subverting the historical writing of Chinese women in the American patriarchal society. Yan Geling's rebellion is also reflected in the "mutual gazing space" that she creates through the combination of first – and second-person narratives. In the auditory narrative, the heroine Fusang is confined to a suppressed space of one-way discourse. Yet Fusang regains her intersubjectivity with the narrator "I" through the visual act of looking at each other in the visual narrative. In this way, the work resists the authoritarianism and renders intergenerational communication of Chinese immigrants in a equal way.

Methodology

Aiming to explore how the history of Chinese-American females is rewrite in *Fusang*, this paper adopts a method of close reading, researching the narratology of this novel. With the narratological and stylistic theories, this paper focuses on the second-person narratives in Yan Geling's novel *Fusang*. The narrative theories of Genette, Shen Dan, Zhao Yiheng and the stylistic theories of Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short provide the main theoretical basis for this research. The perspective of visual culture is also accommodated in this paper. The works of John Berger and Martin Jay provide the major theoretical resources for the visual analysis in this paper.

I. Readers' Reception and the Dual Gaze in Second-person Narration

Fusang is a vision-dominated text permeated with gazes towards the narratee. Gaze is a method of seeing that carries the operation of power or the entanglement of desire (Zhao et al. 2006, p. 349). The gaze in *Fusang* is manifested as the exhibition and

scrutinizing of heroine's body. The reader's mistake of taking the position of the narratee leads to the displacement of the gaze on the true narratee Fusang, and finally the gaze is dwelt upon the reader.

The gaze in *Fusang* is dual. It contains both male gaze and racial gaze, which is a dual objectification of the Chinese female Fusang by the American society dominated by male and Western centrism. First, Fusang's disadvantaged position as a woman in male society, especially her low status as a prostitute, further intensifies the objectification upon her, which is expressed in the male gaze she receives. John Berger points out that the gaze is embedded in gender consciousness, and that the female body is not an object at her own disposal: "The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly in an object of vision: a sight" (2010, p.47).

The opening of *Fusang* begins with the second-person narration, which is a unique expression compared to the third-person narration, making Fusang appear as an object to be viewed. Although the narrator "I" is a female, the description of Fusang is recreated from the historical records of white historians, so the description of Fusang is in the perspective of American patriarchal society, and the description of her body representations implies male desire and power: The author's brushstroke skims over her clothes, chin, face, and lips, writing: "Your body lying on a bamboo bed waiting to be enjoyed fills his mind" "Let me take a closer look at the flesh you use to entertain the world" (Yan, 2010, p. 16).

In the second-person narrative discourse, the narrator constantly uses words such as "show" and "reveal" to give instructions to Fusang's body, which shows that Fusang's body is "involuntarily" viewed by others and becomes a "public exhibit". Readers experience the feeling of Fusang's body being gazed at and openly exhibited with a series of second-person narrative discourses because of the illusion of replacing the presence of Fusang's body with the reader's own embodiment. In addition, the choice of narrative language presents a one-way, commanding discipline in the discourse: for example, "Raise your chin a little more," "There, that's

good." "Please don't move, just lie there." These are also manifestations of the gazer's condescending power over the gazed. Thus, the male gaze and discipline that is hidden when using third-person narration is fully exposed in the second-person discourse, from which the reader receives a shocking reading experience.

The gaze on the narratee not only comes from male desire, but also comes from the racial prejudice from the white-dominated society. With the development of postcolonialism, more and more critics have pointed out that racial consciousness is also embedded in the gaze. Stuart Hall argues that in the racial gaze, black people are reduced to racial stereotypes, and in addition their bodies become fetish objects in the white field of vision, that is so-called the Spectacle of the Other (1997, p.287). This theory also applies to Chinese immigrants, who are also minorities in American society. The Orientalist perspective behind the gaze is illustrated by this passage in the text: "This gives me a clear view of your whole face. It doesn't matter, your too-short, too-wide face shape will only give an oriental mood. Every flaw of yours is a feature in the eyes of the curiosity seekers of your time" (Yan, 2010, p. 1) The second-person here is also a synonym for the Other, and under the gaze of Orientalism, it contains the colonial imagination of white mainstream society towards Chinese female. By mis-occupying the position of the "you" of the narratee, the reader is also exposed to the racial gaze.

In the first chapter of her work, Yan Geling evokes readers' identification with her heroine in their cognitive experience by adopting the tactics of second-person narrative, which puts the reader at the site of an objectified Asian female. The trick turns the table on readers. Being different from the readers of American history books that record Chinese prostitutes, the readers of Yan's novel are no longer the subjects of giving judgement. Instead, they are forced into a shocking illusion of being judged with nude body by an authority.

II. Second-person as the Focus of Superimposed Multiple Perspectives

In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette makes a clear distinction between the narrative voice and the narrative perspective, arguing that the "narrative voice" is the voice of the narrator and the "narrative perspective" refers to the point of view (1980, p 186). Shen Dan expands on Genette's concept of "narrative perspective", arguing that "A person's perspective is not only about his/her perception, but also about his/her particular view of things, standpoint or emotional attitude" (1980, p.191). The narrative of *Fusang* is characterized by the multiple perspectives. The portrayal of Fusang often retains the male perspective and the white historian's perspective dwelt on Fusang in a parodic way, which imply value judgment of the narrator and the implied author. With all these narrative tactics, the implied author takes a critical stance against the male perspective and Western centrism.

The focusing function of a second-person narrator enables Fusang to become the focus of multiple perspectives, placing Fusang at the visual center of the narration, thus unifying the multiple perspectives superimposed in the narration. This narrative feature is exemplified in the description of Fusang facing the white teenager Chris:

You are aware of your oddly shaped feet, the high collar that binds your neck and the cold bracelet made of artificial jade. You are aware of the breath and heartbeat of every embroidered flower on your pink gown (Yan, 2010, p. 36).

Multiple perspectives are like the overlapping of camera filters, which can preserve the characteristics of every filter in the same visual layer simultaneously. Judging from the word "aware", this text seems to be based on Fusang's perspective. On second thought, the source of perception is the narrator, "I," and the reader observes Fusang through the narrator's perspective on top of Fu-

gments to it. Although the narrator "I" does not agree with the accounts from the Western historian's perspective (like "low price"), she does not completely erase the traces of this perspective. Instead, she retains these traces and denies the historical biography through the commentary with a strong negation of the historical narrative (like "I could not see any trace of"). In this way, she attempts to reshape the character of Fusang and rewrite the cultural history of Chinese-American females. The two different value judgments coexist in the aforementioned double perspective, and they are converged on Fusang through the second-person "you", making her the focus of contradiction between the two opposite value judgments. Thus the contrast between the juxtaposition of the two judgments is represented in a way that is much more distinct and intense. The perspective of the narrator "I" is placed above the perspective of the white historian, which exerts a more obvious influence on the reader with its visual domination.

III. The Mutual Gazing Space With a Combination of First-person and Second-person Narratives

As the narrator, "I" can control the external form of discourse describing Fusang (such as obscuring the response from Fusang that might exist or using free direct quotation to record Fusang's dialogue with others without quotation marks, etc.), but "I" cannot control the visual representations of the character in the discursive space. Although Fusang is in the position of being silenced by the narrator, she rebels against the authority of the gaze by looking backwards at the viewer "I" despite of her aphasia. With the "mutual gazing space", she realizes the communication between the first- and fifth-generation immigrants.

Yet the space for dialogue between "you" and "I" is suppressed, Yan Geling creates a "mutual gazing space" with the combination of first- and second-person narratives. In the first mutual gaze between Fusang and "I", "I" is placed under the scrutinizing gaze of

"you" (i.e. Fusang), and is transformed from the subject of the gaze to the object being gazed. The identity is then revealed in the text: "a book writer at the end of the twentieth century", "a fifth-generation Chinese immigrant". Under Fusang's gaze, "I" also feels confused about her own existence, stating "I never knew the reason that made me cross the Pacific Ocean" and "didn't know what I was looking for. " It indicates that the narrator's certainty when she was telling Fusang's story is weakened, and the narrator is plunged into a state of uncertainty:

This is when you look at me at the end of the twentieth century – me as a book writer. You wonder if it was the same reason that brought me to this exotic dock called "Gold Mountain". I never knew what brought me across the Pacific Ocean. We pay lip service to freedom, learning, and wealth, but we don't really know what we are looking for. Some people call us the fifth generation of Chinese immigrants (Yan, 2010, p. 3).

Fusang's reverse gaze has a power that is sometimes clearly defiant to the narrator's gaze:

Who am I going to stare at when you stare at me like that questioningly?
Okay, let me try to express your feelings. Let me make a cup of coffee first and refine my words, otherwise I won't be able to express this feeling even with a whole book.
Anyway, if I can't write it right, I can blot it and rewrite.
Things are not what you think...
Not right? Let's start over – (Yan, 2010, p. 165).

In this excerpt, Fusang not only looks at "me" but also expresses her opposition to the story narrated by "me" with her questioningly stare. The narrator, "I", becomes the object and the watched object instead. In the end, the authority of "I" is shaken by Fusang's questioning gaze, and changes the words "I" has already written, becoming an unreliable narrator. The opposition between

the second-person "you" and the first-person "I" makes the reversal of subject and object more prominent.

With the subjectification of the second-person, Fusang still does not attain the right to speak, however she manages to communicate with "I" through gazing. Martin Jay points out that the eye is not just a passive receptor of light and color. It is also the most expressive of the sensory organs and is capable of projecting, indicating, and radiating powerful emotions with clarity (1994, p.9). This makes communication between "you" and "I" possible in the space of the opposite eyes. The "stare" and the "look" with surprise and pity are both expressions of Fusang's emotions. In fact, Fusang does not have power over "me", let alone the desire for "me", so instead of considering Fusang's reverse viewing of me as a kind of gaze with the connotations of power and desire, it should be seen as a way of communication and expressing emotions. The response of "I" to Fusang's gaze proves that the communication between the two sides in the space of the gaze is achieved.

In short, the combination of first- and second-person in Fusang creates a mutual gazing space by constructing an opposition between "you" and "I". Compared with the tendency of othering in the third-person narrative, the objectified mutual opposition between "you" and "I" is more obvious, which prepares the prerequisite for the inversion of the subject-object and the communication between subjects, and finally completes the visual communication in the visual space.

This mutual gazing space is mediated by timeless visual images, and it constructs a link between the first generation of Chinese American female immigrants and the fifth generation of female immigrants in different historical space-time. It aims to shorten the distance between the two at the visual narrative level, creating the illusion that they are in common space-time. It is worth noting that the narrator of the text, "I", who is concerned about the historical plight of Fusang, is a fifth-generation female immigrant instead of a descendant of first-generation immigrants born in the United States. Although there is a lineage relationship between the descendants of first-generation immigrants and their

elder generation, they are more disconnected from the experience of first-generation immigrants and find it difficult to understand Fusang because they have been assimilated into American culture and do not feel the pain and anxiety of moving away from their homeland. However, as a fifth-generation immigrant, "I" shares similar spiritual dilemmas with the first-generation immigrants, so she is more sensitive to the racial and male gaze that minority females suffer in American society. That is the reason why "I" was chosen to be the storyteller of Fusang.

In addition, the difficulties in understanding between "I" and her white husband due to cultural differences is also a parallel to the mutual misunderstanding between "you" and Chris, a white teenager, reflecting the dilemma of Chinese-American female in inter-ethnic love:

I can't remember how many moments my husband's gray sunken eyes and my eyes met, and we shuddered, fascinated by our differences and the desire to know each other so that no matter how intimate we were with each other, it didn't count, and in the shudder we were stuck in the unfamiliar and the fresh, in an impasse of sense.

You see, you and Chris are stuck in the same impasse right now (Yan, 2010, p. 36).

It demonstrates that whether it is "you" or "I", the situation of Chinese females has never really changed in American society with racism and male-dominated orders, and the social problems have never been solved through the centuries. Therefore, the narrator "I" sees herself in Fusang's life, and therefore in the mutual gazing space formed in her imagination, Fusang is a mirror-like projection of "I" in some way. In short, the creation of the mutual gazing space is based on the spiritual dilemma and crisis shared by the first-generation immigrants and the fifth generation new immigrants, reflecting the difficult situation of Chinese female new immigrants in American society in terms of identity and intimate relationships. In the mutual gazing space, the intersubjectivity between Fusang

and the narrator "I" is a rebellion against the current orders of male-dominated American society, and it is also a part of rewritten history of American-Chinese females.

Conclusion

Through the perspective of the narrator "I", the author Yan Geling rewrites the history through her writing, repainting the portrait of a Chinese female deformed in the historical records of American society, thus overshadowing the orientalist gaze of white colonialists in the piles of old documents. With the reconstruction of visual spaces and visual relations in the text, her work rebels Orientalism and the American patriarchal society and rewrites the cultural history as "herstory".

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Rewriting the past in *O Vendedor de Passados* (2004) and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* (2012)

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Abstract:

The novels *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento* (2012) and *O Vendedor de Passados* (2004) by José Eduardo Agualusa feature characters who, on opposite sides of history (a colonist and a colonized), reconstruct and reposition their identities in the tumultuous social and political context after the independence and the end of the civil war in Angola, between the 1970s and the beginning of the 21st century.

The problematic relationship of the characters with their memories is structured from, and around, concrete places such as Ventura's house and Ludovica's apartment in the “Invejados” (the envied) building, which becomes the ultimate location vis-à-vis the post-colonial reality. Life within these places is regulated and circumscribed by political and social phenomena linked to colonialism's violence and its repercussions. Ludovica's and Ventura's efforts to isolate and barricade themselves from the outside world, generates a tension between the space they inhabit and the world that surrounds them.

Throughout the action, the limits of these houses are dissolved and invaded by the radical transformations that from the outside interfere with the inside, reorganizing and intervening in the characters' awareness of their identities and memories, forcing the recognition of their biographies and therefore a historical repositioning. This process takes place through the infiltration and contamination between colonial history, the civil war that followed, and the characters' biographies. My reading of these two novels focuses on how the tension between colonial reminiscences and the new postcolonial narratives are materialized in the biog-

raphies of the protagonists. From the reclusion of their houses the protagonists rewrite the past in their walls, through their interaction with the visitors, the intruders, their neighbors, the books, the sounds of the radio that infiltrate the structures of the houses and transform their interior landscape and the events that they can watch through their windows.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literatures, Cultural Memory, José Eduardo Agulosa.

The novels *O Vendedor de Passados*¹(2004) and *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*²(2012) by José Eduardo Agulosa feature characters who, on opposite sides of history (a colonist and a colonized) reconstruct and reposition their identities in the tumultuous social and political context after independence and the end of the civil war in Angola, between the 1970s and the beginning of the 21st century.

The characters' problematic relationship with their memories is structured from, and around the protagonist houses. Life within these places is regulated and circumscribed by political and social phenomena linked to the violence of colonialism and its repercussions. Ventura's and Ludovica's (the main characters) efforts to isolate and barricade themselves from the outside world generate a tension between the space they inhabit and the world that surrounds them.

Throughout the action, the limits of these houses are dissolved and invaded by the radical transformations that from the outside interfere with the inside, reorganizing and intervening in

¹ My translation of the title to English: *The Seller of Pasts*.

² My translation of the title to English: *General Theory of Oblivion*

the characters' awareness of their identities and memories, forcing them to acknowledge their biographies, which leads them to a historical repositioning. This process takes place through the infiltration and contamination between colonial history, the civil war that followed and the characters' biographies.

The tension between the colonial reminiscences and the new postcolonial narratives is materialized in the biographies of the characters: they reenact the postcolonial problematics of cultural memory in their countries, by rewriting the past as a way of (dis)enabling the nationalist, post-independence Angolan narratives.

O Vendedor de Passados (2004) and Teoria Geral do Esquecimento (2012)

In *O Vendedor de Passados*¹ (The Seller of Pasts in its translation into English), Félix Ventura, an albino, is a forger or genealogist of pasts, who recreates biographies for clients dissatisfied with their real past in post-civil war Luanda. His house, which is occupied by a gecko, Eulálio, the novel's homodiegetic narrator, is visited by ministers, journalists and businessmen who seek to buy names and biographies more adjusted to the new Angolan political conjuncture, erasing the traces of less glorious pasts.

The novel VDP is divided into 32 chapters, separated between linear time of action and dreams. The voice of narration corresponds to Eulálio, with the exception of Buchaman's letter to Felix Ventura and the diary entry in which Ventura announces and informs the reader of Eulálio's death. This entry corresponds to the end of the novel. Since the novel refers to the end of the civil war 2002 and the diary entry is dated 2004, the reader assumes that this is the time in which the action takes place.

In *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*² (General Theory of Oblivion in its translation into English), on the eve of Angola's indepen-

¹ From now onwards it will be referred to by the novel's initials VDP.

² From now onwards it will be referred to by the novel's initials TGE.

dence, Ludovica is confronted with the unusual disappearance of her sister and brother-in-law who leave her alone in the city of Luanda, where events are increasingly violent. This is followed by an attempted robbery at her house that ends with Ludovica firing a gun, killing one of the assailants. Ludo buries him on the terrace and builds a wall that separates her from the building she lives in and permanently cuts her off from the rest of the world. The novel is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, who is said to have gained access to Ludovica's diaries through Sabalu, a secondary character.

The novel TGE has 36 chapters, and the voice of narration is guided by entries from Ludo's diary, by letters and by two poems. This novel ends with a diary entry written by the main character. Because it is dated 2012, it makes it understood that the diegesis takes place between Angola's independence in 1974 and 2012. As with the death of Eulálio, the gecko, so the death of Ghost (Ludovica's dog) causes the house to be opened to the world. Two chapters after Ghost's death, Sabalu, like a phantom itself, begins to show signs of his presence in the house.

The house is the central place of action in both novels and the main characters are isolated in the space of the house from the outside world: in VDP the narrator is a gecko limited to the walls of the house he inhabits and, consequently, this is the space that is accessible to the reader; in TGE, Ludovica blocks the exit from her apartment to the building, barring all access from her house to the building, thus detaching the house from the rest of the diegesis.

The narrators' isolation – both Ludovica's efforts to barricade herself in and the fact that the narrator Eulálio is restricted to the house – causes a tension between the space that the characters (and the reader through them) inhabit and the world that surrounds them. As a centripetal force of convergence and divergence of action, the house of the protagonists is the place with which all the characters in the novels have a connection – they enter the house, pass near it, are in its surroundings, or relate to characters whose fate is directly linked to these houses. It is also in the houses of

Ventura in one novel and Ludovica in the other that the action of the two novels reaches its climax.

In both novels, the characters develop a problematic relationship with the memory of the colonial past and the civil war in Angola. This memory is conditioned by the trauma of the colonial and civil war: by the impossibility of achieving justice, of overcoming, forgiving, and forgetting the crimes committed, not only during the colonial period, but also in the post-independence period. In post-independence and post-civil war Angola, as represented in the two novels, the past is mediated by forgetting and by the adulterations of individual, collective, and institutional memories and narratives about the traumatic events. The falsifications of the past, the active and passive forgetting, convey the problematic of the traumatic memory of the war that marked decades of the second half of the twentieth century in Angola.

Memory

Both novels announce memory as a central theme in their titles. In the title *The Seller of Pasts*, the noun "seller" shows the past as a tradable good, as if, like a false passport or identity card, it was possible to invent and trade a biography, a family history, or a genealogy that would provide a new identity and memories to whoever resorts to a dealer in pasts. *General Theory of Forgetting* similarly refers to the past but emphasizing oblivion. The designation "General Theory" proposes a kind of comprehensive essay on the various forms of forgetting, from the most benevolent and palliative to the most pernicious coercions to forget, such as the erasure of a culture, for example, in the case of colonial invasion and domination, or, also, institutional reformulations, and is a form of appeasement of past traumas.

This dynamic between remembering and forgetting is referred to by Aleida Assmann, who highlights forgetting as a fundamental element of the constitution of memory – memory, in an intrinsic

way, will always imply a selection of the past and, therefore, an inevitable forgetting of part of the events (Assmann, 2008, p. 97-98).

In these novels, the falsifications of the past and the characters' memories are constituted as forms of individual ruptures with the prevailing narratives about events, with external reality, and with cultural memory (Erll, 2008, p. 2), (Assmann, 2008, p. 97) and (Assmann, 2008, p. 110-12):

Cultural memory is a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent: they may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another. External objects as carriers of memory play a role already on the level of personal memory. (...) On the social level, with respect to groups and societies, the role of external symbols becomes even more important, because groups which, of course, do not “have” a memory tend to “make” themselves one by means of things meant as reminders such as monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic institutions. This is what we call cultural memory (A. Assmann). In order to be able to be reembodyed in the sequence of generations, cultural memory, unlike communicative memory, exists also in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and reembodyment (Assmann, 2008, p. 110-11).

In *The Seller of Pasts*, the action progresses from seclusion, amnesia, and forgetfulness to becoming aware of the past, overcoming the traumas, pacifying the memories, the latter corresponds to the period when the house opens. One of Ventura's clients, Gouveia returns to Luanda to take revenge for the crimes of which his wife and daughter were victims at the hands of the torturer Edmundo Barata dos Reis, of the political police. To do so, he uses the services of Felix Ventura and assumes the new identity of José Buchmann.

Gouveia and his daughter Angela Lucia meet again at Felix Ventura's house when the villain Edmundo Barata dos Reis bursts into Ventura's house and they both confront the torturer with his past:

"I hear Edmundo Barata dos Reis' voice, squeaking, distressed, and only then do I see him. He is leaning against the wall, standing, his arms down. His shirt glows red over his thin chest. The edge of the scythe, the gold of the hammer, sparkle, an instant. Then they dim.

– That, little girl, fell from hell! From the past! There where the excommunicated come out...

José Buchmann is trapped between Angela, in front of him, and Felix, who holds his arms behind him. His face is glued to his wife's. He cries out in a rage.

He suddenly looks like a colossus. The veins in his neck swell and pulsate, they bulge in his forehead:

– Exactly, I fell from the past! And who am I? Tell them who I am!...

He suddenly breaks free in a fierce thrust, knocking Angela to the ground. He leaps on Edmund, grabs him by the neck with his left hand, and forces him to kneel at his feet. He buries the barrel of the pistol in his neck:

– Tell them who I am!" (Aqualusa 2004, 202).¹

In *General Theory of Oblivion* the plot unfolds around Ludovica's confinement and tends towards the opening of the house and the consequent pacification of traumatic memories through forgetting, overcoming and accepting the crimes committed. As in *The Seller of Pasts*, in *General Theory of Oblivion* the climax takes place when the villain Magno Moreira Monte (a police who perpetrated numerous crimes) is confronted by his victims at the door of Ludo's house. At that moment, all the characters in the novel whose fate is intertwined with Ludovica's and with her Building

¹ All quotations from both novels are my translation to English from the original in Portuguese.

converge at the door of her apartment, upon which Magno Moreira Monte is confronted with his past as a torturer:

I am remembering the gentleman. You woke me up the night Simon-Pierre disappeared. The idea was to make me disappear – right?

By now all eyes were on the former agent police officer. Nasser Evangelista let go of Baiacu and advanced towards Monte, angrily, knife in hand: "I remember you too, and they are not happy memories. Monte, seeing himself surrounded by Jeremiah, Antonio, Little Soba, Daniel Benchimol and Nasser Evangelista, began to retreat toward the stairs: Calm, calm, what has passed, has passed. We are all Angolans. Nasser Evangelista did not hear him. He was listening to his own screams, a quarter of a century earlier, in a narrow cell, smelling of shit and piss. He heard the screams of a woman he never saw, coming from an identical darkness. Screams and the barking of dogs. Behind him everything was screaming. Everything was barking. He took two steps forward and pushed the blade against Monte's chest. He was surprised to find no resistance. He repeated the gesture again and again. The detective staggered, very pale, and brought his hands to his shirt. He saw no blood. His clothes were intact. Jeremiah grabbed Nasser by the shoulders and pulled him to himself. Daniel snatched the knife from his hand: It's a fake. Thank God, it's a circus knife.

So it was. The knife had a hollow handle, with a spring, into which the blade slid, hiding itself, whenever pressed.

Daniel struck himself, on the chest and neck, to show the others the falseness of the weapon. Then he jumped on top of Jeremiah. He stabbed Nasser. He laughed loudly, in wide, hysterical laughter, which the others followed. Ludo was also laughing, clutching Sabalu, tears streaming from her eyes (Agualusa, 2012, p. 192-93).

In the transcribed excerpts from the two novels, it is possible to analyze the way in which they equate the tension between remembering and forgetting in the Angolan historical context in the transition from colonial occupation to independence and subsequent civil war. The need to reiterate national unity is highlighted, as Monte claims: "we are all Angolans". On the one hand, there are the victims of the various crimes perpetrated by both the colonial power and the political forces of independent Angola; on the other, the colonists and the perpetrators of war and political crimes. On one side of the barricade are those who seek to overcome and avenge the past; on the other, those who seek to be forgotten and to overcome the past through new narratives.

The importance of forgetting in the pacification of historical memory, especially in the cases of traumatic pasts of a people, as the upcoming excerpt shows, is compared to the Kubango River on the Angolan side, Okavango on the Namibian side. The river is referred to as a reminder that once the confrontation with the past and the necessary settling of scores has passed, there is also such a need for those who were victims of violence to overcome and forget, but also the fear of those who perpetrated the crimes that they will never be forgotten:

Only Monte remained serious. He stretched his shirt, straightened his back, went downstairs. Outside, the air was scalding. A dry wind shook the trees. The detective was breathing hard. His chest hurt, not where Nasser had hit the fictitious stabs, but inside, in some secret place he couldn't put a name to. He wiped his eyes. He took his sunglasses from his pants pocket and put them on his face. The image of a canoe floating in the Okavango Delta came to his mind for no apparent reason.

The Kubango is called the Okavango when it crosses the border with Namibia. Being a large river, it does not fulfill the common destiny of its peers: it does not flow into the sea. It opens its strong arms and dies in the middle of the

desert. It is a sublime, generous death that fills the sands of the Kalahari with green and life. Monte had spent the 30th anniversary of his marriage in the Okavango Delta, in an ecological lodge – a gift from his children. They had been fortunate days, he and Maria Clara, hunting beetles and butterflies, reading, canoeing.

Some people suffer from the fear of being forgotten. This pathology is called atazagoraphobia. With him it was the opposite: he lived in terror that he would never be forgotten. There, in the Okavango Delta, he felt forgotten. He had been happy" (Agualusa, 2012, p. 193-94).

The river is also associated with time, particularly as a form of manifestation of the past, in VDP. The song that the gecko knows by heart and which is "the soundtrack of twilight" in the house (Agualusa 2004, 14) shows how the experience of time inside the house is intrinsically linked to the past and how it is remembered:

Nothing passes, nothing expires/ The past is/ a river that sleeps/ and memory a lie/multiple. The waters of the river sleep/ and in my lap the days sleep/ sleep/ the sorrows/ the agonies sleep./sleep. Nothing passes, nothing expires/ The past is/ a sleeping river/ it seems dead, it barely breathes/ wake it up and it will jump/ in an outcry (Agualusa, 2004, p. 14).

On the other hand, the house is associated with a boat moving on a river, which leads the characters in their journey to the past:

I often think of this house as a boat. An old steamship cutting its way through the heavy mud of a river. The immense forest. The night all around. (...) He pointed in a vague gesture to the vague books: "It's full of voices, my boat" (Agualusa, 2004, p. 39).

InVDP characters re-write their narrative by embodying the new biographies they request of Ventura: José Buchmann, for example, begins to believe that the story sold to him by Ventura is real and begins to adopt behavior, ways of being and speaking that are characteristic of the invented character, making Gouveia disappear, contaminated by Buchmann:

I've been studying José Buchmann for weeks now. I observe him changing. He is not the same man who entered this house six, seven months ago. Something, of the same powerful nature of metamorphosis, has been operating in his inner self. It is perhaps, as in chrysalis, the secret stirring of enzymes dissolving organs. You may argue that we are all constantly changing. Yes, I too am not the same as yesterday. The only thing in me that doesn't change is my past: the memory of my human past. The past is usually stable, it is always there, beautiful or terrible, and it will stay there forever.

(I believed this before I met Felix Ventura).

(...) I am referring to more subtle changes. First of all he is changing his accent. He has lost, is losing, that Slavic-Brazilian accent, half sweet, half sibilant, which at first disconcerted me so much. He now uses a Luandan rhythm, matching the printed silk shirts and sports shoes he is now wearing. I also find him more expansive. Laughing, he is already Angolan. He has also lost his mustache. He has become younger. He showed up at our house tonight, after almost a week of absence, and as soon as the albino opened the door for him, he went off:

– I was in Chibia!

He came in feverish. He sat down on the majestic wicker throne that the albino's great-grandfather brought from Brazil. He crossed his legs, uncrossed them. He asked for a whiskey. My friend poured it, bored. Good Lord, what was he doing in Chibia?

– I went to visit my father's grave (Aqualusa, 2004, p. 75-76).

In General Theory of Forgetting the intervention in memory is made by the observers' narratives about inexplicable events: the barking of Ludovica's dog, which nobody sees, is quickly attributed to a ghost; the case of the missing journalist that the street children think they saw being swallowed by the earth because the only trace left was a hat on the ground; the disappearance of the chickens stolen by Ludovica, an event that will be attributed to Kianda (a local deity) by her neighbors:

Thieves! thieves!

Then, having verified the impossibility that someone had climbed the smooth walls to reach the balcony and steal the chickens, the accusations turned into a terrified wail:

Spell... Spell...

And soon after into a certainty:

Kianda... The Kianda... (Aqualusa, 2012, p. 49-51).

Furthermore, Ludo was a Portuguese settler. By committing a homicide, she reenacts the crime of the colonial occupier. By covering up the crime, hiding it and all evidence, building a wall that separates her from the world and submerging herself in the depths of silence, this character resembles the problematic silence regarding the crimes committed by Portugal during the colonial occupation and the civil war and its subsequent participation in the persecutions that took place in the post-independence civil war.

The lies about the past, the fictions sold by Ventura to attribute new biographies and pasts to his clients, such as the case of José Buchmann (Gouveia), constitute another way of re-writing the past. These forgeries cause a disturbance in the pacified and domesticated versions of the official narrative. Examples of this are the Minister of independent Angola who elects a hero of the colonial war as his forged ancestor, and the President, whose face has been altered and his identity stolen, seeking a new biography without glory:

– All the stories are connected. In the end it all connects. Sigh: – But only a few, very few, very crazy people are capable of understanding this. Anyway, what I want is for you to get me the opposite of what they usually hire you for. I want you to give me a humble background. A lack-luster name. An obscure and irrefutable genealogy. There must be rich guys with no family and no glory, right? I'd like to be one of them... (Agualusa, 2004, p. 213).

Memory and the postcolonial nation

In both novels there is a confrontation between the memory of Angola's recent history and the biographical memories of the characters. This confrontation presents itself as a form of intervention and rupture with the new narratives that aim at the formation of a unity and national identity, where the characters, appealing to calm and consensus, often repeat now "we are all Angolans" (Agualusa, 2012, p. 192). Thus, also in these two novels the negotiation between the individual and biographical memory of the characters and the national narratives about identity and historical version of the past should be read in the light of Astrid Erll's words: "The notion of cultural memory has quite successfully directed our attention to the close connection that exists between, say, a nation's version of its past and its version of national identity" (Erll, 2008, p. 6).

In this context, in which memory is negotiated between the biographical and the collective for the production of a cultural memory, literature takes up the role in both novels of a tool and process of memory and intervenes in different ways in the plot: on the one hand, as a recording or a witness, as a therapy, as an autobiographical object; on the other, as an instance of creating national narratives, of contradiction??? or form of interrogation, thus contributing to the maintenance and negotiation of biographical, collective and cultural and official memories of the places inhabited by the characters. In Ventura's words:

– I am a liar by vocation –, he roared: – I lie with joy. Literature is the way a true liar has to make himself socially accepted (...)
– I think that what I do is an advanced form of literature, he confided to me. – I also create plots, I invent characters, but instead of leaving them trapped inside a book I give them life, I throw them into reality (Aguilusa, 2004, p. 91).

The reinvention and obliteration of memory is the result of the negotiation between the past and the present as materialized in the characters' individual biographies. These biographies are positioned as a form of rupture with the institutional and official narratives about the historical, political and social moment from the colonial occupation to the building of the independent and post-colonial national identity. Thus, in both novels, the negotiation between remembering and forgetting is preponderant for the destiny of the characters and conditions the outcome of the plot. Therefore, in both novels the relationship and intersection between the characters as individuals and social subjects is framed by the historical context that delimits their individual and biographical narratives, which also have the ability to influence the collective space, that is, cultural memory as presented in Cultural Memory Studies: "(...) a broad understanding of cultural memory, suggesting as a provincial definition 'the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts'" (Erl, 2008, p. 2).

In this context, memory also has a prospective mission, since, by delimiting and framing the characters' past, it largely determines, or strongly conditions, their destinies, simultaneously investing itself with potential –collective and individual– futures. This characteristic also applies to institutional and national memory, which, by framing the past, delimits or directs future trajectories within the collective imaginary.

The role played by literature for the notion of memory is seen as relevant, active both as a means and object of memory

conservation and, consequently, as a resource for observing the production of cultural memory (Erll and Rigney, 2006, p. 112).

In *The Literary Representation of Memory*, Brigit Neumann proposes a narratological analysis of memory fictions (Neumann, 2008, p. 334) recalling multiple contributions made by literature to the formation of cultural memory. Here the role of negotiation of cultural memory that literature plays is highlighted:

“However, on the textual level, novels create new models of memory. They configure memory representations because they select and edit elements of culturally given discourse: They combine the real and the imaginary, the remembered and the forgotten, and, by means of narrative devices, imaginatively explore the workings of memory, thus offering new perspectives on the past. Such imaginative explorations can influence readers’ understanding of the past and thus refigure culturally prevailing versions of memory. Literature is therefore never a simple reflection of pre-existing cultural discourses; rather, it proactively contributes to the negotiation of cultural memory” (Neumann, 2008, p. 335).

In VDP the rewriting of the past is done through the stories invented to support the new identities created by Ventura and by the embodiment by the characters of these new identities. In TGE the narratives created by the numerous characters to explain inexplicable events and Ludovica’s diaries are a form of rewriting the past.

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Imagining Cultural Transfers – Poetics of Cultural Contact, Circulation and Exchange

Web Novels as Vehicles of Cultural Transfer Across the Globe. Re-negotiations of Cultural Histories Between East and West

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Abstract:

The article explores the global circulation of web novels and their rising popularity in the 21st century. Moreover, the study analyses the close connection and relationship between web novels and transmedia storytelling. It focuses on the transformative dimension and adaptive productivity of digital fiction, highlighting the collaborative efforts, which contribute to its fascinating quality and easy dispersion around the globe. Often closely linked to an international readership preferring a forum-based communication, web novels are at the same time firmly rooted in a cultural imaginary, which they also stimulate and expand.

Keywords: Web novels, Spreadability, Dispersion, Transmedia Storytelling, Transformative Dimension

Nowadays, web fiction is becoming increasingly popular. Since the beginning of the 21st century the global impact of web novels has steadily expanded. The serial form of publishing, often favoured by web authors, proves to be most attractive, while the transposition into various media forms also seems to enhance the worldwide spreadability and dispersion of narratives.

In my article I would like to explore the function and potential of web fiction in three different respects:

- First, I would like to focus on the specific qualities of web fiction and explain the main reasons for its increasing attractiveness.

- Second, I will discuss the close connection between web novels and transmedia storytelling – that is the transformative dimension and adaptive productivity of digital fiction published in various online platforms around the globe.

- My third point will be the new role of the traditional book format, as it is emerging from the context of digital texts and their adaptations. As we shall see, users of the new social online platforms dedicated to digitally reading and writing are not altogether oblivious of the old traditional book medium. On the contrary (and perhaps paradoxically), they often develop an amazing appreciation of the printed book in its aesthetic complexity.

Accordingly, the key questions concerning this multi-faceted topic can be summarized as follows: What are the specific qualities that render web fictions attractive for authors and readers alike? What are the prominent features of web novels, what is their key to success, and, to what extent do they contribute to the evolution of world literature, in the global sense of the term?

Let me start on my first point with a representative example. Wattpad is probably one of the most well known online social reading platforms offering users diverse options of reading and creating original stories. According to the co-founders Allen Lau, a Canadian entrepreneur, and his colleague Ivan Yuen, the Toronto based platform aims at sharing creative work and removing barriers between readers and writers, such as social privileges or complicated and expensive publishing processes.

User accounts are usually free of charge and therefore easily accessible for netizens.

Significantly, the self-advertisement on the introductory page of the website resorts to the inclusive, collective pronoun „we“, addressing the readers in an informal, casual style: „Hi, we're Wattpad“ (<https://www.wattpad.com>). Moreover, the providers of the platform claim their product to be „the world's most-loved social storytelling platform“ because „Wattpad connects a global community of 90 million readers and writers through the power of story“ (Ibid.). Interestingly, the operators sing the praises of a very ancient cultural practice known as ‚storytelling‘. They also envisage the ultimate aim of publishing the most successful digital texts as best-selling novels in the familiar form of the printed book: „Wattpad Books aspires to recognize and reflect diverse voices by taking Wattpad stories to published books and onto bookshelves around the world“ (<https://www.wattpad.com>).

Moreover, one of the principals aims of the founders was making numerous literary texts available to mobile users, thus combining reading as a crucial cultural technique with mobility, ubiquity and the dynamics of sharing intellectual products. The growing digitization is appreciated as a favourable vehicle and convenient framework for the re-inventing of narratives and the exploration of its comprehensive forms. Within this framework, digitalisation is supposed to entail the democratisation and widespread dissemination of fictions.

As a frequently quoted early example of popular web fiction, Scott Zakarin's *The Spot* (1995-1997) deserves to be mentioned because it is often referred to as a prototype. – The term 'webisode' was coined to describe its characteristic form and features (Smed, 2021) – it was streamed on the website thespot.com from 1995 to 1997, and, the series tells its story through characters' journal entries. Furthermore, it was highly praised for its interactivity with its audience, which was considered a novelty in the 1990s.

Apparently, there are great differences in quality, originality, and, style among web novels. If they are well written and successful, however, their availability on the internet and their spreadability will sooner or later enhance their popularity. Thus, fascinating and original web novels will attract even more attention and are bound to be adapted to other media. There are abundant examples of internet novels being transformed into television or web series. In this respect it seems not at all surprising that Allen Lau is also a board member of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), „a cultural organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world through film“ (<https://company.wattpad.com/allen-lau>).

This observation leads me to my second point: Web fiction frequently inspires transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a relatively recent type of narrative crossing the boundaries not only of genres, but also of different media. In the last few years, it has attracted scholarly awareness and has been analyzed by scholars of literary history, narratologists, and, media experts alike (see, for instance, the contributions of Henry Jenkins, Marie-Laure Ryan, Carlos Alberto Scolari, Annette Simonis and Barbara Strautmann, who explore diverse aspects of the phenomenon). As Henry Jenkins has proposed in his compelling definition, „transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story“ (Jenkins, 2007). Marie-Laure Ryan has discussed the interesting question, whether transmedia narratives are a top-down or a bottom-up phenomenon (Ryan, 2015, p. 5), i.e. the question in how far the storytelling is not only hosted, but also inspired and controlled by the great media franchises. This controversy is still an ongoing discussion among the experts, and has not yet been decided clearly.

In this context, it is no coincidence that Wattpad promises its authors a brilliant career of their texts as models for films and other

popular adaptations, reaching beyond the limitations of the textual medium: „Your original story could be the next big hit. Wattpad Studios discovers untapped, unsigned, and talented writers on Wattpad and connects them to global multi-media entertainment companies“(<https://www.wattpad.com>). Obviously, the large media platforms assume a key role in discovering and supporting eligible works and their authors.

Indeed, transmedia storytelling substantially contributes to the dynamics of producing web novels and of their reception. The transmedial dimension serves as a vehicle of dissemination and spreading through the World Wide Web, crossing cultural boundaries with unexpected ease and participating in globalisation.

At the same time the transmedial dimension itself becomes a powerful vehicle of cultural transfer. When being transferred to visual media (like film, manga etc) the story, or more precisely, the narrative core, is abstracted and becomes more or less independent from its specific linguistic basis (cp. Ryan, 2013). This facilitates and stimulates its transnational circulation. The storyworld and plot of a web novel can inspire a Tv series which in turn may stimulate a manga or an anim . At the same time the increasing popularity of the narrative favour’s international translations of the original work as well as translations of the corresponding screen play in form of subtitles etc.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the internet publishing form is favourable towards cultural exchange, stimulating the circulation of narratives around the globe. The production and translation of Chinese web novels and their enthusiastic reception in the West (U.S., Canada, U.K., Spain, Germany, Russia etc.) may serve as a prominent example for the transnational and transcultural dynamics of contemporary reading on the web. In contemporary China, webnovels (also named Internet Literature or *wangluo wenxue*) constitute the dominant form of digital fiction (see Hockx, 2015, p. 4, Skains, 2022). A widespread Chinese term addressing internet literature writers is *xieshou*, 'writing hands' (cp. Hockx, 2015, p. 5), which, interestingly, focuses on the original process of

writing, including all the material aspects of the handicraft. Y. Zhang regards the „advent of new media in the 1990s“as a liberating event entailing the end of an „elite monopoly of literary institutions" (Zhang, 2015, p. 3). Since then, Internet or Web literature „has swiftly spread to cultivate tastes and values alternative or even oppositional to elite culture“ (ibid., see also Fanetti, 2022).

Webnovels are often serialized stories constructed in a collaborative, forum-based, online community. They can, however, also be individual creations. Internet publishing also attracts many individual authors, who aim at a larger, potentially global audience. Some recent Chinese web novels, especially the modern fantasy genre, invested with additional elements of historical and detective fiction, such as for instance *Mó Dào Zǔ Shī*, *The Grandmaster of demonic cultivation*, are being read by millions of overseas fans, mostly in English translations, but also in Mandarin, by users with a migration background. Significantly they have been termed „the country's most successful cultural export“. The international success of the web novel *Mó Dào Zǔ Shī* (Chinese: 魔道祖师), engl. *The Grandmaster of demonic cultivation*, written by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu is mostly due to the corresponding film series *The Untamed* (*Chen qing ling*, 2019) which first aired in China on the network Tencent Video in summer 2019 in 50 episodes. (See <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10554898/>) A shorter version, a 20-episode special edition of the drama, aired on WeTV starting on December 25, 2019. As a result of its great success, the production seemed a good candidate for an international or transnational audience and was also streamed on Netflix.

As has been mentioned above, the drama series was based on the popular web novel *Mó Dào Zǔ Shī*. The novel was received somewhat controversially in contemporary China, because it included BL content, depicting a close friendship between the two protagonists, which gradually developed into an erotic relationship. The main characters, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji are sect members and cultivators in a fantasy world that is typical of the genre of the so called xianxia novel. In the xianxia genre of Chinese fantasy,

we encounter a heterogeneous mixture of Chinese mythology, Taoism, Buddhism, Chinese martial arts, traditional Chinese popular beliefs, etc. (see Cheong & Qin, 2022, p. 19).

Without going into detail concerning the semantics of the elaborate and complex narrative, one observation seems evident: The fascination of the story apparently stems from the subtle combination of elements from Chinese mythology and martial arts with key components of international fantasy literature and film (compare Simonis, 2022).

The pair of young actors were celebrated as rising stars and soon became very high in demand in the production industry and with advertising companies. An audiobook and a manhua accompanied the lasting success of the novel and the TV drama. Not least of all, it deserves to be mentioned that in the wake of the popularity of the donghua and the TV drama the web novel has been published as a book in several editions in Main China as well as in Taiwan and Singapore. Most editions have a representative form, some are richly illustrated editions.

Since its first airing the series has also inspired numerous fanfiction published in the World Wide Web, in social media and media collections or archives. The *Archive of our own* currently includes 42342 fanfictions based on *The Untamed*, while the novel *The Grandmaster of demonic cultivation*, and its multiple adaptations have inspired a total number of 60748 texts in the *Archive* since 2017 on the same website).

This takes me to my third and last observation – what about the book, the traditional format of world literature? As it becomes obvious on closer examination, it would be over-hasty and premature to claim that the book has been rendered superfluous or redundant by recent media developments. On the contrary, the rise of the web novel has not abolished the book-based novel, but has stimulated its evolution in the 21st century.

In contemporary culture, we can observe an interesting phenomenon, which can best be described as a re-emerging of the traditional medium of the book in the context of transmedial pro-

cesses. Surprisingly, the traditional book format often provides the final climax within the transformation process and the series of adaptations. This is illustrated by numerous fan videos showcasing the process of unboxing a recently printed book originating from a web novel.

Numerous fan-made videos on Tiktok, Facebook and YouTube testify the unboxing of the book or the series of three books of *Mó Dào Zǔ Shī* / *The Grandmaster of demonic cultivation*, treating this ancient medium as a precious object, an object of art to be meticulously examined and treasured (See, for instance: <https://www.tiktok.com/@autoranahabreu/video/7122080801197411589?lang=ceb-PH>, <https://www.tiktok.com/@yuyu15ting/video/7065576286214753562>, https://youtu.be/lvqZu_Qd8IM [25.01.2023].)

Finally, the chain of subsequent adaptations inspired by the digital internet text is returning to the most traditional medial representation of the written text, that is the form of the book, fascinating by its solid nature with its haptic, sensual and visual attributes, immediately catching the attention of the readers.

The numerous fan videos on ‚unboxing‘ are enacting the fascination still emanating from the book, skimming reverently through its pages, enjoying the sudden intimacy of the sensual encounter with a highly cherished text, formerly only available in its virtual, digital form, celebrating the final triumph of this media type. The published book finally seems to prevail as the perhaps superior personification of successful fiction, when compared to the more transitory digital versions of the texts.

Especially the expensive, richly illustrated versions, often termed as ‚limited editions‘, of the work of fiction in question, seem to reveal and establish its true character as a work of art.

Apparently, in the case of web fiction and its numerous transformations, the analogue medium of the book no longer functions as starting point of the transmedia storytelling, because it has been replaced by the digital internet format. Interestingly, the expected order of adaptations seems to be reversed. The publication of a book edition in print often appears to be the last part of a chain of adap-

tations. Nonetheless it still occupies a privileged position within the chain of adaptations, insofar as it reappears as the final version of the transformative process, if not as the ultimate aesthetic incarnation of the story.

The emergence or re-appearance of the book in the course of the successful career of the web novel manifests its resilience as a preferred carrier medium of the narrative. In comparison, the digital version seems slightly inferior to the prestigious and colourful book editions.

Let us finally have a look at the transcultural aspect of web novels and their transmedial adaptations. Evidently, the potential of cultural transfer highly depends on genre and genre conventions. As has been elaborated above, the example of *Mó Dào Zǔ Shī* proved to be eligible for transcultural and transmedia adaptations. Nowadays, the fantasy genre offers most promising transcultural components. The mythological concepts of resurrection and self-cultivation in *The Grandmaster of demonic cultivation* are not specifically Chinese but seem common elements in different mythologies, therefore they are liable to transcultural circulation. The same applies to the mission of revenge in the wuxia genre.

Many elements of mythological and fantastic worldbuilding constitute common ground between different nations and their cultural imaginary; therefore, they provide transcultural tendencies and are easily appreciated by international audiences. At the same time, cultural idiosyncrasies will not be considered an obstacle for the process of international reception when they are combined with and embedded in a larger transcultural framework.

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Transnationalism and the Languages /Literatures of the Global South: South Asian Perspectives

Delineation of Inner Spaces and Angst: A Comparative Study of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice – Candy – Man*

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Abstract:

The recent women writers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh exemplify the issue of gendered self-representation and feminist concern. Their works realize not only the diversity of women but the diversity within each woman. They are incorporating their experiences to make a new, empowering image for women, instead of limiting the lives of women to one ideal; they push the ideal towards the full expression of each woman's potential. Indian land is known for its unity and diversity. It has been a witness to the most horrific as well as terrible atrocities that have ever been committed in the history of humanity. The harrowing situation of women during partition has been quite popular among the literary writers. The present study tries to delineate the wounded souls of women during the partition of India in 1947. It has described the condition of women as delineated by Amrita Pritam in *Pinjar* and Bapsi Sidhwa in *Ice– Candy Man*. It will also aim at presenting a comparative study as to how both the writers share different perspectives of women during partition in their masterpieces- *Pinjar* and *Ice-Candy-Man* respectively. In both the novels we get a clear glimpse of the atrocities of partition and the ultimate tragedy shattering the lives of women across the boundaries. Both the novelists have

described the pangs of women's suffering in a realistic way. Amrita Pritam has tried to present an Indian identity in her description of Pooro's journey of transformation from Pooro to Hamida, her loss of identity and agony while on the contrary Bapsi Sidhwa has given her own description through the character of Ayah, who was kidnapped by the Ice-Candy-Man.

Though both the novels centre around the theme of partition and the plight of women, their struggle and suffering due to the perpetrators of violence either in the name of culture, religion or societal norms during partition, the writers have tried to analyse the situation in their own way. Of course, in presenting the condition of women during and after the partition both the writers have the same views. However, Sidhwa has delved deeper by depicting the trauma in a more realistic way through her feminist lens. The present paper intends to present a comparative stance of both the characters –Pooro on the one hand and Ayah on the other in terms of pangs and trauma they suffer in the hands of their near and dear ones against the background of partition.

Keywords: Trauma, Oppression, Atrocities, Identity Crisis, Tortured Self

Research Goals

The objective of the paper is to present a comparative stance of the efforts made by two great writers– Amrita Pritam and Bapsi Sidhwa and their concern for the status of women in contemporary society with a view to helping them cross the threshold of societal norms. The paper also focuses on depicting the atrocities committed on women during and after partition.

Methods

The researcher has used a direct method to bring forth the various nuances of partition. She has discussed the impact of partition on women. And for this purpose, the primary sources and the secondary sources both have been taken into consideration.

In the history of the twin nations, India and Pakistan the political act of partition remains a drastic event which still brings fears and tears into the eyes of people who recall it. The partition led to hostility, distrust, religious enmity, attacks and counter-attacks culminating into wide spread massacre and rape. These all constitute the major parts of the subject matter of the partition novels. These novels depict not just the story of bloodshed but also delineate the anguished cry of helpless and hopeless multitude caught in the vortex of death and destruction which was based on insane and pseudo dogmatic religious practices and more inaudible afflictions of sensitive mind who suffered the most. The novels like *Train to Pakistan*, *The Shadow Lines* and *Ice – Candy-Man* and short stories like *Pinjar* record the ghastly tragedies of the partition and its impact on the common man on streets. These novels, moreover, present as to how the borders of India and Pakistan came to know violence that destroyed the very bond of brotherhood. As far as women writers are concerned they besides portraying the partition experience in general specifically record the women's experiences, thereby presenting a gendered perspective of partition. The women writers like Amrita Pritam in *Pinjar*, Bapsi Sidhwa in *Ice – Candy Man*, Jyotirmayee Devi in *The River Churning*, and many others seem to be propelled by an inner space to articulate the painful experiences of women during partition. They have delineated their characters in such a way as the people experience the situation as women perceive it. They not only portray the victimization of women but also their resilience.

The trauma of partition has been scripted with blackest letters on the darkest pages of human cruelty and bloodshed. Women have suffered violence within and without men's pre-structured security

around them. The records show and history narrates that women were massacred inside and outside their homes. They were abducted and forced to accept brutality, were victimized in communal riots and even were made them the easy prey of lynch-mob frenzy and were psychologically traumatized to the extent of being driven to jump into wells and commit suicide to preserve their dignity as women.

Amrita Pritam is a renowned Punjabi poetess and novelist of the twentieth century. Her most of the works centre around the sufferings of women and afflictions of multitudes caught in the hell of communal violence. *Pinjar*, [written by her in Punjabi and translated by Khushwant Singh in English is an unprejudiced depiction of author's anguish over massacres during the partition of India. It shows that communal hatred was mainly and deeply rooted in the minds of Hindus and Muslims. It is a story of a young girl, Pooro who has been abducted by a man, Rashid in order to avenge the family enmity and when she escapes back to her parents she is disowned.

The novel revolves around Pooro and her happy family of two sisters and a brother. She unquestioningly accepts whatever her parents decide for her marriage. Her marriage has been fixed with Ramchand. Their wedding ceremony is going to be held very soon. But destiny has decided something different for her. The turning point of the story and Pooro's life arrives when she is abducted by Rashid, a Muslim boy who wanted to avenge for the similar act committed by her uncle. Rashid does not rape her though he traps her many days in his house. After struggling a lot, she manages to escape and goes home but there is no place for her in the family as she had been abducted which puts her chastity and fidelity to question, "You have lost your faith and birthright. If we dare to help you, we will be cut down and finished without a trace of blood left behind to tell our faith" (Pritam, 2013, p. 23). Being rejected by her family, she returns to Rashid to lead an identity-less life. He forces her to marry and changes her name Hamida from Pooro, "She became Hamida by day and turned back Pooro by night. In reality, she

was neither Hamida nor Pooro; she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name (Pritam, 2013, p. 25).

She is a classic example of a traumatic psyche which is the result of divided and tortured identity. Priyadarshini Das Gupta in her article, "Re-covering Women: Reading Two Partition Stories", rightly points out the predicaments of Pooro, "Now she is Pooro only in her dreams and in her reminiscences of her parents' home. This duality she cannot take affably to and is soon reduced to mere skin and bones" (Dasgupta, 2013, p.5). She strongly feels that she is now attached to her husband yet there always burns the flame of desire that one day she might see her mother. Pooro does not kill her memories of family, friends and fiancé but keeps them intact in her subconscious mind and in her dream only. Rashid repents for the crime of her abduction and seeks redemption. He tries to provide love and care to her but she is unrelenting as the wounds inflicted by him are really unforgivable. She bitterly accepts the fact that now she has no family to go to but Rashid with whom she has to spend the rest of her life. Being a mother of a son makes it easier for her to accept the tortured identity. Amrita Pritam highlights that women are considered merely bodies of violence, nothing more than bodies. Puro's dilemma is repeated when Lajo is abducted by Muslims and kept in captivity in her own house and Ramchand comes to Pooro seeking her help to relieve Lajo. She shows immense strength with the help of Rashid in the hour of crisis to help Lajo to escape from the clutches of abductors and to hand over her to Ramcharad at the Refugee camp for a fresh start. Hamida as a wife knew the agony through which Rashid had gone through these years and also his repentance. This developed respect for him in her heart and she accepted him as husband and she did not want to go through the same pain of separation through which she had already been with Ramchand. She wanted to stay back to help all the helpless women who were left behind to reunite with their family. The anguished outcry of Amrita Pritam is remarkable, "It was a sin to be alive in a world so full of evil...It was a crime to be born a girl" (p. 87).

Delineation of the wretched lives of women in *Pinjar* may be compared to the condition of Sita in *The Ramayana* where women's miseries continue even in the present time. Pooro's life is compared to Sita's as she is also abducted and later abandoned by the society but she emerges as a strong feminist when she decided to stay back to help other victims of partition. Amrita Pritam's depiction of Pooro is very much similar to the portrayal of the character of Nooran in *Train to Pakistan* as well. She is the beloved of Jugga, a criminal turned humanist. She shares the sufferings of the women caught in the vortex of communal hatred. She does not want to leave the village as she feels herself to be deeply rooted in the soil of Mano Majra. Her home is the land where her forthcoming child would be with its father. She offers prayers for Jugga's return from police custody. She goes to Jugga's mother and reveals that she is in a family way and has conceived the child of her son. She implores her to give her and her child shelter expressing apprehension that if the child is born in Pakistan it would be killed. She begs her for mercy for herself and the child. Her hope is shattered when her plead is rejected by Jugga's mother. She has to go to the refugee camp for shelter with her thwarted dream.

Pooro feels herself to be disconnected not only from her home and health but also from her social and religious mooring and hence an agonized soul. In the meantime, India gets Independence with the partition. She is severed off from her last connection with the native land. The partition aggravates her afflictions like anything. An identity of Hamida is imprinted on her soul. She writhes within and finds no escape from her predicaments. Her anguished cry is subdued and she becomes merely bones and skeleton. Though Rashid has always been good since kidnapping and did not call her Hamida, Amrita reveals her soul, "In her dreams, when she met her old friends and played in her parents' home, everyone still called her Pooro" (p.25)

Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the major writers writing on partition. She belongs to India, Pakistan and the United States simultaneously but she likes herself to be called as a Punjabi – Pakistani – Parsee

woman. Her novel *Ice – Candy-Man* examines the inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitudes. The novel captures the effects of communal frenzy that follows partition through the innocent eyes of Lenny, the child narrator of the novel. She is polio-ridden, precocious and a keen observer of the happenings around. The story of the novel has been presented from her point of view. She has a deformity in her foot. She is apprehensive that Dr. Bharucha may finally be able to correct her leg by repeatedly putting it in a cast. Her deformity imparts a special status to her. She is rather happy with her deformity. She uses it to gain sympathy and favour. She grows up in comfort and tranquility in her house on Warris road in Lahore. Col. Bharucha is the spokesman of the Parsee community in Lahore. He advises his people to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare to safeguard their interest. The Parsee paradox of whether to 'Swaraj' or to maintain their loyalty to the British Raj is also humorously delineated. A piquant touch is given to his dilemma. The Parsees in Lahore at a special meeting at their temple hall in Warris Road have an acrimonious debate on the political system. If India is divided and independence is achieved, political glory, fame and fortune will be acquired by the two major communities-Hindus and Muslims. Col. Bharucha says, "Hindus, Muslims and even Sikhs are going to jockey for power and if you jokers jump into the middle you will be mangled into Chutney" (Sidhwa, 1987, p. 36).

Shanta, the eighteen year old Hindu Ayah of Lenny has a seductive appearance and attracts many admirers. When Ayah takes Lenny in the evening to the park, her several admirers assemble around her. Among them is Hotel cook, the government house gardener, the head and the body Masseur, the Zoo attendant Sher Singh and Ice– Candy man—all vying for her attentions and her favours. Ayah has such stunning looks that she draws covetous glances from every one. Beggars, holy men, hawkers, cart-drivers, cooks, coolies and cyclists turn their heads as she passes and ogle at her. Of these Masseur and Ice – Candy Man are Ayah's most favourite. In an interview, Bapsi Sidhwa declared, "Part of my title

Ice – Candy Man did reflect on Ice – Candy Man that is manipulative politician who hold out false candies to people" (Interview).

Even the English men are not able to resist her magnetic charm. They are people of different faiths—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs—yet they live together amicably in a spirit of oneness. Gradually things change and this change is depicted in the dwindling of the group around Ayah. Things start turning ugly and violent. Houses are looted and burnt. There are riots – English soldiers being chased by Sikhs. Ayah moans at the horror of the scene and collapses but the violence excites many including the Ice – Candy man. The entire area is set on fire. The Hindu and Sikh families leave Lahore as communal trouble brews. Ice – Candy man would like to avenge those deaths, those rapes and mutilations. He becomes a communalist. He joins the gangs of Marauding hooligans in their looting and killing spree. He not only abducts Ayah but also throws her to the wolves of passion in a Kotha:

The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart
and their harsh hands supporting her with careless
intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed
against her, propping her body upright, their lips
stretched in triumphant grimaces.

(Sidhwa, 1987, p. 183)

Ayah is taken to Hira Mandi where she is transformed from Ayah to Mumtaz and is forcibly married to him. Though she is afterwards rescued by Godmother, a departure from *The Bride* where the rescue of Zaitoon was affected by a man and was sent across the border. She is completely shattered and disillusioned. Lenny also gives an account of the village of Pir Pandas where she frequently visited. She helps the Hindus during riots and even donates blood. She very rightly comments on Ayah's situation:

That we fated, daughter. It can't be undone. But it
can be forgiven... Worse things are forgiven. Life goes
on and business of living buries the debris of our pasts.
Hurt, happiness... all fade impartially... to make way for
fresh joy and new sorrow. That's the way of life.

(Sidhwa, 1987, p. 262)

Lenny is like the persona that Chaucer adopts in his *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. With the wonder of a child, she observes social change and human behaviour, seeking and listening to opinions and occasionally making judgements. The subtle irony and deft usage of language creates humour which does not shroud, but raucously highlights the trauma of the partition. The author sensitively shows the human toll of the partition, when Lenny asks, "Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it, where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" (1987, p. 92).

Ice – Candy-Man not only presents the barbaric details of atrocities perpetrated by one community over another, but also delineates various manifestations of pettiness and degenerated values which had hollowed the inner structural strength of the society. Though Lenny is baffled by various questions, she simultaneously becomes aware of religious differences. She worriedly remarks, "It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves-And the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, people shrinking, dwindling into symbols" (1987, p. 93).

Ice – Candy Man also presents friends turning foes. In an attempt to save their lives, many convert– some Hindus become Muslims and some Christians. Nobody is safe. Hari is humiliated; Ayah is abducted, Masseur is killed. Personal scores are settled. The writer brilliantly contrasts earlier playful games with cruelty and brutality after religious differences begin separating Hindus from Muslims, Christians from Sikhs. Sidhwa also suggests that though the past cannot be forgotten, it can be forgiven. The novel, though politically motivated, is also a work of art; it is a good blending of

realism and autobiographical form. However, she fails to present a subtle exploration of events. She only presents a kind of truth telling history; in portrayal and narrative she becomes pedantic. Her expression of despair and hopelessness to some extent belongs to savage irony that suggests an existence without hope, warmth and humanness. The novel distills the love-hate relationship of the Hindus and the Muslims. Indeed, Sidhwa's depiction of holocaust presents her Pakistani perspective and to some extent her biased point of view. Her main concern like that of Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* is to expose a brutal fact of how Muslims suffered in the hands of Sikhs and how Sikhs were killed by Muslim fanatics. But the treatment of partition does not arouse genuine pathos.

Partition was really a traumatic experience. The psychological trauma constituted partition with crucial factors of violence, loot and murder. A trauma, in the words of Sukeshi Kamra, "is a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience" (2022, p. 178). Sidhwa shows that the communal frenzy has a distorting effect on the masses and leads to feelings of distrust and frenzy. The novel conveys a serious warning of the dangers of communalism and religious fanaticism. Revenge becomes the major motivation for the Ice-Candy man and his friends. The novelist shows that during communal strife, sanity, human feelings and past friendships are forgotten. Here we are reminded of the message in Bhisham Sahni's novel *Tamas* that "those who forget history are condemned to repeat it." Bapsi Sidhwa represents those women who are kidnapped and raped, then rejected by their families and relegated to rehabilitation centre where they are subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment. The novel raises an issue that is always of serious concern for both the countries. Sidhwa's treatment of the subject is so fresh and refreshing that this dark and sordid tale of partition turns into a powerful truth telling narrative.

Results

Women have always been considered as subaltern in the patriarchal society, be it India, Pakistan Bangladesh or any other South-Asian country. Here both the novels – *Pinjar* and *Ice-Candy-Man* present Amrita Pritam and Bapsi Sidhwa as feminists and idealists who see in their women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love and the courage of one's convictions. The protagonists, Pooro and Ayah are portrayed not only as victims but also as saviours, thereby highlighting their contribution as agency in redeeming the distressed. Generally in male narratives, it is men who embrace action, seeking to shape circumstances to their will. But in the partition discourses by women writers, roles of women emerge paramount. Moreover, they have presented women characters as stereotyped victims, drawing on the easy pathos of helpless suffering. They refuse to accept passively an imposition of suffering as destiny. The impact of partition is psychologically understood and narrated through the feelings of women. Despite both the writers being feminists the way of depicting the atrocities during the partition period is different. Their approach to the treatment of the subject is dissimilar. Whereas Amrita Pritam has focused on the theme against the background of marriage, Bapsi Sidhwa has tried to highlight the incidents which took place with Ayah. However, both the writers have depicted the trauma and turbulence, especially in the context of women who became easy prey to violence during partition.

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**Exploration of Womanhood and the Assertion of Self:
A Comparative Study of Meghna Pant's *One and a Half
Wife* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride***

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Abstract:

Feminism emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women's rights on the one hand and love, respect, sympathy and understanding from males on the other. It focused on women's struggle for recognition and survival and made them realise that the time has come when they should stop suffering silently in helplessness. The images of women in South Asian novels have also undergone a change in the last three decades. Earlier women were conceived as a symbol of self sacrifice and suffering. In due course of time women writers affected by Western Feminism have explored the alternative ideal of self assertion. The feminist writers have emphasised a new perspective of women. They have rebelled against stern patriarchy and male chauvinism. Meghna Pant's *One and a Half Wife* reveals the struggle and circumstances faced by a woman, Amara Malhotra, entangled in the Indian orthodox culture. Here she is caught in a tug-of-war between old beliefs and new ones, between parents who favour obedience and new friends who encourage independent thought. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* poignantly describes the circumspect world of women in a world dominated by men where women are not individuals but objects to be possessed, nothing more than a piece of land and sometimes a beast that can be traded with. Zaitoon not only defies her destiny but also challenges it by running away from the clutches of her tyrant husband. Women are like commodities in the tribal society to be bartered and traded. Once married they become part of the property of their husbands, which the latter must protect. Bapsi Sidhwa reinforces this macabre image of woman graphically in

various sections of the novel. Both the writers have opined that women have occupied a subaltern position that is oppressed both by traditional notion of patriarchy and by colonialism. But their ways of treating the theme of womanhood are quite different – Meghna Pant on the one hand portrays the character of Amara in new light, showing her as a blend of traditional and modern wife, whereas Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel has delineated the character of Zaitoon as a subdued, submissive and obedient wife who shows her courage at the end. The present paper intends to make a comparative study of both the novels.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Submissive, Male-Chauvinism, Orthodox Culture

Research Goals

The objective of the paper is to present a woman in a new colour as independent, bold and assertive who has to struggle a lot in the patriarchal social structure. It will also highlight the efforts undertaken by a woman to break the fetters of woman's servility and oppression and prove her worth to the world.

Methods

In writing the paper direct method has been used. The primary sources and the secondary sources have been taken into consideration while preparing the manuscript.

Feminism emerged as a worldwide movement to secure women's rights on the one hand and love, respect, sympathy and understanding from males on the other. It focused on women's

struggle for recognition and survival and made them realise that the time has come when they should stop suffering silently in helplessness. Quest for feminine identity is largely a post-independence social phenomenon in India – a phenomenon influenced by various changing forces of reality, freedom movement progressive education, social reforms, increasing contacts with the west, urban growth.

The condition of women is equally miserable in Indian society. It is basically patriarchal where a woman is given the secondary role. In the male dominated society a woman has been the victim of male hypocrisy, exploitation and violence but she could not freely narrate or openly discuss these experiences. However, with the passage of time, the women folk became conscious of their rights and they with their male counterparts struggled for achievements in the professional and economic spheres and deconstructed the image of a submissive, repressed and self-effacing being. The picture that emerges is of a self-reliant, emancipated and happy individual, a person intelligent, confident and assertive.

The images of women in South Asian novels have also undergone a change in the last three decades. Earlier women were conceived as a symbol of self sacrifice and suffering. In due course of time women writers affected by Western Feminism have explored the alternative ideal of self assertion. From the suffering women in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai et al. to the recent subversions of the traditional image in the works of Chitra Fernando, Anees Jung, Bapsi Sidhwa and Taslima Nasrin, the women have come a long way. The recent writers explore the wonderful consequences of Indian women renaming self and experience. Individually they have gained a name collectively an identity. Their new strength stems from personalities defining their own terms lending grace to living. To voice a pain, to divulge a secret was considered sacrilege, a breach of family trust. Today voices are raised without fear and are heard outside the walls of homes that once kept a woman protected and also isolated. The feminist writers have

emphasised a new perspective of women. They have rebelled against stern patriarchy and male chauvinism.

Meghna Pant's *One and a Half Wife* reveals the struggle and circumstances faced by a woman, Amara Malhotra, entangled in the Indian orthodox culture. Being the only girl child of her parents, she always dreamt of American education and also of a prince like groom to support her the rest of her life. Though she migrated to the USA alongwith her parents, she was not able to assimilate that American culture and mentality to that of Indian beliefs. The novel has also highlighted the effect of divorce on the life and honour of women in general and Amara Malhotra in particular. Unlike most Indian immigrants, Amara is not destined to achieve the American Dream. Much to the anxiety of her parents & the spirited Biji and the doting Baba & Amara leads an unremarkable life. She marries a Harvard educated millionaire, Prashant Roy. Amara had learnt that in Indian society, everything & prayer, education, family, beauty, chastity and career was a rung of the ladder of life, which had to be climbed to reach the top rung, marriage. She tried her best to adjust in American way of life but, "everything fits together in America except the immigrant's identity." (Pant, 2012, p.83) Throughout her life Amara kept on learning how to be a good wife but despite her best efforts, she could not be the wife Prashant wanted. There was none who could understand her and her feelings. Even Biji, her mother dismissed her concerns, "Marriage like that only. Don't be asking more than you deserve. And don't be talking bad about new family in front of me or other" (2012, p.100).

Moreover, the attention and respect that Amara did not get from her husband came to her from the Indian American community. Her marriage sounded good on paper, "Beautiful apartment in Manhattan, a husband earning a six figure salary, vacations in Hawaii and movies every week" (2012, p.100). In order to impress Prashant, Amara to keep herself fit, cut down her meals to twice a day and went four times a week to Equinox gym. However, this was not enough as sex remained a hurried process between them without any affection. Amara still did it because it was the only way

she could keep her hopes of a baby alive. Prashant never wanted Amara to have white friends, "Remember we need this land, not its people (2012, p.107). He did not mind working or networking with them, but when it came to friendship, he wanted only Indians. Prashant had many expectations from Amara, especially in the context of his mother & to fluff the pillows, bring out the most darling comforter and warm the milk. At those times, Amara thought the word 'wife' was too small to accommodate its responsibility. Of all the roles Amara had played – daughter, student, employee, sister and wife & wife was the only syllable and disproportionately the most difficult. Prashant was not comfortable with the relationship between himself and his wife, Amara, "This marriage is a sham. We are not like a normal husband and wife. I don't love you. I never will" (2012, p.131). Amara shared her worries with Stacy, one of her friends in America. Prashant was thinking in terms of divorcing Amara. Amara in a disturbed mood observed, "As an Indian in America, divorce is a big deal. What is seen as liberating in America is bondage for Indians." (p.44) Ultimately Amara had realised that Prashant was adamant on divorcing her. Her entire dream was shattered and her worst fears came to life haunting her, "how was she going to live as a divorcee...?" (2012, p.169). She saw the rest of her life boil down to cruel isolation and rejection.

With the passage of time Amara's focus shifted to a career from marriage. Over the last few months, she had been witness to stories of divorces, legal wrangles, gold-digging wives, wife beating husbands, shattered children & and she realised that comparatively she had had a quick divorce, which hurt when it happened, but healed quicker because it was firm and definite. She often thought that she had brought violence upon her family by being a divorcee running her own business and letting her parents house her. Finally she decided to be a single mother, though Lalit had come to her life as a big support. He wanted to marry her but to Amara, marrying him will be an escape, a way of running away from her problems. But this is also a fact that she appreciates his sense of love and loyalty, courage or fairness. She knows it fully well that he would

make a wonderful husband. He would not only make her happy but would also protect Kiara, the adopted child. Even then she is not ready to marry Lalit as she feels that she will be free only when she is in a state of unknowing. Amara's marriage collapses and thus she returns to the land of her birth, to the city of Shimla. Here she is caught in a tug-of-war between old beliefs and new ones, between parents who favour obedience and new friends who encourage independent thought.

Bapsi Sidhwa is a celebrated diasporic writer of Pakistan, living in America and churning out stories from her experiences of the subcontinent. Her writings are concerned with issues of the marginalized that may include the proprietorship of women in a patriarchal society. *The Pakistani Bride* is the first novel by Bapsi Sidhwa but the second to be published after *The Crow-Eaters*. The novel owes its genesis to a trip undertaken by the writer to the Karakoram Range where she was told this gruesome story of a young Pakistani girl who had dared to run away from an intolerable marriage, and had been killed in the Hindukush mountains by her tribal husband. The novel poignantly describes the circumspect world of women in a world dominated by men where women are not individuals but objects to be possessed, nothing more than a piece of land and sometimes a beast that can be traded with. She has to observe *Purdah*, to cast off prying eyes of men, representing a sexually repressed society. Her docility, acquiescence, submissiveness is the pride of her lord and her smallest act of disobedience is treated as an attack on his inveterate honour. Women in this land have no say whatsoever in matters personal or professional, private or public, domestic or societal, regional or national. Such is the story of a young, enthusiastic girl Zaitoon who is given in marriage to a ruthless tribal for honour's sake. Zaitoon not only defies her destiny but also challenges it by running away from the clutches of her tyrant husband.

Throughout its long history, civilization has been dominated by concepts that established the supremacy of man over woman. Aristotle's declaration that 'the female is female by virtue of a certain

lack of qualities' asserts an unconscious attempt to negate a woman's individuality. In western thought, the body has been historically associated solely with women, whereas men have been associated with the mind. Susan Bordo, a modern feminist philosopher, in her writings elaborates the dualistic nature of the mind/body connection by examining the early philosophies of Aristotle, Hegel and Descartes, revealing how such distinguishing binaries such as spirit/matter and male activity/female passivity have worked to solidify gender characteristics and categorization. Bordo goes on to point out that while men have historically been associated with the intellect and the mind or spirit, women have long been associated with the body, the subordinated, negatively imbued term in the mind/body dichotomy. The notion of the body being associated with women has served as a justification to deem women as property, objects, and exchangeable commodities (among men).

French philosopher, novelist and essayist, Simone de Beauvoir in one of her famous quotes, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" encapsulated an argument that propelled a number of questions, simple and complex, into the minds of thinking and rational individuals of the society. Beauvoir in her polemical work *The Second Sex* argued.

...there was no such thing as 'feminine nature'. There was no physical or psychological reason why women should be inferior to men, and yet, throughout history and across cultures, women had always been second-class citizens. Even when worshipped and adored, they have had no autonomy and received no recognition as rational individuals, any more than when they have been abused and denigrated (Waugh, 2006, pp. 320-21).

Writers of the twentieth century have felt an urgent need to represent this conscious struggle to resist patriarchy as also to disturb the complacent certainties of the patriarchal structure, through their writings. Their entire thrust lay on the projection of

women as 'rational, thinking and speaking individuals' and also to express her misery in her own words. They continuously strived towards making their women characters a part of history making.

Women writers, the world over, consciously made efforts to assert a belief in sexual equality and overthrow sexist domination in order to transform society. They adopted the medium of literature not only to explore the anguished consciousness of the oppressed and exploited, but also to focus the indifference of the society towards them. Mary Ellman in *Thinking about Women* (1968), in connection with the sperm-ovum nexus of the pre-Mendelian days when men regarded their sperm as the active seeds which give form to the waiting ovum, which lacks identity till it receives the male's impress, "reversed the male dominated point-of-view by suggesting the independent identity of the ovum" (Selden et al, 2005, p.125). These writers from the sub-continent have rarely raised their voice for equal rights but they have been striving hard to bring to focus the indifferent and callous attitudes of the society towards women. Some of the writers like Tasleema Nasreen, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, to name a few, have been quick to respond to the clarion call of their Western counterparts. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) is one such poignant tale of Zaitoon, an orphan girl from the plains of Punjab, adopted by a Kohistani tribal, Qasim. Having lost his entire family to smallpox, Qasim moves to the plains but destiny brings him nearer to home once again in the wake of India-Pakistan riots of 1947. He is on the Lahore bound train when anti-Muslim mob attacks its passengers mutilating whomsoever they could lay their hands on. Zaitoon's parents are massacred in this fanatic violence and in the dark of night she mistakes Qasim to be her father and clings to him for safety. Qasim adopts this little orphan and brings her up as his daughter taking pride in her intelligence and her adulation for him. Zaitoon is hardly fifteen when in a fit of rustic nostalgia for his tribe, he promises her in marriage to one of his tribesmen's son. Life becomes a nightmare for Zaitoon after her marriage. She not only has to face the rugged and all-engulfing environment of the Karakoram Range

but also a ruthless, jealous and brutish husband, a typical tribal for whom life is nothing but a question of honour which rests on matters as trivial as a handful of grains.

The opening part of the novel acquaints the readers not only with the harsh surroundings but also to the rigors of day-to-day survival of its men:

Chiselled into precocity by a harsh life in the mountains, Qasim had known no childhood. From infancy, responsibility was forced upon him and at ten he was a man, conscious of the rigorous code of honour by which his tribe lived (Sidhwa, 1983, p.7).

Whereas men folk are the bearers of the honour of the tribe, the women are a part of man's moveable property quite like the beasts that he rears and raises for profit. Women can be traded against a pending loan or can be given off to honour one's word. Without even asking for her consent, she can be tethered to some other post, "A wife was a symbol of status, the embodiment of a man's honour and the focus of his role as provider. A valuable commodity indeed and dearly bought" (p. 138).

The novel, though, centered on the story of Zaitoon, introduces the readers to two other 'brides', Afshan and Carol. Afshan is the young bride of Qasim, who on seeing her husband on the night of their wedding, "didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She had been told that her groom was young, but she had thought that he would be, like herself, at least fifteen. She began to laugh, while tears of disappointment slid down her cheeks." (p.10) Afshan surrenders to her destiny, without batting an eyelid because she is aware of the fact that her destiny is controlled not by fate but by the men of the society she lives in. In contrast, Zaitoon is unable to accept this fate and her fiery, rebellious spirit rises against this slavish attitude. She knows that such disobedience will win her nothing but death, yet some distant dream of life away from these rugged men and mountains gives her fragile body an extraordinary strength and she dares to take a leap towards life.

In a few days Zaitoon is married off to Sakhi and thus begins the nightmare of her life. Despite Sakhi's effort to domesticate her,

he is unable to check Zaitoon's indomitable spirit. His repeated thrashings and brutish behaviour does not deter the rebel in her. She strikes a chord with Hamida, Sakhi's mother, in whom she finds a sympathetic soul and a mother-figure. She finds some solace going to the river, spending some meditative moments on the rocks near the banks of the river and reliving the moments she had spent in proximity with the civilized human beings. She longs to be in the company of her gentle father, her uncle, Nikka and aunt Miriam. Sakhi forbids her from going there and once when he finds her sitting there he hurls stones at her, grazing her forehead and other parts. This brutal treatment makes her realize that she couldn't possibly spend the rest of her life in these mountains among such men. She is fully aware of the fact that her defiance could lead her straight to the clutches of death. Despite all the odds being against her, her dauntless spirit refuses to surrender and one fine morning on the pretext of fetching water, she runs away taking a blanket with her to save her from the chill and a bundle of stale bread enough to survive a few days.

Hamida, who is the first one to detect Zaitoon's absence from the household, secretly wishes for her escape to the world of sanity, away from this frenzied madness, from this world based on men's honour, from this world of 'veils and wails', "Honour! she thought bitterly. Everything for honour, and another life lost!...Men and honour. And now the girl..." (1983, p. 228) She is a witness to the threatening disgrace of the men of the clan. Meanwhile, Zaitoon had been hiding in the mountains for over ten days and still she could not find the way to the Dubair Bridge, her route to escape. She went round the mountains and every time she seemed to come back to the same rocks and boulders. Coming across natural dangers lurking around her, a diseased vulture and a snow leopard, hardly did she realise that the greatest danger lurking around was 'man'. The day she sees the "sky blue stretch of wet satin trembling against white banks" she is filled with gratitude but her destiny has still more in store for her. She is raped by two tribal men on the banks of the river. Though her body cringes in pain and anguish, her zest

for life is still undiminished and her resolution to reach to safety is undeterred, "She crawled farther and farther from the beach, creeping up through fissures and stony crevices. For a time she snuggled beneath a salty overhang, like a wounded animal, to lick her bruises." (1983, p.232) Finally she reaches the Dubair bridge and is saved from the savage clutches of her husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law, who are out hunting for her near the bridge by the army officer, Major Mushtaq Khan.

The other 'bride' of the novel – Carol, has been shown to be in a highly perplexed state of mind resulting from a clash of her lofty romantic western ideals of 'womanhood' and the practical problems faced by her through her marriage to Farrukh, an offspring of the feudal system. Her courteous and devoted husband shows his true colours and mindset when he tries to assert his male authority over Carol through jealous arguments. His nervous and suspicious manner became unbearable to her. The jealousy, possessiveness and compromises that mark the lives of both Zaitoon and Carol differ merely in degree but it is a difference that literally marks the variance between life and death. The two women who initially seemed to strike a common chord of vulnerability with each other are inevitably separated by a Cultural Divide, "But Carol, a child of the bright Californian sun and surf, could no more understand the beguiling twilight of veils and women's quarters than Zaitoon could comprehend her independent life in America" (1983, p.180).

Carol begins to find it difficult to adjust to this environment of "repressed sexuality". Farrukh's unbearable jealousies, his insane suspicions were not making things work between them and they were 'falling apart'. Their marriage was struggling to survive. Sidhwa, however, is quick to bring to light the hypocrisy in Carol's nature. Though troubled by Farrukh's behaviour and allegations she is not ready to part with all the luxuries which she is enjoying currently as the wife of a rich, feudal landlord, "these compensations made her stay despite Farrukh's morbid jealousy. They prevented her from carrying out her repeated threats to divorce him & to go back home" (1983, p.114). She enters into a relationship with

Major Mushtaq Khan considering it to be an act of just revenge on Farrukh for all his male possessiveness.

Women are like commodities in the tribal society to be bartered and traded. Once married they become part of the property of their husbands, which the latter must protect. Bapsi Sidhwa reinforces this macabre image of woman graphically in various sections of the novel. *The Pakistani Bride* does not merely chronicle the events, it does explore the feminine consciousness which is unique in post colonial fiction. Though societies like these will take an eternity to change, one can already feel a whiff of the changing times in the novel. Zaitoon had to face innumerable hardships in her journey from the plains to the mountains and back, she may have suffered abuse, torture, rape at the hands of her tormentors. She represents the woman of today, though illiterate, yet ready to take on the world. She is not a persona, she is a metaphor & the symbol of courage. Her attitude to overthrow tyranny and resent subjugation in every form lends voice to the multitudinous women around her.

Both the writers have opined that women have occupied a subaltern position that is oppressed both by traditional notion of patriarchy and by colonialism. But their ways of treating the theme of womanhood are quite different – Meghna Pant on the one hand portrays the character of Amara in new light, showing her as a blend of traditional and modern wife, whereas Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel has delineated the character of Zaitoon as a subdued, submissive and obedient wife who shows her courage at the end. The expression of women's experience through writing is one of the modes of resistance used by the feminist writers to question and redefine the notion of patriarchy. Women resisting the patriarchal notions establish the fact that there are power relations within the society that have to be challenged and demolished. Moreover, women are extensively represented in the postcolonial Indian contexts, severely marginalized, infuriatingly belittled and socially entrapped in a system ruled by patriarchy. Their subjugation in society has

been reiterated by prevailing patriarchal ideas that are firmly rooted in culture, tradition, custom, heritage and value system.

Results

In the male dominated society, a woman has been the victim of male hypocrisy, exploitation and violence where she could not freely narrate or openly discuss her experiences. However, Meghna Pant's and Bapsi Sidhwa's women characters especially Amara and Zaitoon emerge as assertive and dominating at the end. They are capable of expressing their emotions boldly. They constantly long to renew their abilities in order to enjoy autonomy in the society. The outcome of the paper is that the women no longer suffer from any identity crisis. They, with their male counterparts, struggle for achievement in the professional and economic spheres and deconstruct the image of a submissive, repressed and self-effacing being.

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Focusing Cultural Affinity Among South Asian Cultures, Cutting Across Geo-spatial Barrier: Rabindranath Tagore and His Multi-dimensional Creativity

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Abstract:

In a jet – set globalized world where change is the only constant as an aftermath of phenomenal progress in science and technology, we are at ease to interact with various cultures, pertaining to various countries, nations and groups. But it is indeed amazing that even in the nineteenth century, a poet and litterateur of astounding magnitude in British ruled – India – Rabindranath Tagore, the first Nobel Laureate of Asia could visualize the idea of a one world across geo – political boundary. Notwithstanding his multiple visits to Europe and America, his fascination for Asian countries has been revealed through his five trips to Japan, China, Ceylon, Persia etc. In his attempt to trace the root of affinity among these cultures of South Asian countries, he had imbibed inspiration from their literature, art and above all lifestyle and this cultural interaction has been delineated in his travelogues like *Way to Japan*, *In Persia* etc. The Japanese style of short poem *Heiku* composed in two/three lines had impressed him so much that he started writing *Heiku* poems in Bangla. Japanese drawing, flower decoration, tea ceremonies etc. were so favorite to him that he requested his nephews to visit Japan just to get training in that art.

The most poignant expression of this cultural interaction between Tagore and South Asian countries was reflected in the idea of *Visva Bharati*, his cherished institution where South Asian impetus is distinctly visible. The dance technique, choreography and music which he invented for his musical and dance dramas reflect the profound impact of Sri Lankan *Candy* dance and other techniques. In the same token, Sri Lanka, bent on westernization at

the cost of their indigenous culture, could make a cultural revival under the influence of Tagore.

In the present paper, there will be a humble attempt to show how cultural pluralism among diverse South Asian cultures could materialize through the aegis of Tagore, how he could institutionalize these diverse influences in his institution through exchange programme of teachers and students and above all how this idea of ingrained oneness was permeated in his creative works, in essays, travelogues, art and fine arts like dance. Tagore's reception in South Asian countries and the impact exerted by him vice – versa can be cited as an example of cultural assimilation.

Keywords: Cultural Affinity, Transnationalism, Rabindranath Tagore, Visva-Bharati

It is rather in the fitness of things that in a jet-set globalized world where change is the only constant as a result of phenomenal progress in science and technology, both interaction and cultural assimilation of various cultures, pertaining to different countries, nations and groups will take place inevitably. Theoretically speaking, transnationalism has been defined as diffusion and extension of social, political and economic processes in between and beyond the sovereign jurisdictional boundaries of states. But when this interaction which is feasible for cultures pertaining to sovereign states, happen through the extraordinary genius of a multi-faceted iconic personality in British- ruled India, bereft of sovereignty in nineteenth century, this indeed becomes an astounding phenomenon. This icon was Rabindranath Tagore of India, who, notwithstanding his status of a second class citizen of a British colony, could set an example by visualizing the idea of a one world (where the

world meets in one nest) across geo-political boundary and imperialist hegemony.

Now the term „affinity“ used in the title of this article needs to be explained. Technically speaking, the term affinity means a liking or sympathy for someone or something especially because of shared characteristics. Tracing cultural affinity among nations is therefore not restricted singularly in the present era, but it had captured the imagination of many illustrious figures even in nineteenth century though presumably they were not theoretically well acquainted with the technical paradigm.

To gauge and assess the nature of mutual bonding between India and a few South Asian countries in nineteenth century, as spearheaded by Indian poet Rabindranath, it is imperative to have a fair idea of life and activities of the poet. Born in a culturally oriented family in 1861, he was the recipient of the most coveted Nobel Prize for his literary master piece Gitanjali Song Offerings in 1913. Apart from his repute as a prolific writer who excelled in almost all branches of literature like novel, short stories, serious essays, travelogues etc., he was an institution builder, educationist, a pioneer of social reformation movement and a dedicated soul, devoted to village reconstruction for the service of his country, steeped in poverty and ignorance of that time. In 1921, he established Visva-Bharati, a centre of international learning in Santiniketan to give shape to a university where east and west will meet in perfect cohesion. As a matter of fact, Rabindranath tried to implement in his university Visva-Bharati a conglomeration or fusion of ideal knowledge, imbibed from both East and West since its inception, as reflected in his essay The Centre of Indian Culture –

“And this is why the inner spirit of India is calling us to establish in this land great centers where all her intellectual forces will gather for the purpose of creation, and all her resources of knowledge and thought, Eastern and Western, will unite in perfect harmony”.

In an attempt to establish this bond of cultural affinity, Tagore invited scholars from both Orient and Occident to teach in

Visva-Bharati. Scholars of South Asian countries played a pivotal role as teachers in Tagore's university. In 1919, Dharmadhar Rajguru Mahasthabir, a Buddhist monk from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) taught Buddhist philosophy in Visva-Bharati. In 1924, Cheong Lin, a Chinese scholar joined as Professor of Chinese. He was the first Chinese teacher in Visva-Bharati. In 1928, Tan-Yun-San arrived at Santiniketan and through his efforts and insistence from Tagore, China Bhavan was established in 1937 at Visva-Bharati. It is apparent therefore that political bondage notwithstanding, Tagore had always tried to explore and establish a bond of cultural affinity with the neighboring South-Asian countries. He might be described as a colossal figure, representing transnationalism.

Tagore succeeded in promoting the idea of transnationalism in another way too. He was a way-faring poet. Tagore travelled all five continents and visited several countries (some on more than one occasion). But what was striking about Tagore was he had his own nature of familiarizing himself with the cultures and languages of the places he had been to; at the same time he used to do that by integrating all the good and positive aspects of the places in his personal self as well as in building institutions. It was a vice versa process. He was influenced by cultures of alien countries he visited and in the process impacted foreign cultures too.

It may be noted in this context that despite his several visits to Europe and US, the fact remains that Asia elicited his imagination and fascination to a great extent. His concept of Asia was based on the belief that just as India is rich in cultural as well as spiritual heritage, Asia too may boast of its prosperity that was not confined to any geographical location or any particular race, but to the entire human race. If we accept the term global south in a broader perspective, we will find that in his quest to trace cultural affinity among the Asian countries, he made five trips to Japan, then China, Persia; but most significant was his visit to Sri Lanka as he imbibed Sri Lankan influence not only in his creative endeavor, but simultaneously he was instrumental in a metamorphosis of Sri Lankan culture. Tagore cherished the idea of One Asia, highlighting thereby

that all Asian countries are intertwined with each other through common cultural affinity and this finally led him to the much-cherished internationalism (*visvabodha*).

A cursory look at the countries of global south which Tagore visited will help us to evaluate the binary relationship of mutual love and admiration, nurtured both by Tagore and general milieu of these countries. It is a fact that Japan at present does not belong to global south, but since in nineteenth century the demarcation hardly exists, we may take up the case of Tagore's interaction with Japan. In this particular instance we will find that steered by his friendship with Japanese artist Okakura, Tagore believed and accordingly propounded that since Asia is one and indivisible, though at present split, Asian unity was no dream and that the East could teach the West the blessings of spirituality which the former always nurtured as its blessed possession. Tagore made his first trip to Japan in 1916. In his travelogue *Japan Jatri* (*Passage to Japan*), Tagore had mentioned time and again his appreciation for Japanese Tea Festival as well as their space management. He introduced this celebration with tea in his ancestral house at Jorasanko in Calcutta and also later in Santiniketan where a house *Dinantika* was earmarked for this tea festival. Tagore believed that this sense of beauty, ingrained in the psyche of the Japanese nation lies at the bottom of their power. But more important is the fact that his quest for tracing cultural affinity among the Asian nations and attempt to strengthen it has found its most poignant expression in introducing Indian readers to the appreciation of Japanese poetry. He translated and composed *Heiku* poems, a Japanese form of poetry, marked by brevity and usually consist of 5-7-5 syllabic pattern. So enamored was Tagore by Japanese art that in a letter, addressed to his nephew *Abanindranath* in 1916, he unhesitatingly stated that fusion with vibrant Japanese art is essential for revival of Indian art. In fact, Tagore intended to infuse a new lease of life to Indian art by assimilating Japanese influence and as such invited Japanese artist *Campo Arai* to Santiniketan with a view to train Indian artists. He was keen to trace the root of affinity between the two ancient

civilizations-Indian and Japanese, with a desire to inculcate Japanese influence in Indian literature and art too. Time and again he emphasized the concept of immortal East –“In a word modern Japan has come of the immortal East like a lotus blossoming in an easy grace...”. In 1915, Tagore’s speech resonated the very concept of transnationalism – “I want to know Japan in the outward manifestation of its modern life in the spirit of its traditional past. I also want to follow the traces of ancient India in your civilization and have some idea of your literature if possible”. Despite his strong objection towards Japan’s excessive industrialization at the cost of his age-old spiritual values and aggressive nationalism, Tagore appreciated Japan’s sense of beauty, spiritual identity and wanted to inculcate them in the Indian way of life.

Cultural affinity with each other, as ingrained in Asian countries steered Tagore’s imagination and faith to bring them under one umbrella. This concept enamored Tagore to such an extent that he travelled Asian countries excessively even with his failing health in a mature age to find out the root of this mutual bonding. China, Thailand and Persia – all came under his travel schedule. But it was Sri Lanka, a small South Asian island which impacted him most and simultaneously where he made a visible contribution in the regeneration of Sri Lanka’s society and culture. Tagore had a special fascination for the island of Sri Lanka as he believed that the island of Sri Lanka had an innate connection with Bengal and it was often said and considered that these two had been born out of the same source. It may be noted that Sri Lanka just like India had been subjected to years of colonisation which resulted in a strong dependence on and adherence to the western model of life. Tagore on his visit to the island had realized the need for a cultural revivalism and recognition of the roots by Sri Lankan people, most of whom were oblivious about it. His endeavor was to inculcate in the people of Sri Lanka the idea of Pan-Asianism and to create an Asian mind that would hold on to the remnants of its ancient civilization and culture. His love for Sri Lanka was ignited by the prevalence of Buddhism in that country which was also an inspira-

tion for Tagore. He visited Sri Lanka in 1922, 1924, 1928, 1929 and 1934.

On his first visit to Sri Lanka in October, 1922, Tagore emphasized mutual cultural affinity between India and Sri Lanka and the impetus to strengthen it in contemporary perspective – “Although the political constitution of modern Ceylon (Present Sri Lanka) separates this country from India, it is no secret that its history, religion, language, morals, culture and everything else are closely linked to India... Although the spiritual bond between the two countries that was there in the past has collapsed, time has come to put that together again and strengthen it”.

The 1934 visit was most significant as in May, 1934, Tagore’s play *Shapmochan* (Redemption) was introduced and performed by students of Visva-Bharati which struck the chord of Sri Lankan heart and succeeded in promoting an interest for oriental dance, music, drama and their socio-historical legacy. In a society, bent upon imitation of western culture, this sudden overwhelming interest about its own culture, old form of song and dance was indeed amazing and Tagore created a revival of social and cultural ethos in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans could feel that Tagore was trying to support them to find their cultural identity and thus in a way bolstering their national sentiment. Martin Wickremasinghe, a critic explained the significance and impact of the presentation *Redemption* on Sri Lankan milieu – “Tagore dance drama which was a visual presentation of an aspect of Indian culture made an impression on the educated section that were ignorant of their own language and culture”.

Simultaneously Sri Lanka had exerted its influence on Tagore too. Sri Lankan Candy Dance attracted Tagore to such an extent that he used this dance profusely in his choreography and technique in dance dramas, composed by him. In one of his most illustrious dance dramas *Shyama*, Tagore has experimented with this dance form in portrayal of the character „Kotal“ (guard).

On the other hand, Tagore’s educational ideas attracted Sri Lankans so much that he was requested to inaugurate a College in

Sri Palee, Horana which was modeled after the educational ideal of Tagore. At the inaugural ceremony of this school, slated for rural reconstruction Tagore said – “It reminds me of my own work in Bengal, this institution which you have started, and I feel that this will be a channel of communication of hearts between your island and our institution in Bengal. It makes me feel so happy”.

In his creative writings also, Tagore exhibited the influence of Sri Lanka. He wrote a poem *Kandiya Nach* (Candy Dance), embodied in his poetic collection *Nabajatak*, eulogizing Candy Dance of Sri Lanka. Tagore inspired many Sri Lankans to develop and appreciate their own tradition of music and dance. Ananda Samarakoon (1911-62) composed Sri Lankan National Song *Sri Lanka Matha* under direct impact of Tagore’s *Jana Gana Mana*, recognized as the Indian National Anthem.

The point which should be never lost sight of, is Tagore’s cherished international centre of learning *Visva-Bharati* was the cradle of South Asian teaching and learning. As early as in 1902, Hori San, a Japanese student came to study Sanskrit in the school, established by Tagore which was at that time at a nascent stage. Equally fascinating was the plan nurtured by Tagore and the pioneer Indian scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose to get Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in the temples of Japan and China, copied by this young Japanese student. In 1919, Dharmadhir Rajguru Mahasthabir, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka taught Buddhist Philosophy in *Visva-Bharati*. Many Sri Lankan scholars and students came to Tagore’s university *Visva-Bharati* in Santiniketan while a few Indian teachers like Santideb Ghosh were sent to Sri Lanka by Tagore to learn and teach dance techniques of both these neighboring countries.

However, the cultural affinity among the South Asian countries finds its zenith in the binary relationship of two countries – India and Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) presently. These two countries share identical culture, identical natural surroundings and one common language Bengali. Our poets like Tagore and Kaji Najrul Islam had inspired the people at every stage of their freedom

struggle against tyrannical aggression. Identical cultural bond has united these two nations and that is why Tagore's song – "My golden Bengal, I love you", (translation mine) has become the National Song of Bangladesh.

South Asian countries may be geographically separated from one another. But an underlying affinity of culture, ethics, and past heritage has unified them under the perception of One Asia. Tagore could feel it and utilized and fostered it in his creative endeavor. Transnationalism or cultural bonding among nations is plausible even in an apparently disadvantaged situation like subordination to a foreign power.

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Translation and Transnationalism: A Study of Memory, Migration and Spirit Translation

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Abstract:

Translation is often understood as a transfer of a text in a language into another. But is it the only type of translation that exists? What of something that can be described as a spirit translation. A translation where the language does not change, but the spirit of one language is drawn into the corporeal self of another language. Quite often transnationalism becomes difficult to identify when only the conventional idea of translation is considered. What remains unexplored is the veritable treasure trove of transnational elements in works that are only translated in spirit. Such spirit translations can be found in several of the works of the early poets in India. Taking into consideration such poets who at the turn of the century are immigrants to a foreign land. A strong yearning for their motherland generates these spirit translated works. These poets now transplanted in a different clime and land write in alien languages acquired secondarily.

This study will primarily attempt to understand the nuances of such works that have the spirit of a language but the body of another. It will further explore the role that such works play in creating and fostering transnationalism. With special emphasis on the poetry of Toru Dutt, the study will juxtapose transnationalism and translation. The major aim of the paper will be to try to establish the role of such spirit translations in fostering transnationalism in the Global South.

Keywords: Transnationalism, Spirit Translation, Toru Dutt, Post-colonialism

The people of the world once thought up a grand scheme to construct a large tower that would graze the heavens. Before it could be completed, by a strange course of affairs, they discovered that they now spoke in different tongues. The masons could not understand the masons, nor the carpenters. The tower lay unfinished, but in its wake a million languages were born, so too was born the art of translation.

The legend of the Tower of Babel has its beginnings probably in the understanding that a lot of present-day languages emerged from the undiscovered but hypothetical Proto Indo-European language. With migration, the languages became more and more specialized to the area, until they were completely different from the language from which they broke off. Time, wars and social similarities created specialized areas speaking the same languages. They evolved and metamorphosed for years until concrete and non-porous borders were created. Within these borders the first nation states developed. While a lot of factors may have acted in favour for the formation of a nation, a homogenous language would certainly be one of the major factors that decided where the boundaries would be drawn. People armed with a common language rallied to protect their lands and culture against aliens who spoke different tongues. Languages and people were pitted against each other in a long history of physical and literary wars. This trend of language wars continued well into the fin de siècle of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the last years of the century were marked by a radical change in many fields. The Industrial revolution allowed transportation to become faster, steamers and trains facilitated travel. Colonialism, with all its evils, was undoubtedly a force that created more border crossings. The border crossings allowed for literature and languages to cross the previously non-porous boundaries. These changes were in combination, harkening to the arrival of the new movement of Cosmopolitanism. While transnational activities existed prior to this, cosmopolitanism was the boost that it required to make border crossings permeate all aspects of life. And

one major aspect that cosmopolitanism helped cross the borders was literature and language.

Cosmopolitanism largely helped the cause of transnationalism by slowly eroding the base of strictly nationalist sentiments. It allowed for movement of literature, culture and language across borders and for people to rise above their own national identities. In Literature especially migration and cosmopolitanism created a niche for nations to engage in equal trade. It was such a trade that was seen in several of the works of the early Indian-English writers. Nevertheless, there existed challenges to this cause. For one, the major force that initiated transnationalism in India, was also its biggest challenge; Colonialism. When the British Raj obtained a *farman* (A royal order) from the Mughal Emperor to trade in India, neither of the parties involved, realised the paradigmatic shift in the histories of India and Briton that it would bring about. By the late nineteenth century, the British had established themselves as a significant power in India. When cosmopolitanism was burgeoning in the early twentieth century, there was also the fomenting Indian anger at the colonial occupier. At odds with the culture born into and the culture imposed upon them, a new wave of authors was finding their way to a fine balance.

This curious age, even though it would be termed a less than perfect age for liberal and economic concerns, was a veritable fertile ground for transnationalism to take root and flourish. Colonialism allowed the world to expand, the new world had a lot to offer beyond the spices and resources that the East India Company saw. Porous borders allowed for easier trade, not just in commodities, but also in literatures, cultures and languages. Goethe found his love for Sanskrit drama. The existence of a common denominator in the classical languages of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit was discovered. Nevertheless, there existed a simultaneous disadvantage. Colonialism brought with it stunted thought about race and abilities. Pseudoscientific enterprises like eugenics thrived. This brought about an askew trade pattern. Translations from the hierarchically dominant colonial language flooded the market, while indigenous

works were often dismissed as secondary or inferior. Thomas Macaulay's minutes created a particular imbalance in the colonial scenario of the Indian subcontinent. They attempted and succeeded to an extent in creating a batch of bureaucrats "Indian in flesh and colour but English in thought and manners". Contrary to their intentions the minutes also created a group of Indian authors whose work would be English in body but Indian in spirit. Colonialism has inadvertently handed the colonised a potent weapon and perhaps a language that would allow them to cross the borders that were more often than not closed to them. Thus, while translations flooded the colonial markets, a silent and slow movement of indigenous works but in English was flowering elsewhere. And although the colonial era would, despite its porous borders for trade, look increasingly bleak on transnationalism, this is only if conventional translation processes are considered. Transnationalism had not exactly taken a downturn during the colonial era. The invisible component that helped adjust the skewed balance was an unusual form of translation, spirit translation.

Understanding Spirit Translation

If in a hypothetical scenario, the workers in the mythical tower of Babel were brought back after their various migratory paths. And if one of them by some colonial misadventure was now speaking as his second language the first language of his colleague. This would be the ideal case to understand spirit translation. These individuals may not need a translator to mediate between them, nevertheless there may exist an element that would invariably be lost in translation. This element that is lost in translation is the spirit. Spirit translated works are works that exist in the corporeal self of one language but possess the spirit of another language. In a translated work the spirit would be absorbed into that of the TL (Target Language), but in a spirit translation since there is no need for a physical process of translation, or the existence of a TL, the

spirit remains within the text. The relationship of the language and the spirit is as a receptacle to the liquid, a body to the soul. A spirit translated work holds the spirit of one language, and in a bilingual author, the spirit is of the mother tongue.

This study will primarily attempt to understand the nuances of such works that have the spirit of a language but the body of another. It will further explore the role that such works play in creating and fostering transnationalism. With special emphasis on the poetry of Toru Dutt, the study will juxtapose transnationalism and translation. The major aim of the paper will be to try to establish the role of such spirit translations in fostering transnationalism in the Global South.

Translation in the conventional form involves on the outset two languages, the source language and the target language. A spirit translated work is to the reader an untranslated work, a work originally written in a language, read in the same language, understood in the same language. But implicitly it is work of two different languages, or even in certain cases multiple languages. Umberto Eco describes the spirit of a text as the original meaning the author is trying to convey. Spirit etymologically conveys the sense of something abstract, a smoke-like existence that is accessible only at a particularly attuned sensorial state. It is thus dependent on two levels of abstraction. The entity itself and the medium to attain it are abstract. Nevertheless, in common speech the word spirit is used frequently, the spirit of life, spirit of patriotism, spirit of the game, therefore the concept is often concretized in human speech. Human experience and civilizational history have contributed to the concretization of a lot of concepts that had been once abstract. Which brings us to the question of what is the concrete existence of spirit of a language. The spirit of a language when concretized, is all of its history, cultural significance, intonation. It is life of a language and that of its speakers.

Translated works often display a tendency to conform the SL (Source Language) into the TL (Target Language). This leads to a loss of a lot of elements that might have given the text the spirit of

the SL. This loss of spirit works perhaps similar to the loss of the spirit of the text as Eco describes it. If the translation conforms the SL to the TL, the identity of only the TL and its own language identity remains. This is where the relevance of spirit translation in fostering transnationalism becomes evident. Since there is no change in the language, all the cross-cultural references, or the spirit that the author intends would not be lost in a consequent process of translation. Spirit translation allows the persistence of the spirit that conventional translation processes may have to forego. Nevertheless, spirit translations require the fulfilment of some pre requisite conditions. A land or people completely cut off from the rest of the world may not essentially develop conditions that lead to people learning second languages or writing in them. The major driving force behind spirit translations is thus the movement of people, culture and language with them.

The earliest written records from the human perspective on migration comes from the descriptions from the Exodus. And according to the 'Out of Africa' theory, unwritten episodes of pre-human, neanderthal migrations led to the population shifting from the African homeland to different parts of the world. Thus, migration mediated the creation of hubs of human civilizations. While several centuries passed without major migration patterns unless prompted by serious resource scarcities, it was the development of faster means of transport that initiated the pattern of migration for non-essential purposes. Migration in the fin de siècle led to the creation of the cosmopolitan movement that was both greeted and derided equally. The cosmopolitans had broken the status quo, they had moved across the borders and had in their journeys gathered the culture, knowledge and literature of those places.

The early nineteenth century is also marked by a profusion of migrations. The developing means of transportation like the steamer considerably reduced the travel woes of the earlier times. Different parts of the British Empire were brought closer with these fruits of the industrial revolution. Changes in perception of travel and sea crossings also brought about an increase in people migrating or at

least travelling to foreign lands for education. The proliferation of the ideas of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahma Samaj slowly allowed, at least the *Bhodrolok*, to travel the seas without a fear of losing caste. With Indians being allowed to write the ICS, the bilingual population largely preferred a foreign education. Migration also set into motion a series of changes that allowed for literature to cross boundaries.

Spirit Translation in Practice

Toru Dutt began her voyage to France with her family in 1869. This marked a radical change in the life of the young poet, and subsequently that of early Indian-English writing. The colonial landscape was fast changing with the constant ideological and spiritual undercurrents. The Dutt family who had converted to Christianity in 1856 had travelled across the sea to the French shores. For the early 19th century this was a completely unknown and radical concept. The vast distances, cultural, and geographical having been crossed, the journey is an act of physical transnationalism. Besides physically crossing boundaries, Dutt had already started to learn several languages. She was already proficient in English. Dutt was a voracious reader; she was thus drawing from an abundance of influences when she wrote. It is thus clear why her works are such veritable treasure troves of border crossings.

Understanding Dutt's poetry necessitates a study of the Dutt family because of the generations of transnational tendencies they possess. The joint-family system was the status quo in pre-modern India. The Dutt's family embraced transnationalism as a family heirloom rather than individually chosen paths. Dutt's grandfather Rasamoy Dutt who migrated to Calcutta from Burdwan, entertained at his home, people from all walks of life. From missionaries to Hindu priests, the Dutt family home was the scene for a host of conversations that stretched across philosophical extremes. Dutt's father Govin Chander Dutt was educated in the newly established

Hindu college. Dutt herself had the advantage of deriving her identity from a variety of sources. Even though the family had converted to Christianity early in Dutt's childhood, her mother and the other women in the household were initially reluctant. Dutt therefore had an early exposure to both Hindu and Christian doctrines and philosophical thought. And colonialism despite its many evils, allowed Dutt to have a truly cosmopolitan upbringing.

A transformative period in Dutt's life was when the family decided to migrate to France. The decision which was paradigmatic and largely unheard of at the time followed Dutt's brother, Abju's untimely death by tuberculosis. The family moved first to France, followed by a brief interlude in Italy and finally lived in England before returning to India. While Dutt wrote extensively throughout her life, the works that she had composed in exile are the ones that allow a better understanding of spirit translation. A particularly notable poem is, which also happens to be Dutt's most famous, "Our Casuarina Tree". The poem is deep and poignant that builds on the recollections from the homeland. It follows the well-established pattern of the Romantic poem and describes the imagery of the Indian landscape. What really makes the poem stand out though is the eclectic use of the metaphors. The metaphors used are mostly imagery that is usually seen in Dutt's various adopted homes of France and England. The poems are most clearly aimed at a target audience that isn't used to the Indian summers or the local flora or fauna. Thus, the work in a way can be described as a translation of the Indian spirit, landscape and life into another language. For instance, the line-

"The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed."

An Indian reader of the above line needs perhaps a bigger introduction to the vehicle, the snow rather than the tenor, water lilies. Only a fraction of the Indian population would have ever seen snow enmassed. But, for a native of England or even France, the image of snow enmassed clearly translates the authorial impression

of the water-lilies enmassed. Thus the target audience of the poem can quite accurately be established to be English.

“And far and near *kokilas* hail the day”

The word “*kokilas*” is a Bangla word, but Dutt does not hesitate to use her own mother tongue in the English poem. Despite the theme being aimed at an English audience, as can be seen from the example of the metaphor of “snow enmassed”. The languages themselves are thus intermixed in the poem. Dutt is attempting to bring the spirit of the Indian landscape and quite often her own Indian language of Bangla into English.

Bangla is all that has contributed to the creation, preservation, and development of the spirit of Dutt’s home; its people, their lifestyle, their habits, their food, their festivals, the geography, terrain, the climate and even its sounds. Dutt does not merely allow Bangla to walk through the rooms of the poem, she allows it to stay, possess it. And possession is a recurring theme throughout the poem, beginning with the title, the tree is “ours”. For a person far from her “native clime” Dutt’s possessions, abstract and concrete are far from her. She does not hear her native tongue in the streets, she cannot feel the monsoons in the air, and here, she cannot see her beloved Casuarina tree. And yet she attempts to do something different, she possesses all of these through her poetry. Her native tongue lives as the spirit in her English poem. Her home, its climate, the tree and its inhabitants all live in the words. The language and the present place may be alien, but her poems are strongly rooted in her homeland, and yet not too far away from the foreign shores either.

“Like the sea breaking on a shingle beach
It is the tree’s lament, an eerie speech”

While the reader is lulled into an easy calm of the Casuarina tree’s description, the tree’s lament on a “shingle beach” brings a jolt. The scene shifts in the blink of the eye from the countryside of

Bengal into a shingle-beach somewhere in Europe. The poem seems to physically travel across the seas here. The presence of both the landscapes, one of the past, or of dream and the other of the present reality of the poet. And the reader does not require to know both the languages involved to understand the spirit of the poem. And despite being an English poem, 'Our Casuarina Tree' exists in both English and Bangla.

Dutt takes care to bring out authentic experiences of the everyday Indian into her poems. In her poem *Jogadhya Uma*, Dutt describes a local tale of a *shakha* (shell) bangle seller coming across a young woman, who it is later revealed is the Goddess herself. Dutt does not allow the alien-ness of the English language to confine her subjects to what is English in spirit. She claims the language as hers to modify and recreate. The bangle – seller, the small village and the Goddess all come alive in the English language, never once seeming out of place. A truly ground-breaking exercise for the time.

During the British Raj, colonial India was known only to the officers of the British system who served in India. For everyone else India was a land of deep exoticism where snake charmers and yogis live side by side. It took works by poets like Toru Dutt and Derozio to bring the real India to England. They described India as it was in English, made it accessible to the English public in a way that it was not before. And beside the subject matter these poets brought the spirit and oftentimes the very language into their poems. The spirit translation escapes the loss of spirit, and thus brings everything that the language had intact to the reader. Dutt brings the whole of Bengal into this English poem, and not a drop is lost in translation. Today spirit translation is not an alien phenomenon to India. Indian-English writers like Arundhati Roy and Kamala Das to name a few have walked the path to global recognition, a path paved by the likes of Toru Dutt in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Colonialism created the commonwealth, and it also created the authors of the commonwealth who write in English. Post colonialism talks about the empire writing back in the language of the colonisers. Subverting what had been for the colonisers their potent weapon, the empire writes back, and writes back the spirit of their own land, language and lives. Spirit translations unite people from across the globe. What would have been lost in translation was preserved when pre-colonial Africa is seen in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, or India in Dutt's several poems. Suddenly the world could understand each other, and without a filter of translation, the land and its language, even through English, seems more accessible.

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Characters without Names: the Anonymous and the Crowds

Anonymous Characters, Function and Aesthetics: An Other Reading of *Death in Venice*

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Abstract:

Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* is an intensely lyrical and aesthetic stream-of-consciousness about Aschenbach who desperately loves a young and handsome boy in his trip to recuperate in Venice and ends up in death. In the novel, except for the characters with name, there are the anonymous and nameless characters, who are always neglected in the readers' expectation and researchers' consideration. Yet, all the characters in the novel are designed for some reason. So, this paper tries to decode the function and aesthetics construction of the anonymous and nameless characters in the novel to reveal Thomas Mann's writing techniques. It is found that there are mainly four catalogues of the anonymous and nameless characters in the novel and they are important and necessary for the fiction. They help develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably, outstand the protagonist in comparison, fulfil the introduction of the protagonist and construct a moving setting for the story, so as to beautify the story plot, enrich the depiction of the protagonist, purify the theme of the story and enhance the comprehension of the story. It is hoped that more attention and research be paid to the anonymous or nameless characters in fiction.

Keywords: *Death in Venice*; the Anonymous and Nameless Characters; Stream-of-consciousness; the Function and Aesthetics of Character Construction

1. Introduction

According to Wikipedia, fiction is any creative work, chiefly any narrative work, portraying individuals, events, or places in ways that are imaginary or inconsistent with history, fact, or plausibility (Harmon & Holman, 1990, p. 212; Oxford University Press, 2019; Sageng & Fossheim, 2012, pp. 186-187). So, individuals, events, and places are three basic constituent elements of the fiction, among which individuals mean the construction of the characters. Character is a person or other being in a narrative (Baldick, 2001, p. 37; Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 23; DiBattista, 2011, pp. 14-20; Freeman, 2016, pp. 31-34), and Childs and Fowler (2006, 23). See also "character, 10b" in Trumble and Stevenson (2003, 381): "A person portrayed in a novel, a drama, etc; a part played by an actor") which may be entirely fictional or based on a real-life person or a combination of several persons (DiBattista, 2011, pp. 14-20).

The construction of character image is regarded as the core of fiction art, the event plot is the skeleton, and the description of ^{typical} place is the setting.

Traditionally, to study a character in a fiction requires an analysis of the relations of the character with all the other characters in the work and the individual status of a character is defined through his or her social network in the fiction (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 41; Elam, 2002, p. 133). The construction of characters in fiction refers to the construction of typical characters, mainly through the description of characters' appearance, action, language, psychology, expression and so on, vividly shaping characters' images with words on paper. This typical character image is often based on the author's real life or his or her own creation for the model. He/she is different from living characters in real life, but often the one created by the author according to the literary creation's need and extracting from hundreds. Such typical characters fully meet the needs of the author's creation, concentrating on the theme of the work, with typical representative significance.

It is generally believed that the methods of character image creation in fiction can be summarized as follows: 1. Direct description, refers to the description of the appearance, language, action, demeanor and psychology of the characters in the fiction, providing an overview of the characters; 2. Indirect description, refers to the form of contrast, through the fictional characters and others in actions such as dialogue to reflect the character's image; 3. Side description, refers to the introduction, comments of the author about the characters from the perspective of omniscience. Throughout the current literature study at home and abroad, most focus on the study of the main characters in fictions, or at least the study of characters with name, little attention to the construction of anonymous or nameless characters in fictions.

Therefore, this paper tries to shift the research focus to the anonymous or nameless characters in fictions, taking *Death in Venice* published in 1912 by German Nobel Prize-winner Thomas Mann as a case, to explore the construction of the anonymous characters, its function and aesthetics.

2. The anonymous characters in *Death in Venice*

Death in Venice is a short story written by Thomas Mann (1875-1955), the greatest German novelist of the twentieth century, and the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 and the Goethe Prize in 1949. Based on Mann's personal experience, it tells the story of the hero Aschenbach, a fifty-year-old noble, crazy loves a beautiful little young boy and refuses leaving the resort of Venice, regardless of the prevailing fatal epidemic and finally ends in death. Since its publication, the fiction has been highly appreciated and enjoying great popularity, especially after it was shot as a film with the same name.

In the fiction, the major character is the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach, the supporting character is the little young boy Tazio, the rest are the minor characters which are those nameless

or anonymous. Studies of characters on it are all about the main characters as Aschenbach or Tadzio. The anonymous or nameless characters are neglected. However, all those appearing in the fiction have their own reasons.

Mann employed the stream of consciousness in his fictional writing, which easily substitutes the readers into the protagonist's position and focuses the readers' attention to Aschenbach's passion over Tadzio. He also depicted a lot of anonymous characters in the fiction with careful design and arrangement, which are worthy of research and attention as well. They are the man, the people, the crowds, the young, the seaman, oarsman, etc. appearing at the special time and place for special reason in the fiction. According to their ways of appearance, they can be divided into four catalogues.

Catalogue one, appearing singly and with interaction with the protagonist through direct description, such as "...the man was in fact staring at him so aggressively, so straight in the eye, with so evident an intention to make an issue of the matter and outstare him, that Aschenbach turned away in disagreeable embarrassment..." (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133), and "Aschenbach was no sooner aboard than a grubby hunchbacked seaman, grinning obsequiously, conducted him to an artificially lit cave like cabin in the ship's interior" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139).

Catalogue two, appearing in crowds and under the gaze of the protagonist through direct or indirect description, such as "Resting one elbow on the handrail, he watched the idle crowd hanging about the quayside to see the ship's departure, and watched the passengers who had come aboard" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139), and

Those with second-class tickets were squatting, men and women together, on the forward deck, using boxes and bundles as seats. The company on the upper deck consisted of a group of young men, probably shop or office workers from Pola, a high-spirited party about to set off on an excursion to Italy (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139).

Catalogue three, appearing in the dream of the protagonist through direct description, such as Women, stumbling on the hide

garments that fell too far about them from the waist, held up tambourines and moaned as they shook them above their thrown-back heads; they swung blazing torches, scattering the sparks, and brandished naked daggers; they carried snakes with flickering tongues which they had seized in the middle of the body, or they bore up their own breasts in both hands, shrieking as they did so. Men with horns over their brows, hairy-skinned and girdled with pelts, bowed their necks and threw up their arms and thighs, clanging brazen cymbals and beating a furious tattoo on drums, while smooth-skinned boys prodded goats with leafy staves, clinging to their horns and yelling with delight as the leaping beasts dragged them along (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168).

Catalogue four, appearing in the omniscient author's introduction through indirect description, such as "... a shrewd commentator... 'an intellectual and boyish manly virtue, that of a youth who clenches his teeth in proud shame and stands calmly on as the swords and spears pass through his body'" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 136), "Then, when the great doors were opened and the crowd streamed out into the shining Piazza swarming with pigeons, the beguiled lover would hide in the ante basilica, he would lurk and lie in wait" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161), and

When in his thirty fifth year he fell ill in Vienna, a subtle observer remarked of him on a social occasion: "You see, Aschenbach has always only lived like this" – and the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand tightly into a fist – "and never like this" – and he let his open hand hang comfortably down along the back of the chair (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135).

3. Function of the anonymous or nameless characters

All things exist for reason in the world, so do the four catalogues of anonymous or nameless characters in the fiction. Since the stream of consciousness is employed in the fiction, it is quite natural that readers' focuses are on the protagonist, while the anonymous or

nameless characters are always neglected. After close reading, however, it is found that Mann has employed careful skill and art design in the construction of the anonymous or nameless characters, which are designed for special functions as follows.

The first function is to develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably.

In the fiction, it is introduced in details that the protagonist Aschenbach is well self-disciplined and a workaholic writer. Working hard and “‘stay the course’...was his favorite motto” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). From the beginning of the story, he is in the situation of hard working. But “The morning’s writing had overstimulated him” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132). “And so, soon after taking tea, he had left the house hoping that fresh air and movement would set him to rights and enable him to spend a profitable evening” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132). At this point, the fiction needs a chance to push the story forward and something happens to change the routine life style of Aschenbach. An anonymous character is arranged to appear in the way he walks, very suddenly and naturally.

...when he noticed something that brought him back to reality: in the portico of the chapel, above the two apocalyptic beasts that guard the steps leading up to it, a man was standing, a man whose slightly unusual appearance gave his thoughts an altogether different turn (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132).

Where this man appears is not clearly introduced, but he is under the gaze of Aschenbach carefully and in details with fully direct description. His look, his dress, his size, his behavior...all lead to arouse Aschenbach “a youthful craving for far-off places” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133), “a desire to travel” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133). And then such a desire becomes a plan. “Very well then—he would travel. Not all that far, not quite to where the tigers were. A night in the wagon-lit and a siesta of three or four weeks at some popular holiday resort in the charming south...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 134). At last, it becomes an action. “...then, one day between the middle and end of May, he took the night train to Trieste, where he stayed

only twenty-four hours, embarking on the following morning for Pola.” (139) By then, the story plot takes its first step.

The stay at Pola, an Adriatic Island, makes Aschenbach upset. He doubts his decision. “He at once gave notice of departure from his present, mischosen stopping place” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). Then where is the correct chosen stopping place? As the plot goes forwards, the second nameless man appears. He is a grubby hunchbacked seaman taking passengers’ particulars and issuing their tickets. “To Venice!’ he exclaimed, echoing Aschenbach’s request.” “One first class to Venice. Certainly, sir!’ He scribbled elaborately, ...” “A very happily chosen destination!’ he chattered as he did so. ‘Ah, Venice! A splendid city! A city irresistibly attractive to the man of culture, by its history no less than by its present charms!’” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). His words direct the story plot to its designed place Venice and cement Aschenbach’s decision to go to Venice. At last Aschenbach takes the ship to Venice and settles at the Hotel des Bains where he meets the entirely beautiful little boy. This is the second step of the story, which decides the setting of the plot.

At Venice, the story does not go smoothly as those traditional one that they fall in love at the first sight and be happy couple forever. “Once before, years ago, after fine spring weeks, this same weather had come on him here like a visitation, and so adversely affected his health that his departure from Venice had been like a precipitate escape” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 146). Venice makes him vexed, “The thought of leaving occurred to him then and there” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 146). But the boy’s beauty makes him feel “Well, I shall stay, thought Aschenbach. What better place could I find?” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 148). His witness of the little boy makes him happy. “He was at one and the same time entertained and moved, that is to say he was filled with happiness” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 148). At last, reason overcomes passion. “To stay on willfully would be contrary to good sense, ... He must make up his mind at once. To return straight home was out of the question” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 150). So, “he notified the office that unforeseen circumstances obliged him to leave on the following morning” (Mann,

1912/1988, p. 151). Though hesitations appear again and again, Aschenbach must leave. “Good-bye, Tadzio! thought Aschenbach” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 151). At the station, “Aschenbach’s distress and sense of helplessness increased to the point of distraction. In his torment he felt it to be impossible to leave and no less impossible to turn back” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). At this point, the third anonymous man (the hotel company’s employee) “appeared and informed him that his large trunk had been sent off as registered baggage” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). The mis-departed baggage is a mistake of the man but a joy to the protagonist. “A wild joy, an unbelievable feeling of hilarity, shook him almost convulsively from the depths of his heart” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). Then, they return Venice. Such a small climax is the third step of the plot.

The stay at Venice again satisfies Aschenbach’s meeting of the little boy and forwards the plot. But an accelerant is needed. Here is it. One day during the fourth week of his stay at Lido, Aschenbach visits the hotel barber without a name, who chatters in flattering manner, “But you are staying on, signore; you are not afraid of the sickness” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). This fourth anonymous man briefs the signal of sickness to Aschenbach, which leads to the climax of the plot. Venice becomes a dangerous and fatal place. Normal people should take a leave. Aschenbach should leave and tell the family of the boy to leave. However, “he realized with a kind of horror that he would not be able to go on living if that were to happen (Tadzio might leave)” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161). So, he keeps the secret to himself. “‘They want it kept quiet!’ he whispered vehemently. And: ‘I shall say nothing!’” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168) even though once at a moment, he has an idea that

Tonight, after dinner, he might approach the lady in the pearls and address her with words which he now mentally rehearsed: “Madam, allow me as a complete stranger to do you a service, to warn you of something which is being concealed from you for reasons of self-interest. Leave here at once with Tadzio and your daughters! Venice is plague-stricken (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168).

However, passion overcomes reason at last. He tells nothing at all. He keeps the secret to himself and hopes that Tadzio would be with him forever. Staying means death at this point. The fifth anonymous character appears, who is the doorman who tells Aschenbach that the family of the boy will leave Venice after lunch. Such a message leads to the death of Aschenbach soon that afternoon. Thus, the plot comes to its end.

In all, all these five anonymous or nameless men construct a complete plot for the story, from the beginning to the climax and to the end finally. They direct or indicate the story to go as designed to witness the death of Aschenbach because of plague in surface but passion over a beautify young boy indeed.

The second function is to outstand the protagonist in comparison.

In the writing of stream of consciousness, Mann is careful in the construction of the protagonist. In addition to direct description, the use of the anonymous characters to outstand is one of the techniques. In the fiction, on his way to Venice, Aschenbach met an old man on the ship, “who wore a light-yellow summer suit of extravagant cut, a scarlet necktie and a rakishly tilted Panama hat, was the most conspicuous of them all in his shrill hilarity” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). Aschenbach looked closely and “realized with a kind of horror that the man’s youth was false” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). In careful observation,

His cheeks’ faint carmine was rouge, the brown hair under his straw hat with its colored ribbon was a wig, his neck was flaccid and scrawny, his small stuck-on moustache and the little imperial on his chin were dyed, his yellowish full complement of teeth, displayed when he laughed, were a cheap artificial set, and his hands, with signet rings on both index fingers, were those of an old man” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140).

Aschenbach with a spasm of distaste felt that “he had no right to be wearing foppish and garish clothes like theirs, no right to be acting as if he were one of them” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). The dress color, the thick makeup, and the appearance of the old man

totally upset Aschenbach. However, in the later chapter, in order to make himself look younger, he himself wore thick makeup, dyed hair, scarlet necktie, broad-brimmed straw hat encircled with a many-colored ribbon when dogging Tadzio's footsteps. He becomes the person he dislikes before. Such a well-designed comparison outstands Aschenbach change from a lofty gentleman to a madman crazy only for love.

In addition to the old man, another nameless man is also set to compare with the protagonist. When Aschenbach got the information that Venice was under a kind of fatal plague, he was happy but still had conscience. Once a while, he wanted to tell the information to the family of the boy and urged them to leave Venice. He hesitated. The situation of the plague became more and more serious. The hotel manager appeared. He answered Aschenbach's question,

It is merely a police measure, sir, taken in good time, as a safeguard against various disagreeable public health problems that might otherwise arise from this sultry and exceptionally warm weather – a precautionary measure which it is their duty to take (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 163).

Aschenbach knew that the hotel manager was a trickster but he took his good excuse, and said, "Very praiseworthy of the police" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 163). This man helps Aschenbach take the police words as good excuse to keep the information from the family of the boy and feel at ease. Such comparison with the nameless man makes Aschenbach descending down to the normal ordinary people rather than a civil model anymore.

The third person designed to outstand Aschenbach is an oarsman under the instruction of Aschenbach to follow that gondola ahead of them that was just turning the corner, to follow it at a discreet distance, who noticed that Aschenbach followed the little boy and had unknown hobby and was eager to offer help. "The fellow, with the roguish compliance of a pander, would answer him in the same tone, assuring him that he was at his service, entirely at his service" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161). This man's suggestion arou-

sed a shiver running down his spine and made him wake up from his craziness, which forms a comparison free him of the dirty desire, even though he himself has already been in the beginning action. Such a comparison appears to readers that Aschenbach's behavior is evident to the others rather than only a secret love.

In physical world, Aschenbach refused the oarsman's dirty suggestion, but the nameless men and women in his dream show another picture of his inner desire. In the dream, men and women were wild and promiscuous and Aschenbach joined them.

Yes, they were himself as they flung themselves, tearing and slaying, on the animals and devoured steaming gobbets of flesh, they were himself as an orgy of limitless coupling, in homage to the god, began on the trampled, mossy ground. And his very soul savored the lascivious delirium of annihilation (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 169).

That is, in his dream, he wants to have the boy not only in way of love in spirit but also in way of love in body, which overpasses his pursuit of beauty in spiritual world.

In all, all these comparisons constructed by the anonymous characters are served to indicate the protagonist's change and his inner thought. The old man is designed to show the change of Aschenbach's personal likes and tastes, indicating the difference in behavior to another track, like crazy love of a beautiful boy, regardless of reason, ethic, honor and shame. The hotel manager is designed to show a good excuse for Aschenbach's selfishness in love, his keeping the plague information from the family of the boy, without any sense of guilt and shame. The oarsman is designed to show that Aschenbach's desire of the boy is obvious even to the oarsman and the suggestion of the oarsman is like a slap on Aschenbach's past glory. So, he can only hide it by refusal. The men and women in the dream are well designed to show Aschenbach's inner thought and instinct desire, who are totally free from all ethic and disciplines and behave by instinct desire and libido. Such designs are well served the functions to outstand the protagonist and give insight of his behavior.

The third function is to fulfil the introduction of the protagonist.

In the fiction, Mann applies the stream of consciousness in writing, which fully displays what the protagonist Aschenbach sees, thinks and interacts with others in the story as the plot goes on. But there is not yet enough. In order to fulfil the introduction of the protagonist, an omniscient perspective is designed, in which a lot of anonymous or nameless characters with no direct interaction with the protagonist appear. They are the noble family background of Aschenbach without a name, such as he is “the son of a highly-placed legal official” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “His ancestors had been military officers, judges, government administrators; men who had spent their disciplined, decently austere life in the service of the king and the state” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). His mother is “the daughter of a director of music from Bohemia” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). They are the maid and servant at Aschenbach’s service. “He dreaded spending the summer in the country, alone in that little house with the maid who prepared his meals and the servant who brought them to him...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 134). They are “the public eye” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “a daily correspondence that bore postage-stamps from every part of the globe” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “the general public” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “the discriminating connoisseur” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “all sides” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135)...In addition to the above mentioned silent anonymous and nameless characters, there are some observer and commentator who remark on Aschenbach. For example, a subtle observer remarked of him on a social occasion:

“You see, Aschenbach has always only lived like this” – and the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand tightly into a fist – “and never like this” – and he let his open hand hang comfortably down along the back of the chair (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135).

This observer is quoted to prove that Aschenbach “had a native capacity both to inspire confidence in the general public and to win admiration and encouragement from the discriminating connoisseur” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). “a shrewd commentator ... an

intellectual and boyish manly virtue, that of a youth who clenches his teeth in proud shame and stands calmly on as the swords and spears pass through his body” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 136) is quoted to prove that

Aschenbach was the writer who spoke for all those who work on the brink of exhaustion, who labor and are heavy-laden, who are worn out already but still stand upright, all those moralists of achievement who are slight of stature and scanty of resources, but who yet, by some ecstasy of the will and by wise husbandry, manage at least for a time to force their work into a semblance of greatness. (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 137)

All these help for the full introduction of the protagonist, because the writing of stream of consciousness can only be the consciousness of the protagonist. So anonymous and nameless characters are arranged to make up. The anonymous characters can depict from a side description. Such side introduction cannot be depicted by the writing of stream of consciousness, but by the anonymous or nameless characters is a perfect design, which compensates for the omniscient rigid introduction of the author, thus enriches the construction of the protagonist.

The fourth function is to construct a moving setting for the story.

In addition to those single nameless men appearing in single with or without the protagonist, there are men or women appearing in crowd or group in the fiction, whose presence construct moving settings for the story, especially in the stages that Aschenbach meets the boy and follows the boy. For example, on his way to Venice, Aschenbach meets the passengers on the ship. To him, they are “those with second-class tickets” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139) or “the company on the upper deck” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). Among these young men there is an old man in a false young appearance, which makes Aschenbach feel sick and feel instinctively “something not quite usual was beginning to happen...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). On the way, Aschenbach totally misfits the other passengers and the people he sees on the other ships as well as those boatmen.

They are completely from different worlds. At this stage, the old man and the others act as a kind of setting for the story with some suspense for the readers.

And at the stage when Aschenbach meets the little boy, there are also an anonymous or nameless group. They are totally different from the previous groups, where Aschenbach feels at ease and has the sense of belonging. “A large horizon opened up before him, tolerantly embracing many elements” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 144). The boy also belongs to this group. “With astonishment Aschenbach noticed that the boy was entirely beautiful” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). The same is the arrangement of anonymous or nameless characters in group, but the description shows the difference, from which Aschenbach’s love and taste can be easily depicted. This group are gentle, well educated, with aristocratic taste. Even their “luxuriant, treacherous bias in favor of the injustice” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145) can be regarded as a kind of “Inborn artistic nature” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). Because injustice creates beauty, Aschenbach tends to “sympathize with aristocratic preference and pay it homage” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). So, at this stage, the boy and his group act as a kind of setting for the preference and taste of the protagonist.

At the stage when Aschenbach follows the little boy by a mad compulsion here and there, he meets “groups of people were standing about silently on bridges or in squares, and the stranger stood among them, brooding and scenting the truth (the news about the plague)” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). To him, “visitors of other nationalities evidently knew nothing, suspected nothing, still had no apprehensions” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). On the one hand, some visitors there really are kept in dark about the plague as the little boy’s family, on the other hand, there are people suffering from the plague to death. Aschenbach is at the crossroad of to be or not to be. The anonymous or nameless groups at this stage totally present Aschenbach’s choice. There are people knowing and leaving. Yet there are people enjoying themselves there. The depiction of a small group of street singers from the city gave a performance

in the front garden of the hotel fully shows the deep desire of the protagonist. Carpe diem. The hotel staff, the lift boys, waiters, office employees, the Russian family, their aged serf...all are enjoying life to their heart content. Aschenbach and his boy are among them! So, at this stage, the anonymous or nameless groups act as a kind of setting for the deep desire of the protagonist.

All the settings constructed by the anonymous or nameless are not changeless, but moving forward with the story plot and the development of the characters, which appear when the protagonist's stream of consciousness cannot cover, functioning as a kind of supplement, so as to perfect the story in all aspects.

4. Aesthetics of the construction of the anonymous characters

The previous studies mostly focus on the main characters and the anonymous or nameless characters are always neglected. But the existence of the anonymous or nameless characters are not for no reason. There are different aesthetics for the construction of the anonymous characters in Mann's works, especially in *Death in Venice*. From the above functions cataloged, the aesthetics can be summarized as follows: Firstly, beautify the story plot. The appearance of them perfectly smooths the story's development and makes the story plot reasonable and fascinating. Secondly, enrich the depiction of the protagonist. The anonymous or nameless characters help improve the depiction of the main character and show the sharp contrast between them, which helps the readers better apprehend the protagonist. Thirdly, purify the love of Aschenbach over the little young boy. Through the comparison between the protagonist and the anonymous or nameless characters, the story draws the readers into the protagonist's shoes to feel his anxiety, entanglement, love, hidden desire and pain, and away from the moral thinking and moral trial. As a result, the story is regarded as a pure love story rather than an immorality or an indecency of an old man over a teenager. Last but not the least, enhance the comp-

rehension of the story. The plot, the character and the theme are all enhanced by the design of the anonymous or nameless characters, thus help the reader better understand of the story and make it enjoy great popularity around the world.

5. Conclusion

Minor characters in fiction are always anonymous or nameless, so are those in *Death in Venice*. From the analysis above, it is easy to conclude that they are designed for important reason and are necessary part for the fiction, especially for the fiction like *Death in Venice* written with the stream of consciousness of the protagonist. They are with various catalogues and help develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably, outstand the protagonist in comparison, fulfil the introduction of the protagonist and construct a moving setting for the story, so as to beautify the story plot, enrich the depiction of the protagonist, purify the theme of the story and enhance the comprehension of the story, and maybe even more. So, the anonymous or nameless characters are worthy of more attention and research.

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History, Sociocultural Implications and Archetypal Characters of “Three Gu Six Po” in Traditional Chinese Novels

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Abstract:

Grannies with folk careers, literally translated into “Three Gu Six Po” in Chinese, are ubiquitous in traditional Chinese novels and colloquial stories. They may be nuns, midwives, or matchmakers from a relatively unprivileged status, seeking any temporary work opportunity and providing various services in and out of households. The interesting dynamic between these characters taking on deeply nuanced positions in Chinese sociocultural traditions while also adhering to archetypal roles provides begs two assertions:

Firstly, we can learn about the career norms, social status and life patterns of these “Three Gu Six Po” during the Ming and Qing dynasties by delving into the stories and related reviews in historical accounts. Noticeably, their roles can be simultaneously powerful due to their social roles within the domestic politics sphere while marginalised and diminished because they are women and of a less respectable working class. And the development of social stereotypes and contemptuous attitudes towards “Three Gu Six Po” can be explored by studying these texts. Under the unnoticeable biased narratives of the elite literati during that period, this group of characters in literary works does not have a complete or identifying name and usually takes on relatively flat and templated personalities, with fixed impressions such as eloquence, greed, and lewdness, which suggests a concentration on the issues of gender and class inequalities in that period.

Secondly, as a representative member of “Three Gu Six Po”, “Granny Wang” has gradually become a typecast nameless character and is continuously being rewritten. Based on the basic profile of

“Three Gu Six Po”, some writers have occasionally given the character more detailed and vivid portrayals, and in some cases have developed her into a round character with own agency who was aware of her domestic power and made use of it. The logic behind the empowerment of “Granny Wang” through service can be traced back to Chinese philosophy, which makes the character archetype very different from servants or witches in Western countries.

Keywords: Three Gu Six Po; Granny Wang; Traditional Chinese Novels; Social History of Women; Servant

Introduction

Traditional Chinese women lived within a narrow social sphere with great obligations inside the family and very limited rights in the community. However, Tseng Yuho noted that clusters of women poets and painters emerged during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Women were gradually accepted as professionals in the seventeenth century, and “the sale of their artworks was regarded as an honourable means of livelihood” (1993, p. 249). Richard Smith also pointed out that “many traditional Chinese divination techniques were employed by women even more than by men” (1993, p.1) throughout the Qing period. In brief, large numbers of women had careers of their own and were more involved in socially productive activities to a greater extent during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Nevertheless, as women have been marginalized for most of recorded history, documentary evidence is difficult to come by. Authoritative historical sources, such as encyclopedias, official histories, and local gazetteers, seldom devote attention to women, let alone those of working-class backgrounds, because such non-do-

mestic behaviour is incompatible with or contrary to the concept of “righteous womanhood” (e.g., the Three Obediences and Four Virtues). The traces of these professional women can be found almost exclusively in traditional Chinese novels or colloquial stories, as these works contain more working-class sociocultural interactions that the dominant imagination has ignored.

In terms of academia, research into the history of Chinese women’s literature emerged in Taiwan since the 1920s, followed by the flourishing of academic institutions in Hong Kong, mainland China, and some western countries. However, as Jen-der Lee (1996) pointed out, most articles concentrated on a few specific well-known women with great social status or stunning appearances. Masses of females indeed struggle to stand out from the background, while the narrative often tends to follow a few selected characters who are given a name. Therefore, grannies with folk careers, literally translated into “Three Gu Six Po” in Chinese, possess a diminished presence in all accounts despite their ubiquitous presence throughout Chinese society.

Introducing the excluded women as “dangerous women”, Victoria B. Cass (1999) described grannies as a governing force of the feminine that implied aspects of the yin, taking Granny Liu and Granny Wang as examples, and vividly painting a more fine-tuned picture of grannies’ role in the late imperial period. Undoubtedly, Yi Ruolan’s master’s thesis (2002) *Three Gu Six Po: The Exploration of Women and Society in the Ming Dynasty* filled the research gap in more detail, carefully depicting the folk careers and cultural connotations of this crowd from a historical perspective. Subsequently, Hu Guixiang (2013) reviewed this book and analyzed misogyny by comparing the condemnation of the “Three Gu Six Po” with the witch hunts in Europe in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. From a different perspective, Chen Baoliang (2009) called these women “Nü Bang Xian” and regarded them as a crucial new form of social networking system for females in the late Ming dynasty. Afterward, Zhang Angxiao (2012) further studied the literati’s attacks on “Three Gu Six Po”, and Yang Zhiping (2016) explained grannies’

functions for story-telling and the symbolic meanings of these figures in traditional Chinese literature.

Initially inspired by the works of Victoria B. Cass (1999) and Yi Ruolan (1995), this paper focuses on the history, sociocultural implications and some typical characters of “Three Gu Six Po” in the town novels mostly during the Ming and Qing dynasties, in order to study how they represent the working-class women and restore the sociocultural history for these masses of female workers. Furthermore, as “Granny Wang” (Wang Po, the Chinese word “Po” is usually translated into English as “Granny” in academia) is often an archetypal character of the “Three Gu Six Po” in these texts, this article reflects on the cause, flexibility and sociocultural logic behind the insouciant naming process of this character. Besides, the comparison of “Granny Wang” characters in traditional Chinese novels with their similar figures, such as maidservants in Western literature, can further reveal the different cultural logics and social orders.

The history and cultural implications behind “Three Gu Six Po”

The collective noun “Three Gu Six Po” was first noted in WeiZhengJiuYaoand ChuoGengLuduring the Yuan period, both referring to grannies with nine kinds of folk careers. According to Victoria (1999, p.47), they assume roles in areas including *matchmaking*, fertility, birth, nurturing, and illness and death. Shouldering the heavy burden of life, they had to be “versatile” and seized every opportunity to make money.

However, there were only a few records of the “Three Gu Six Po” in the Yuan Dynasty, and it was only after the Ming Dynasty that the “Three Gu Six Po” proliferated as a collective image or individual figure in various types of novels and operas. The frequent appearances of “Three Gu Six Po” in Ming-Qing-era town novels reversely prove that these “Three Gu Six Po” were very active and a

necessity in the social life of Ming and Qing dynasties. Taking *The Golden Lotus* (JinPing Meizhuan, 1617) as an example,

there is not only “Granny Wang” but also “Aunt Xue” (the Chinese word “Gu” is usually translated into English as “Aunt” in academia), “Aunt Wen”, “Granny Zhang”, “Granny Feng”, etc... All of these characters belong to the group of “Three Gu Six Po”, helping construct the common life in the streets. Zhang Zhupo (1670-1698), a Ming Dynasty scholar, once commented that the depiction of the life of grannies in *The Golden Lotus* revealed the fact that it was almost a must for women living in small households to seek folk careers after their thirties or forties.

Interestingly, those working-class grannies were jacks-of-all-trades rather than specialists to seize every opportunity to make money. And although those “Three Gu Six Po” are often well versed in all sorts of household things in order to make profits, their works were not considered as a serious career. Remarkably, most records of “Three Gu Six Po” reflect the literati’s negative attitude towards this female group. As Yi Ruolan (2006) concluded from historical records and literary works, scholars mostly treated the group of “Three Gu Six Po” with great contempt and regarded them as destructive elements of Confucian rituals and patriarchal authority. One of the potential threats of “Three Gu Six Po” is their ability to roam both inside and outside households, which naturally rebels against the ritual concepts of “righteous womanhood” (e.g., Three Obediences and Four Virtues, No physical contact between men and women) that emphasize the gender segregation and social division of women’s staying inside the chamber while men work outside to be breadwinners. Yi also pointed out that intellectuals portrayed those grannies as dangerous women involved in bribery, witchcraft, and intrigues, with stereotypes of eloquence (likou), greed (tancai), and lewdness (yinmei),

while suggesting that this “vulgar group” should be regulated, deported, and chastised. More specific evidence can be found in family precepts of the literati, such as Huo Tao (1487-1540) and Xu Zhenji (1575-1645), both literary officials during the Ming Dynasty.

These biased opinions can be scrutinized under issues of gender and class inequality, which further reveals the double marginality of these grannies with folk careers: both an innominate working-class nobody and an aged woman without much feminine value under the patriarchal gaze. Apparently, the elitist and patriarchal system prevented elder working-class women from any possibility to assume the sort of high-profile roles. Worse still, the oppressive, male-dominated environment of Ming and Qing China, without acknowledging the significance of occupying the boundary between the private and public, placed many restrictions on their existing working opportunities. Shouldering the heavy burden of living in their small households, those grannies had to be “versatile” and seize any opportunity to earn money.

Even though most of the records hold negative attitude towards this female group, it is not possible to erase their existence because of their prevalence and their powerful social role within the domestic politics sphere. As teachers and spokeswomen of the inner chambers, these grannies moved in and out of the households and through the streets of the cities, making profits, owning social statures, and to some extent, partially gaining their independence from many patriarchs. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of the character Granny Wang in *The Golden Lotus*, which will be discussed later.

The naming and a typical character of “Granny Wang”

Aforementioned, “Three Gu Six Po” constitutes an informal bureaucracy that supervised life’s transitions and plays an indispensable role in traditional Chinese novels or colloquial stories. In these texts, “Granny Wang” (Wang Po) can be a representative.

“Granny Wang” (Wang Po) contains both a first name (“Wang”) and a flexible personal pronoun “Po” (the Chinese word “Po” is usually translated into English as “Granny” in academia). Generally speaking, the surname “Wang” is always one of the most

popular family names in China, so writers often create characters named “Granny Wang”, which further diminishes the specificity of the character. And the word “Po” is a kind of personal pronoun referring to aged women. Naming this group of characters in such a flexible way, “Granny Wang” gains the possibility of developing into a literary archetypal character offering various services.

“Granny Wang” was mostly depicted as a matchmaker since the colloquial stories of the Song and Yuan dynasties. A family would first consult a granny-matchmaker go-between to find a suitable bride or groom. For example, in the book *A Brief History of the Chinese Novel* (Zhongguo Xiaoshuo Shilüe, 1925), Lu Xun mentioned a story named *Ghost of the Western Hill* (Xishan Yi Guiku, a colloquial story in the Song Dynasty), where Granny Wang helps the protagonist Wu Hong to make a match. In the town novels or colloquial stories during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the frequency of the role of “Granny Wang” has experienced a considerable increase, appearing in many classics including *Water Margins* (Shui Hu Zhuan), *The Golden Lotus* (Jin Ping Mei), *Three Words Two Beats* (“Sanyan Erpai”), *Cases of Lord Shi* (Shi Gong An) and so on.

One of the most influential grannies must be Granny Wang in *The Golden Lotus*, around character with a distinctive personality and infamous reputation. Unlike the

homonymous Granny Wang in *Water Margins*, the granny in *The Golden Lotus* has deeper and longer involvement, and a particularly vivid first-person psychological description that cannot be found in that in *Water Margins*. In *The Golden Lotus*, readers know that there was an old woman who kept a tea shop from a third-person perspective. But she quickly points out by herself that,

*People imagine that I keep a tea shop here, but to tell
you the truth, a
ghost playing the night watchman would fill the part as
honestly as I do*

*mine. One day, I certainly did sell some tea. It was three
years ago, to be
precise, when snow fell in the sixth month; but I've sold
none since. No,
sir, I make my living in quite another way.*

(Clement, 2011, p. 76-77)

This old woman has been an efficient and busy go-between all her life, occasionally taking care of children or other temporary fortune-making tasks, fully fits the traditional roles and images of “Three Gu Six Po”. Yet unlike the former figures with flat personalities, this granny is depicted detailedly and develops strong agency and her own grievances for she has been clearly aware of her authority within the domestic sphere. Her past experiences and the burden of breadwinning make her to be a resourceful, clever, and even dominant character. The narrator concludes that she is “a thoroughly accomplished rogue” (Clement, 2011, p. 75), while Ximen Qing, the ruthless parvenu of the book also marvels at her accomplishments. By deliberately confusing the word “damsons” with “damsels”, Granny Wang successfully stirred the depraved desire and sexual passion of Xi Mengqing. She even taught Ximen Qing the five necessary skills for seduction and carefully laid out ten plans, which proved to work. This character was thrilled with her power to disrupt. On this basis, we can agree with Victoria’s insight: “In a culture that yields to women low status and precarious economic existence, grannies in Ming literature have a miraculous contempt for the lord of the estate...A very uneasy truce existed between the ruling male and the unruly granny” (Victoria, 1999, p. 72).

More specifically, these grandmothers gain authority through their knowledge of appetites and desires, because they know that men and women are made of flesh. This is not a complicated truth, but it is one that is constantly denied and attacked by the disciplined and the respectable. Granny Wang, however, becomes one of the few who can name the unnameable in these texts, making her a rebellious force against the established rules.

Grannies Are More Than Servants

When comparing Chinese grannies with servants in English literature, the special service patterns and servanthood make the former archetype distinguishable from the latter. Elizabeth Rivlin has concluded that service and servanthood were very closely linked in early modern England, especially in Shakespeare's works. She argues that the praise of volitional service or love in service mainly derives from Christian beliefs, where religious ideology and biblical scripture were invoked to defend slavery (Elizabeth, 2015, p. 27 & p. 36). However, there is still an essential tension existed that between service and servant, between the act and the person.

Both providing various services to their employers, Chinese grannies turn out to be very different from servants in Western countries flourishing in a similar period. In other words, those Ming-Qing-era town novels may spotlight different perspectives on service and servant because of their unique culture and social order. Although grannies with folk careers also provide many services to their employers, they can never be categorized into a vertical hierarchy or a servant-master structure that Western cultures emphasize. Instead, these grannies may develop their own agency and enjoy their dominant power in the domestic sphere. Living outside the constraints of elite customs, they are also blessed with the freedom to ignore these customs.

Service as Empowerment

As Elizabeth pointed out, different critiques and understandings of literary service in Shakespeare's works in the past few years "have opened up a split between materialist and idealist modes of criticism", and "have created an ideological divide which replays larger debates in literary studies" (Elizabeth, 2015, p. 24). Overall, these debates were about "the precarious nature of the divide between will, choice, and agency, on the one side, and constraint, coercion, and force, on the other" (p. 30).

Service, a sacred bond between masters and servants, has long been scrutinised under a hierarchical pattern. However, it is also a chic word since “service” seems freer from the vertical hierarchy than “servant” does. And nowadays, we rely very much on actions or functions that happen to be performed by people (not servants) on a daily basis. Then it comes to the question: In addition to the master-servant relationship under the hierarchical order, what other relationship can “service” construct between the act and the person?

The anonymous “Three Gu Six Po” provided a possible perspective: for those Chinese grannies, service can be an empowering process in a feminine way. On the one hand, grannies’ participation in labour production meant a lot, both in terms of making a handsome contribution to the incomes of individual households and filling positions that were more suitable for female workers. For example, Richard Smith (1993) and Yi Ruolan (2002) agreed that females were urgently needed for the occupations like diviners and missionaries. Additionally, scholars including Xu Zhoujian (1993) and Wang Zhong (1995) all stressed that women’s participation in social production led to an obvious improvement in their family, economic and social status. On the other hand, the service of grannies has dramatically expanded the activity space and the conceptual transition for women. Firstly, the service of “Three Gu Six Po” has the potential of “breaking”. Taking advantage of grannies’ informative visits, young girls and devout wives at that time had more access to knowledge of the outside. Their roaming transcended internal and external boundaries and broke down the fences separating one home from another. Secondly, their services and servanthood were sometimes destructive, reflecting folk lures and desires that may overthrow the traditional beliefs of chastity and marriage. It is also the reason why “Granny Wang” always succeeds in creating domestic chaos and becomes a hint of the so-called “repressed modernities” (Wang 1997). Thinking of *The Golden Lotus* in this way, we will find that the depiction of self-indulgence, particularly in four vices of drunkenness, lust, greed, and anger,

provides us with a very feminine approach to inner reflection, which differentiates it from masculine ritual disciplines. In the case of *The Golden Lotus*, Granny Wang becomes a powerful glue for all these liaisons and helps further unleash the power of human nature.

In conclusion, Chinese grannies' services differ from those emphasized in indoor service and master-servant relationships in Western countries. Their services can empower and help with the boom of folk feminine power within the dynamic socio-economic environment in late imperial China.

Concentrated but Not Hierarchical

Different representations of service and “servants” may be traced to social and cultural differences. More specifically, if we say that the West fits into a vertically hierarchical model, Chinese society may be described as “concentric circles.” The distinction is subtle, but leads to profound differentiation.

In the article above, Elizabeth Rivlin also reveals that English literature is influenced by Christian ideas that intimately link service and servanthood, because ultimately the social order is hierarchical and everyone is in different levels of servitude to God. However, there is less of a sense of vertical hierarchy in Chinese cultures. Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, is grounded by concentric circles of relevance – which expand from the self (body), to family (immediate family & extended family), to a group, to a state, and finally to Tianxia (Liji-Daxue). For this reason, “Three Gu Six Po” in Chinese texts and social contexts are naturally endowed with more freedom through their domestic power.

Conclusion

By studying the “Granny Wang” archetype, we learned about career norms, social status, patterns of life, and the temporal evolution of these “Three Gu Six Po” during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Influenced by cultural and socio-economic facts, archetypal characters of “Three Gu Six Po”, such as “Granny Wang”, may simultaneously be powerful due to their social roles within the domestic politics sphere while marginalized and diminished because they are women and of less respectable working class. And it also stimulates new thoughts and perspectives when comparing the service of Chinese grannies with those of Western servants.

Due to the limitations of length and the author’s knowledge base, many arguments still need to be fully developed. But it is worth doing further research on the history, cultural implications and typical characters of “Three Gu Six Po” in literary works, because this seemingly marginalized granny group works both as servants and as a locus of domestic power – which is not seen anywhere else in the global literary space.

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The Influence of Manchuria Experience on Abe Kōbō's Post-war Novels

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Abstract:

Abe Kōbō is a prominent Japanese writer with international influence. He is often described as "mukokuseki," meaning stateless or without a national identity. Throughout his career, Abe was involved in various artistic groups such as Yoru-no-kai, Shimomamaruko-bunka-syuudan, and Genzai-no-kai, to name but a few. The ideology of his pioneering work also shifted from existentialism to surrealism and communism. As a result, many scholars have attempted to capture consistent themes in the work of such a stateless and ever-changing writer. O'Michon (2010), for example, rationalizes the use of Abe's colonial experience to explain his post-war texts, and Kim Hyun Hee (2009) reveals the issue of 'home' in Abe's literature. And this essay attempts to describe how the colonial experience in Manchuria is at the root of the theme of hometown that runs through Abe's novels.

The hometown influences the customs, perceptions, and history of the native people and shapes the identity of the individual. However, while everyone has a hometown, the opposite phenomenon – "homelessness" – also exists, derived from the serious problems of migration and ethnic minorities generated by imperialism. For Abe, and many others who suffered the migrations and dislocations caused by colonialism in modern history, the model that "hometown" equals the "birthplace" does not apply. From this perspective, Abe Kōbō, who lived in China, which was invaded in World War II, and Japan, which was the aggressor, expresses in his work a special reflection on the question of "hometown" and "homelessness".

Manchuria or Man-chou is an exonym for a historical and geographical region in Northeast China today. It was here that Japan, through a combination of the Kwantung Army and the South Manchurian Railway Company, established the puppet state of Manchukuo. As early as after the Russo-Japanese War, campaigns to attract immigrants to Manchuria were publicized in Japan. Abe Kōbō was one of them. He experienced both advanced urban life and post-war anarchy, and his early memories induced a deeper reflection on his dual identity. This essay examines Abe's writing on the Manchurian experience, including the colonial experience, the return experience, the urban experience, and the post-war experience; and analyses how Abe's colonial experience in Manchuria influenced his view of his "hometown", demonstrating a post-war writer's struggle with his own colonial experience.

Keywords: Abe Kōbō, Manchuria experience, Post-war Literature, Homelessness, Dual Identity

I. The Colony Experience

Originally from Asahikawa, Hokkaido, Abe Kōbō was born in Takinogawa, Tokyo, in 1924. A year later, Abe's father took his family back to his clinic in the Japanese district of Fengtian (now Shenyang), the largest city in Manchukuo. The experience of living and growing up in the foreign city of Fengtian and the Manchurian experience from early childhood essentially defined the sensibility of Abe Kōbō (Takano, 1994). When Abe reflected on his life as an immigrant, he spoke of "three places: where I was born, where I grew up and where I am originally from I think it's fair to say that in essence, I am a person who has no hometown. Perhaps the hatred of the hometown, which is so deep in my emotions, stems from this

background. Everything that has a fixed value hurts me." (Abe, 1997) In essence, people who do not have a hometown are those who long for it, who realize or seek a place where they should have something to cling to, and therefore "pursue the hometown".

Neither war-torn Manchuria nor imperialist Japan could be considered the hometown of Abe Kōbō. In school, He was indoctrinated with the contradictory doctrine that they were superior Japanese under the concept of "the harmony among five races". However, witnessing the brutal acts of the Japanese against other nationalities in the interior of Fengtian only deepened his antipathy toward nationalism. A generation with a dual identity, like Abe's, spent his childhood outside of Japan, without really feeling that Japan was their hometown. But Abe says that Fengtian is not either, "My father was a peace-loving citizen on a personal level. But the Japanese community as a whole was an armed, invading immigrant. Maybe that's why I don't have the right to call Fengtian my hometown. But there is no other place that I can call my hometown" (Abe, 1997).

In the year and a half after the war in Fengtian, the original national structure of the colony was shattered and the sense of racial superiority as Japanese instantly disintegrated, "I witnessed the complete collapse of the social benchmarks, and as a result, I lost all trust in eternity" (Abe, 1997). The defeat and turmoil of the war, and the unprecedented experience of moving back to Japan from a devastated Manchuria, convinced him of the possibility of the vagaries of the world and the overturning of the established order: "The anarchy of Manchuria, its opposite of anxiety and terror, was the pressing-need reality of a certain dream implanted in my mind. Freedom from my father and the possessions and obligations he represented" (Abe, 1997). It is this particular experience that gives a duality to Abe's Manchurian experience: a sense of confusion about personal belonging, but also exhilaration for freedom after the collapse of the old order, which led to a colonial experience of statelessness that breaks through the limits of the national level. He seems to sense the urgency and possibility of

pursuing an ideal hometown in an anarchic city. The opposing subconsciousness that lies at the root of Abe's literary works, "losing the hometown" and "pursuing the hometown", are both rooted in the fact that he had "no hometown" from the beginning of his life as an immigrant.

The "outlands", or Manchuria, has a dual nature of being in opposition to the so-called hometown in the interior, while at the same time acting as an intermediary for integrating and examining the experience of the hometown. Although Abe spent his childhood in Manchuria, it disappeared with Japan's defeat and he was therefore compelled to return to Japan. This contradiction became the source of Abe's sense of hometown and the driving force behind his lifelong compulsion to return to his hometown. No matter how much Abe Kōbō hid his ties to Fengtian, the place where he was nurtured as a youth, the problems of identity and hometown stemming from his colonial life persisted, forcing him to think deeply about "loss of hometown", "statelessness", "wandering on the borderline", "the sadness of rootlessness" and so on. These pains and struggles of the mind are constantly transformed into Abe's unique internal experience, which is reflected in his literary works, especially in *Beasts Head for Home* (1957).

II. The Return Experience

Abe Kōbō's only full-length novel based on Manchuria, *Beasts Head for Home*, is a summary of his life up to the age of 17. It is the story of Kuki Kyūzō, a teenager who loses his family and home in Manchuria and tries to return to Japan. After 1945, Japan relinquished control of its vast colonies throughout Asia. Over 6 million Japanese soldiers and civilians living overseas began to return to the Japanese islands in large numbers; the collapse of various colonial institutions led to new forms of identity and personal belonging for both the colonizer and the colonized. In 1948, the Foreign Affairs Office reported that 4 million Japanese had still not returned to

Japan. *Beasts HeadforHome* is against this background of displacement and dislocations.

There is an autobiographical link between the protagonist's experience and the author's. 1945 saw the end of the war, the entry of Soviet troops into the city, and the death of Abe's doctor father in a typhus pandemic. The family lost their livelihood and shelter and had to move around the city of Fengtian, relying on the 21-year-old Abe to make and sell soft drinks. Kuki Kyūzō also lost his father at an early age, and at the age of sixteen, he lost his only family member, his mother, in the chaos following the defeat of the war. Overwhelmed as an outcast Japanese, Kyūzō was protected by the Soviet officers whom Kyūzō lived with for over two years and then decided to board a train heading south for Japan. But the train he was on was caught up in the civil war and destroyed, forcing Kyūzō and his new friend, Kō Sekitō, to walk south in the wilderness at 20 degrees below zero. Upon arriving in Fengtian, Kyūzō encountered the treachery of Kō and was almost robbed of his belongings. The troubled Kyūzō was rescued by a Chinese teenager and taken to the Japanese, where he managed to board a smuggling boat bound for Japan with the help of smugglers. Finally, like Abe Kōbō who embarked on a repatriation boat in October 1946, Kyūzō began his journey back home.

When Abe's ship arrived in Japan, there was a sudden cholera outbreak in the hold, so people were stranded in the port for nearly ten days, to the extent that some suffered from mental illness. Kyūzō encountered similar captivity. The enclosed space, which was intended as a refuge to protect people from war and storms, was turned into a place of captivity in the life and works of Abe. And we should not reduce the complex ideas presented in his work to mere empirical events. In *Beasts*, Abe elaborates on the notion of borderlines that delineates the home's space and he questions the fixity of borders. When Kyūzō despaired from his homeland, he thought the borderline between wasteland and home was precarious: "Damn it, it seems that I've just been circling the same place. No matter how far I go, I can't take a single step out of the wasteland. Perhaps Japan

doesn't exist anywhere. With every step I take, the wasteland walks together with me. Japan just flees further away..." (Abe, 2017). By the novel's end, Kō went crazy, while Kyūzō behaved like an enraged dog. They all became beasts without a home. Colonization changes the sense of stability of the hometown for both the colonized and the colonizer as individuals. Kyūzō's experience proves that the so-called hometown is nothing but an illusion, a place that can never be reached.

Unlike the realism of other post-war writers with military and battlefield memory, Abe's works use the experience of living and repatriating from defeated Manchuria as a medium to consciously and unconsciously transform the eternal "feeling of losing one's hometown, the experience of wandering in a boundless labyrinth, the loneliness in the city, and the sense of losing oneself, which are all common to human beings living in modern times" into a persistent "spiritual existence" (Kawamura, 1995). For example, Niki Jumpei, who gives up escaping from the dunes and chooses to stay in the desert at the end of *The Woman in the Dunes* (1962); *The Box Man*, who ends up with a cardboard box clasped to his head and in a state of uncertainty; and Mole, who is surprised to find that he has become a transparent person after escaping from the ark to the real world in *The Sakura Ark*, are all spiritual companions of Kyūzō. As Kurihtsubo Yoshiki points out, the movement of these protagonists is the result of the experience of fleeing the war coiled within them, transforming an ego movement into a genetic phenomenon, which is a reflection of the colonists' fatalism.

III. Urban Experience

As Abe Kōbō describes himself, "I did grow up in the colonies, especially during the heyday of so-called Japaneseism, so I formed the habit of seeing Japan relatively from the outside" (Abe & Keene, 1973). Colonial immigrants like Abe who got rid of their dual identities after the fall of Manchuria still did not feel that Japan was their hometown as Japanese. Abe, who had no hometown, sees ano-

ther "loss of hometown" for post-war Japanese from the outside. For about a decade after World War II, Japan experienced a period of rapid economic growth, which led to the transformation of its social structure and the advent of large-scale socialization. As the trend of rural populations leaving their pre-war rural communities for the cities, especially Tokyo, became more pronounced, Kato Masahiro noted that "leaving the village equals entering the capital", and thus the concept of "hometown" was born, and contrast to the city (Kato, 2003). Meanwhile, tens of thousands of "evaporative people" voluntarily left the constraints of the traditional community bonds such as family and workplace. In this sense, the 'disappearance' is closely related to the disintegration of the established social relations and the drive towards the city after the war. Abe wrote several urban novels with the loss of human identity and the alienation of social relations as the main themes, grounding the city on the persistent problems of the hometown. On the one hand, his writing is concerned with Japanese society, while on the other hand, the reality of this country without a hometown allows him to continue to maintain an external perspective and to think about the issue of personal identity.

"Missing Trilogy", which includes *The Woman in the Dunes*, *The Face of Another* (1964), and *The Ruined Map: A Novel* (1967), according to Abe's account, have elements of a trilogy in their depiction of human relationships fleeing modern society. "Disappearance" is closely related to the disintegration of traditional social relations brought about by the war and the drive towards the city, and is a choice to abandon all social affiliation against communist forces in Abe's work, and a continuation of Abe's reflection on his own colonial experience. In this trilogy, the term 'disappearance' plays a thematic role not only as a language of fiction but also as a legal concept, as noted by Namigata Tsuyoshi (1998). For example, in the use of the official document at the end of *The Woman in the Dunes* and the Application for Investigation at the beginning of *The Ruined Map*, the writer is strongly aware of the premise that the word 'disappearance' is a legal term. The legal provisions on disap-

pearance are articles 30 to 32 of the Civil Code, which stipulate that the family court may declare a person missing whose fate has been unknown for more than seven years at the request of the interested parties; this also applies to persons who have been missing for one year due to war, shipwreck or other causes of death. Here there are two types of disappearance: "ordinary disappearance" and "special disappearance", with different periods set for the declaration of disappearance. *Beasts Head for Home* tells the story of Kuki Kyūzō, a missing person of "special disappearance". Abe's literary world is a universe without a hometown, where it is impossible to find, even with the desire to escape. And *The Woman in the Dunes* is about missing persons of "ordinary disappearance" after the war.

The Woman in the Dunes describes a man who travels from Tokyo to collect insects in the dunes, only to be trapped by villagers. He escapes and fails repeatedly in the world of sand but eventually gives up when he has a chance. Under the nightmarish setting of the city and the semi-desert space, the story shows the tension between individual existence and communal fixity. A supporting character's nickname, Morbius Strip, hints at the protagonist's plight that he cannot find a homeland no matter where he flees. Both of these spatial constructions are closely related to Abe's Manchurian experience.

Before the end of World War II, The Japanese in Fengtian was exposed to an urban civilization that was 20 to 30 years more advanced than Tokyo. But in the city center, where other ethnic groups lived, municipal construction was backward, and the environment was heavily polluted. When he was a child, Abe enjoyed adventuring outside more than inside the walls built with bayonets by the Kwantung Army. Unlike the Japanese living area, the old city shows a strange baroque labyrinthine charm. At the time, through the illusion of harmonious community, Abe saw the imbalance between the new and old town streets, the dichotomy between modern order and natural chaos.

In *The Thought of the Desert*, Abe mentions the connection between the desert and his early experiences in Manchuria: "Both

the desert itself and the things in it often exude an ineffable charm. This feeling can also be described as a longing for something that is not available in Japan, but I spent most of my childhood in semi-deserted Manchuria (now Northeast China)...the dust is suffocating, the unerasable sand seeps in through dry eyelids, and behind that irritable mood lies not only discomfort but also a joyful longing" (Abe, 1970) Abe's view of the desert is also influenced by some extent by Hanada Kiyoderu. In *Two Worlds*, Hanada notes that "when it comes to the desert, only happy poets think of death, destruction, and nothingness", and that for children playing with the sand, there is a "sense of creating a world". They both admire the destructiveness and creativity rooted in the fluidity of sand and its constant movement. In *The Woman in the Dunes*, it is through the fluid quicksand that Abe opposed the social life fixed by order. To escape his family and workplace, Niki leaves one enclosed space only to fall into another. The inhabitants of the dunes united to prevent the protagonist from fleeing the dunes and forcing him to participate in the collective work of removing the quicksand under the motto "Love Your Home". Finally, he recognizes that the city and the dune village are all communities fixed by order from which escape and captivity are as entwined as the imagery of the Morbius Strip.

Abe refers to the protagonist in *The Woman in the Dunes* As a man who escapes," while in *The Ruined Map*, that`s "a man who pursues." It depicts the phenomenon of disappearance in the contemporary urban city through the unnamed detective "I." I become a detective work to escape from a professional and married life without uniqueness, which constitutes a correspondence between "I" and the missing man Nemuro. At this level, becoming a detective is already a "disappearance." As people associated with Nemuro appear and disappear, I feel that "disappearance" is a common choice. Eventually, I complete my second "disappearance" into the city, a world I had chosen of my own free will.

The novel presents a picture of a stable and depressing residential area, suggesting it is confinement for people. The missing

people in the story abandon the settled room of the residential area and flee to the mobile space of the city, that is, to leave fixed values and community that are essential connotations of the concept of hometown. The protagonist of *The Woman in the Dunes Gives up* the city, while the protagonist of *The Ruined Map* wanders around the city. Their liberation from the city or into the city points to the departure from the civilized order to a space opposite a hometown.

Abe's questioning of belonging and fixity is closely linked to his Manchuria experience. The urban routine of the anarchic period in Fengtian led him to challenge the necessity and legitimacy of community power to maintain order. After Japan's defeat in 1945, Fengtian was in a state of so-called anarchy, that is, a state without police. But the end of Japanese colonial rule did not affect the normal functioning of the city. The ineffectiveness of the institutions of power and the hypocrisy of the spirit of solidarity and nationalism presented by the everyday scenes led Abe to profoundly question the principles of community and thus to reflect on the existence of the state.

In both *The Woman in the Dunes* and *The Ruined Map*, there are presumptions from the relevant authorities, such as "judgments of disappearance," "the Application for Investigation," and "Reporter." However, those official documents have nothing to do with the protagonists of these novels, and those identified by society as missing or dead continue to survive. So post-war citizens Niki Jumpei and the unknown detective, along with Kuki Kyūzō, raise a common question: whether the communities like states can determine the existence and home of individuals.

IV. Conclusion

The sandy environment in *The Woman in the Dunes* relates to Abe's early experiences in the desert, and the motto 'Love Your Home' points to an illusion of community. The disappeared who abandon their legal identity conferred by the order in *The Ruined Map* share a similar moveable character with the quicksand. After

realizing the Morbius Strip of "losing the hometown" and "pursuing the hometown," Niki Jumpei liberates himself from the city while the detective enters the city. They both see the city as a non-hometown. Abe's preoccupation with mobility is partly due to the influence of the desert and anarchy in Manchuria. He spent 17 years in Manchuria in his early years and returned to Japan after World War II, which provided a unique colonial experience for his writing. The experience of living far from Japan and the demise of Manchuria led Abe to notice the absence of the hometown and to interpret the "hometown" as a concept of "Everything that has a fixed value". An aversion to fixed values, an insurmountable sense of belonging, and a deep disgust for the war combine to form Abe's unique colonial experience, which enabled him to capture keenly the changes in social relations in postwar Japan that were foreign to him as a returnee and deepened his questioning of the ambiguous homeland and the traditional collectivism. Those are central themes throughout his novels. This colonial experience of being thrown out of the community and questioning the collective is further carried over into his work while mapping the radical changes of post-war modernity. This is one of the main reasons why he is called a stateless writer. He has always thought and written about everyday life in Japan in Japanese, but the influence of his life in Manchuria has led him to perceive the alienated society of the 'outlands' in the 1950s and the urbanized Japan of the 1960s in a cross-cultural cosmopolitan sense, reflecting on the fact that there was no hometown as a space of stability for humanity during the 20th century.

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Texts and Visions Across Genres and Media: Re-thinking Arab Cultural History

Georgia as a Cultural Source for Arab writers – Moroccan Imaginary as a Model –

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Abstract:

Has Georgia become a cultural source for Arab writers, in the context of their Postcolonial perspectives towards cultural paradigms?

What space do Georgia and its culture occupy, among universal cultures, in the Arab imaginary in general?

I will try to expand these two questions, by focusing on the Moroccan imaginary, keeping in mind the impact of translation as the sole tool of communication between the Arab writers and Georgian culture.

Keywords: Georgian Culture, Source, Arab Writers, Moroccan imaginary, Postcolonial Perspectives

Keeping in mind the impact of political and cultural relations in the past between Georgia and the Arab world on the one hand and the impact of translation as the sole tool of communication between the Arab writers and the Georgian culture on the other, I will attempt to answer the following two questions:

1. *What space do Georgia and its culture occupy among universal cultures in the modern and contemporary Arab cultural field?*

2. *Has Georgia become a cultural source for Contemporary Arab writers within the context of postcolonial perspectives and cultural paradigm shifts?*

As the imaginary is not an isolated element, this paper will focus on some details which are pivotal for its elaboration.

1. Arabic translations of Georgian Literature

To better understand the process of translating Georgian Literature into Arabic, I will try to shed some light on the nature of Arab interest in Georgian culture and literature since the middle ages.

1.1. The Middle Ages:

As I believe in the interaction between dominant and rising cultures, the following questions need to be answered:

Is it possible that during the Middle Ages, even after the huge efforts made by Georgian kings (Tamar in particular) and scholars like Shota Rustaveli, to reverse the equation and become a source of Culture, no Arab interest in Georgia out of scientific, historical and geographical resources could have been found?

Is it true that the Georgian language had never been a source language during the Middle Ages?¹

¹ We take into consideration that «In general, the 11th and 12th centuries AD (5th -6th centuries AH) were a period of extensive cultural-scientific exchanges

Taking into account the invasion of Mongols on the one hand and the fact that the Georgian language is almost –till now–¹ completely inaccessible to the rest of the world on the other, the possibility that a Medieval Georgian scholar would have translated into Arabic some Georgian Literature rescued from destruction and became witness to an Oriental revival based on humanism, centuries before the European Renaissance, especially Shota Rustaveli's epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* «regarded as the crown of this cultural boom² », seems to be an important one.

What is surprising is that it was a Medieval Arab scholar, not a Georgian one who probably made the first step! Franz Toussaint, a great French expert in Oriental studies and a well-known translator of Arabian, Persian, Sanskrit and Japanese poetry, includes in his compilation of poems translated by him from Arabic into French *The Islamic Songs of War and Love*³, prosaic translations of four Georgian poems among translations of Arabic, Persian, Afghan, Belujistan, Altarian, Turkish, Egyptian, Maroconian, Hogarian, and Cherqezian texts. In The Georgian part of the book entitled: «Georgia songs»,⁴ names of Rustaveli and Shavteli are mentioned, but in an altered transliteration as following: Prince Zoumali: La Rose⁵,

between the Christian population of Georgia and various Muslim nations who were living together in Tbilisi, or its other cities» (mahvash vaheddoost, "Manifestation of Georgian Elements in Persian Literature Texts":

https://www.academia.edu/30681933/Manifestation_of_Georgian_Elements_in_Persian_Literature_Texts).

¹ Gvantsa Jobava, «Exporting Georgian Literature» ,Translated from Georgian by Philip Price, Published in: *The Past in the Present: Writing from Georgia*, Georgia:september-2018-georgia-exporting-georgian-literature-gvantsajobav%2F&usg=AOvVaw2l-kqJPOg6-UxYK6Nsczb5.

² Maka Elbakidze, «*The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and European Chivalry Romance», in: *The Knight in the Panter's Skin“ and its Place in the World Literature.Modern Interpretations*, Irma Ratiani Editor, 2016, p.28.

³ *Chants d'Amours et de Guerre de l'Islam*, Robert Laffont , Marseille , 1942.

⁴ «Chants de Géorgie», p.147-150.

⁵ «Dans tous les jardins , j'ai vainement cherché une rose qui aurait la couleur de tes joues ... p.147-148.

Chavtali: L'Embarras¹, **Roustoual:** La Peau de Léopard (Extrait)², Anonyme: Nuit³. Bearing in mind that the majority of the Georgian part is devoted to the long extract of the poem attributed to Rustaveli, which reinforces the idea that Rustaveli's epic poem was considered a model of high poetry.

According to some Georgian experts, Franz Toussaint "was able to obtain the information concerning Georgian poetry from a compilation of Arabic poems"⁴ by the famous Christian Syrian writer Abu Al-Faraj Ibn al-'Ibri⁵ who was born in 1225.

This hypothesis led us to conclude that Arabic is the first foreign target language for Georgian Literature in the Middle Ages! Maybe the only one, if we take into consideration the fact that no translation into Persian was reported during this period, despite the close cultural relationship between Georgia and Persia since the Achaemenid period which resulted in mutual influence as it is attested by the manifestations of Georgian elements in classic Persian literature (Naser Khorow's Safarnama for example)⁶. To prove it, I believe that deep research must be conducted.

¹ Je lui dirai que je ne peux vivre sans elle et que j'irais la chercher au bout du monde...». p.148.

² «Je suis faible comme le brin d'herbe qui vient d'être foulé par le pied d'un montagnard .Aie pitié de moi ! Je le jure , j'irai chaque soir te retrouver près de la fontaine !Les guerriers de mon père ne pourront reconnaître mon visage...». p148-149-150.

³ «Comme un mendiant altéré , je bois à mes souvenirs d'amour... ».p.150.

⁴ «The Mystery of the Unknown Poem by Rustaveli», kartvelologi: <http://kartvelologi.tsu.ge> archive

⁵ This famous Syrian writer, translator and a compiler served as a bishop in Armenia and lived in Azerbaijan. His written records have retained information on Iberians, conversion of Georgian people to Christianity and Georgian-Mongol relationship». in: The Mystery of the Unknown Poem by Rustaveli – kartvelologi: <http://kartvelologi.tsu.ge> archive.

⁶ mahvash vaheddoost, op.cit. v. cf :

- GEORGIA iv. Literary contacts with Persia, Encyclopaedia Iranica: www.iranicaonline.org%2Farticles%2Fgeorgia-iv.

- Elguja Khintibidze, *Rustaveli's 'The Man in the Panther skin' and European Literature*, Bennett& Bloom, 2011, p.13-14.

What is obvious is that nothing happened later on. For Centuries, there were no more translations of Georgian literature into Arabic nor mentions of Georgian culture in any Arab work of fiction, except references to “AlKorj”¹ (Georgia), as being under The Ilkhanate hegemony during the 14th century in the famous Moroccan traveler Ibn Battûta’s Journey². The image we have of “Alkorj”, and other countries divided among Mongol princes after the death of Sultan Abou-Said Bahadour, without any commentary of Ibn Battûta, is so brief but so expressive.

Ibn Battûta, who had crossed on his way to the capital of the Khân of the Golden Horde, the Black Sea to the Crimean Peninsula, then to the northern Caucasus, did not visit Georgia as it is known, but he visited Cairo and Bilâd a-Shâm twice during Mamluk dynasty: the Caucasian Culture in general (the architecture in particular) had become a part of the Arab Islamic culture during this period, especially during the second period of Mamluk dynasty, called by Arab historians Burji dynasty³.

This complicated and rich past period has become a source of inspiration for modern Arab novelists since the beginning of the second millennium from a negative perspective⁴. It will also be the origin of a new kind of contact with Georgia and its culture as it will be demonstrated later.

¹ The name given by Arabs to Georgia.

², Tuḥfat an-Nuẓẓār fī Gharā’ib al-Amṣār wa ‘Ajā’ib al-Asfār, reviewed by Abdel-Hâdi Tazi, Vol. 2, *Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco Editions*, 1997, p. 73.

³ Burji danasty ruled Egypt from 1382 until 1517

⁴ Among Arab famous novels fictionalizing Mamlûk ‘s period from a negative side:

- Jorge Zaydân , *Istibdâd Al-Mamâlîk* ,Al Hilâl, 1900.

-Mohamed Said Al-’aryân , ‘*Ala Bab Zouila* , prefaced by Taha Hussein,1951.

.-Sa’d Makkâwî, *Assâirûna Niyâmane* ,1963.

-Jamal Al- Ghitanî, *Azzîni Barakât*, Churûk , 1974 .

1-2. The Nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

Following the Nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly during the period of *Nahda* (also *known* as the *Arab Renaissance*), Arab scholars in Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon translated a lot of works from major European languages, French and English in particular. In this context, the enthusiasm of the *Nahda* masters for great Russian writers should be highlighted. According to Richard Jacquemond, „The case of Russian literature is interesting. During *Nahda*, this literature held a prominent place for a long time, competing with French and English literature¹.“

As is the case for the majority of scholars belonging to systems in crisis, Arab scholars targeted dominant cultures for a long time, that is why we had not been surprised by the lack of interest of Arab translators and scholars in Georgian literature during this period even if we know that except for some translations into English and French, Russian has been the first target language for Georgian literature for a long time since the nineteenth century to the decolonization period.

This general conclusion does not mean that some of *Nahda*'s writers had not been in contact directly or indirectly with Georgian culture and literature. Rizkallâh Hassûn's² poem 'A trip in Caucasus' published in 1868 selected works in London is one of the scarce proofs. "This fictional poetic work of forty-eight baits" conveys the author's impressions while making a journey in Georgia³.

¹ Richard Jacquemond, « La traduction en arabe du roman mondial (1991-2015). Jalons pour une enquête », Maxime Del Fiol et Claire Mitatre (dir.), *Les Occidents des mondes arabes et musulmans, XIXe-XXIe siècles*, 2018. fflshs-01838369.

² 1825-1880.

³ «In 1862 Hassûn immigrated to Russia. Initially he came to Harbor city of Georgia Poti from Constantinople through the Black Sea, then he visited Tbilisi where he spent a month. Then he went to Russia along with Georgian military road.» Leila Kvelidze, *From the history of Arabic and Georgian Literary Relationships*, in: *Yearbook*, Vol. 2, Kutaisi, 2010, p. 220.

The second proof is Eliâs Abû Shabaki's¹ collection of poems *Serpents of Paradise*², published in 1938. To our surprise, the famous Lebanese poet, who was one of the founders of the literary League of Ten³ known for its important role in the development of Arab poetry during this period, mentioned Shota Rustaveli's epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* in the preface of his collection. The Lebanese poet had known about the Georgian epic thanks to Edmond Jaloux's article⁴ praising the publishing of the third translation of the epic poem into French⁵ in 1938, and emphasizing the greatness of the Georgian medieval poet.

About this, Eliâs Abû Shabaki said: 'I have just read an article written by the French writer Edmond Jaloux about a great poet from the 12th century called Shota Rustaveli, [...]. Edmond Jaloux said that this recently discovered poet had written a surprising poem or epic, which is a praise of humans as they were in the late Middle Ages, in their strength, their feelings of pride and justice, their naivety at thresholds of revival. He said "as soon as we read this poem (*The man in the Panther's Skin*), We fall in a daze about this oriental drunkenness. It's because we lost – poor occidental people – the habit of slurred speech, and We almost suffocate in this atmosphere of incense and colors⁶ ."

Did Abû Shabaki read the third French translation of the epic poem? There is no way to prove it, but what is clear in his book's preface is the fact that Rustaveli's poetic style was a witness which supports his thesis about poetry creation and his effort to persuade his contemporaries to liberate themselves from the chains of the imitation of Occidental theories and poetry schools⁷. Apart from Rizkallâh Hassûn's poem and Elias Abû Shabaki's preface, no matter

¹ 1321-1947.

² *Afâ'i al-firdaws*, Almakchûf, Beyrouth, 1938.

³ In 1930.

⁴ Appeared in 'Nouvelles Littéraires', 1938.

⁵ Chota Roustaveli, *L'Homme à la peau de léopard*, trad. Giorgi Gvazava et Anie Marcel, Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1938.

⁶ *Afâ'i al-firdaws*, Hindâwi, Cairo, 2014, p.12-13.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.13

how hard I searched, I could not find any other mention of Georgian culture as the long real process of new contact between modern Arab scholars and Georgian culture and literature began in the sixties.

1-3. The Soviet period : The beginning of a modern process

How Georgian Literature made its way into the modern Arabic language during the soviet period?

Substantially, it is Georgian Arabists who took the first step, when they proposed to the Syrian translator Nizar Khalili to translate *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* into Arabic, during his short journey in Tbilisi in 1966. The choice of the work does not surprise us, as it is considered not only as a model of High poetic and thinking of Georgian culture but also as a symbol of Georgian Identity.

Translation made from French and English, with the substantial support of Georgian Arabists, Gouram Tchicovani in particular, comparing the result with the Georgian original text¹ took about twenty-two years , during this period Nodar Dumbadze's novels (*I Can See the Sun², and Granny, Ilico Illarion, and I³*) were translated from Russian into Arabic by famous Arab translators known by their translations of Russian literature into Arabic (Ghâib Tu'ma Farmân, Abderrahmân Habîbî, Jalâl Al-Mâchita, . .).

In 1984, the Arabic translation of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* finally appeared in Damascus. It was financed by Levan Sagradzé, a Syrian businessman from Georgia very attached to his origins. According to the translator preface, Nizâr Khalilî aimed to

¹ Al- fâris fi ihâb an-namir, translated by Nizâr Khalilî, Preface: Nizâr Khalilî and Gouram Tchicovani, Al-matba'a al- jadida, Damascus, 1984, p. 14.

² Arâ as-shams , translated:

- Ghâib Tu'ma Farmân, At-takadum ,Moscou, 1971.

-Hamid Chamaqi, At-takadum, Moscou, 1981.

³ Anâ wa Jaddatî wa Ilico wa Illârion , translated by:

- Abderrahmân Habîbî, Moscou, 1975.

- Jalâl Al-mâchita, Radoga, 1984.

share with Arab readers his own discovery of the greatness of the Georgian epic poem and the specificity of Georgian culture and literature; while drawing their attention to the Arabic heritage in the epic.

Reception of Khalîlî's translation in the Arabic literary field was good but limited: It was celebrated right after its appearance as the first one in Arabic¹, with the participation of the translator and the Syrian novelist Walîd Ikhlâsi who had participated in the revision of Khalîlî's Arab version of the epic poem.

The Syrian and Lebanese articles that appeared in some important newspapers, such as 'Al-Ba'th'², Tishrîn³, An-ahâr⁴, appreciated Rustaveli's new ideas of the Enlightenment that they considered as being the soul of the Modern Renaissance, the prevailing tolerance in the whole epic poem, and celebrated in general what they considered as the most beautiful thing Georgia gave to humanity during its long History. According to Hasan M. Usuf, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* is on an equal footing with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Ferdawsi's *Shahnameh* and Virgile's *Aeneid*⁵.

Similarly, no mentions of translations into Arabic of Nodar Dumbadze's Novels have been detected. Nevertheless, by translating the most important work in Georgian literary history and the masterpiece of world literature, Nizar Khalîlî had been seen by these Critics as a leader contributing to filling a void denoting the ignorance of a country and its culture. This was, therefore, supported later on by some Georgian Arabists like Gouram Tchicovani who translated some Georgian poems into Arabic, besides his contribution to the translation of Shota Rustaveli's poem. Supported by a few Arab translators at the end of the eighties, like the Iraqi Sa'di El

¹ In Soviet center in Damascus.

² 'Abdun-nabî Hijâzî, Chota Rustaveli wa Malhamat Al- fâris fi ihâb an- namir, Al-Ba'th, December 9, 1984 .

³ Hasan M. 'assûf , Al- fâris fi ihâb an- namir: yanâbi' ash-shi'r, yanâbi' al-hikma, Tishrîn, August 31, 1985.

⁴ Waddâh Yûsuf Lahlû , Malhama Georgia wa tarjama 'arabia, An-nahâr, January 18, 1985.

⁵ Hasan M. 'assûf, Ibid .

Mâleh¹ and the Soudanai Abderrahîm abou Dhekrî², Nizâr khalîlî continued his efforts in the eighties, by translating poems of the nineteenth century poets (Nikoloz Baratashvili, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli³), and narrative fiction of the Soviet period (Constantin Lordkipanidzé, Leo Kiacheli, Nodar Dumbadze, Otia Ioseliani, Niko Lordkipanidzé⁴): the choice of poets and authors is very significant.

Did these few important translations of Georgian ancient and modern Literature from Russian and French Into Arabic make a deep change in its reception in the Arab World? Unfortunately, these translations did not make a big change, no interest in academic works, and no influence on Arab imaginary. Hence, Georgia and its culture stayed unknown to the majority of Arab writers and readers! But the Arab world was not an exception, “until the mid-2010s Georgian literature was almost entirely unknown abroad⁵”, according to Ana Mezvrishvili.

In this context, it is important to note that the Arabic translation of some Georgian literary works between 1971 and 1989, was among the exceptions in the history of Georgian literary translation into foreign languages during the Soviet period, thanks to the efforts of Georgian Arabists and some left-wing Arab intellectuals and translators. According to Gvantsa Jobava, during this hard time for Georgia and its culture, except the twelfth-century epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* “that could not be hemmed in even by the almighty Iron Curtain, such was its genius[...]it was

¹ Sa'dî Al-maleh, *Nâmûs al-khulûd*, Radoga, 1989.

² *Anâ anmû Anâ akbur*, Radoga, 1989.

³ «Qadaru Georgia» (1987). – «An-nâsik » (1987). «Al-muaddab» (1988) ,Dâr AlHiwâr, Latakia.

⁴ Khamsu qisasin mina al-adabi al-George , 1988.

⁵ How Georgian literature has made its way into 35 languages, Investor.org, Analytical Business Magazine, how-georgian-literature-has-made-its-way-into-35languages%2F&usg=AOvVaw3DHGYVvHCIPGRE1w-Rtnp. v. cf: Ana Kvirikashvili, «State Cultural Policies in Georgia's small Book market. Case of the translation grant program», *Georgian Literature in translation* (2010-2018), Knygotyra, vol. 75, 2020, p. 96.

essentially impossible to have translations and original writing published outside the Soviet sphere, and even within that sphere, publishing was always tightly controlled by the regime¹.”

1.4. The independence Period: from 2010 till now

* In The Machrek

During the first decade of the independence period of Georgia, the Syrian newspaper «Al-Jamâhîr» published² Gouram Chikovani's translation of the verses of Galaktion Tabidze, Vazha Pshavela and Akaki Tsereteli from Georgian into Arabic. Arabic Translations of Georgian Literature focusing on Dumbadze's fiction, continued growing at the same pace in the eighties with new translators (Nawfal Nayyûf, 'Adil Isma'il, Ali Haddâd, ...³) till 2014.

In fact, the movement of translating Georgian literature into foreign languages began to improve, starting from the 2010 in consequence of the “Georgian Book and Literature Program⁴ [...], aimed at promoting the translation and publication of Georgian literature in foreign languages. This process was facilitated by an annual forum-dialogue for foreign and Georgian publishers, supporting Georgia's participation in international book fairs, and the participation of Georgian authors in literary festivals and symposia⁵”.

¹ Exporting Georgian Literature ,Translated from Georgian by Philip Price, op.cit

² December 17, 1997.

³ Nodar Dumbadze:

- Ar-râyât al-baydâ', translated by Nawfal Nayyûf and Adil Ismâ'il, The Syrian General Organization of Books, 2007.

- Zâirû al-fajr, translated by Ali Haddad, Alkhayal, 2007.

- Qânûn al-abadiyya, translated by Chawkat Youssef, Damascus, 2010.

- Lâ Takhâfî yâ Mama, translated by Ahmed Nâsir, Arab Wirters Union publications, Damascus, 2012.

⁴ It was launched with the funding of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia.

⁵ How Georgian literature has made its way into 35 languages, op.cit.

Translation of Georgian culture and literature significantly gained prominence starting from 2014. Among thirty books¹ translated this year and forty-seven² books translated in 2015, there are translations into Arabic of new famous Authors³! And since the Georgian language was completely inaccessible to the Arab world, Arabic translations were conducted from French, English, and Russian. Thanks to the financial support of the Georgian National Book Center, and the dynamic cultural Georgian diplomacy, Georgia succeeded in being the guest of important Arab international book Fairs: Dubai 2020 and Doha International Book 2022 namely.

At Dubai Expo -23 January 2020, postponed to 23-24 January 2022 because of covid 19 pandemic a series of activities dedicated to Georgian literature and writing had been held, at the initiative of Production in Georgia Agency and with the support of Tbilisi City Hall and Tbilisi –World Book Capital, as it was announced by Elene Dobordjnidze in 2020⁴. Moreover, Doctor Nino Surmava, presented a paper about Shota Rustaveli's epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and the Arabic translation that was reissued in 2016 in Cairo⁵. And to celebrate and encourage the relative growth and openness of the process of translation of Georgian Literature into Arabic, two recent Arabic translations of contemporary Georgian novels were presented: David Turashvili's novel *Flight from the USSR* translated by Samâh Ja'far⁶, and Dato Gorgiladze's novel *The*

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Jemal Karchkhadze, *Antonio wa David*, translated by Amir Zakî, Al-kutub Khân , Cairo, 2014.

- Lasha Boughadzé, *Express Al-adab*, translated by Mohamed Majdî Mohamed, Al-kutub khân, Cairo, 2015.

- In 2016: Achil sulakauri, *Mughâmarâtes Pikolo*, translated by Jihâd Chbînî, Al-kutub khan, Cairo.

⁴ Georgian literature series to be held at Expo Dubai 2020,

<https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/georgian-literature-series-to-be-held-at-expodubai-2020/>

⁵ General Egyptian Book Organisation.

⁶ David Turashvili, *Rihla mina Al-Ittihâd Assûviâti* , Translated by Samâh Ja'far, Al-Kutub Khân, 2015.

Club of Elderly Harlots, translated by Hâla Salâh¹. Master classes on Georgian writing were also organized for the visitors. During two days, Expo Dubai 2020 hosted Georgian culture, sports, cuisine and tourism showcases at the Georgian pavilion².

In 2022, during Doha International Book Fair, a collection of Nodar Dumbadze's stories³ translated from Russian into Arabic by Abderrahîm Dhekrî in 1987 and published in 2019 in Qatar thirty years after his death, was presented with the participation of Dumbadze's daughter. In addition, the Arabic translation prefaces⁴ highlighted the interest of Georgian Embassy, and the efforts made by Arabists Doctor Darejan Gardavadze and Doctor Sobio Nozadze to revise the translation while comparing it with Georgian origin.

***In the Maghreb: Morocco**

Contrary to countries of Machrek (Egypt and Syria in particular), Morocco does not have a long history of cultural exchanges with Georgia. The fact that the Moroccan king Abdelazîz Ibn Al-hassan first's⁵ mother was Georgian did not make any difference. Moroccan universities despite their openness to foreign culture and literature did not show considerable interest in Georgian or Caucasian culture and literature until the end of 2012. The reception of Georgian participants in some of these universities congresses earlier, particularly in Marrakech (2000), Fez (2009) for example, can be considered as a cultural curiosity towards an unknown country and culture. Even though congresses proved to be efficient, the Sixth Alexander von Humboldt & Ibn Battûta international Congress in 2011 was so beneficial.

¹ Dato Gorgiladze, *Nâdi al-ghâniyât al-musinâte*, Translated by Hâla Salâh A-sayâd, Dâr Safsâfa, 2022.

² Georgian literature series to be held at Expo Dubai 2020, *op.cit*

³ *Al-mulâzim Kukaracha*, Qatar National presses.

⁴ - Speech of former Georgian ambassador, Ekaterine Meiering-Mikadze, *Ibid*, p. 7-8.

-Darejan Gardavadze, The Writer of love and smile, *ibid*, p. 11-15.

⁵ 1878-1943.

Ibn Battûta did not certainly visit Georgia and thus did not circulate any idea about its culture, but thanks to his international reputation a Moroccan professor had the opportunity to visit the country and have access to Georgian culture and literature.

During international Conferences held at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra and at Mohammed V University in Rabat, I had the second chance to meet my colleague and friend Doctor Darejan Gardavadze upon her visit to Morocco to participate in the congress. The first chance was in 2009 at the International Scientific Conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Cairo University. A year after, The Sixth Alexander von Humboldt & Ibn Batouta International Conference, I received an invitation from Ivane Javakhi-shvili University within the framework of the project implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, which meant inviting professors from foreign universities to Tbilisi State University and integrating them into the lectures.

To be honest, before my stay in Tbilisi in 2012, my information about the country and its culture was basic: nothing deep about its long history and rich culture and literature, which reinforces my conclusion about the limited impact of the few Arabic translations of Georgian literature before 2014, because of the lack of critical and academic interest in it. However, thanks to the Georgian cultural diplomacy, and the great esteem that Georgian people and scholars have for their own culture and heritage, supported by the process of more openness and changing directions in the Arab field, these Arab translations managed to reach some Arab academic receptors.

I was in Tbilisi when I read for the first time Nizâr Khalîllî's translation of Shota Rustaveli's epic poem which I received as a gift from Doctor Nino Dolidze. The joy of the first contact with Georgian national literature in translation together with the direct contact with Georgia and Georgian people and scholars prompted me to read more translations of Georgian literature into Arabic and French.

Back to Morocco, I delivered my first public speech in Arabic about the epic poem of Shota Rustaveli “The bright image of Arabs in World Literature: *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* as a case study” in December 2012, during an international congress in Fez about ‘Arabity Between Mediation and Conceptualization’. Moroccan and foreign Scholars, hearing for the first time about Shota Rustaveli, focused their debate on the singularity of the Georgian Medieval epic poem and the part on the role of translation in the global cultural and literary exchanges. Having been encouraged by this good reception, and fascinated by the quality of Georgian modern literature, I translated in the same year a chapter of Nodar Dumbadze’s Novel “The law of eternity”¹, and the year after a short text of Niko Iortkipidze entitled: “Waiting”².

With this public communication and translations shared with my colleagues and students in the master of General Literature and Comparative **Criticism** at Mohammed V University, I was preparing the official introduction of Rustaveli’s epic into the Master’s program which focuses on postcolonial theories, reconsidering notions of central and marginal.

My students, becoming used to new cultural spaces and spheres, expressed high interest in Georgian literature and culture, and their good reception of the work exceeded my expectations. This good result can be attributed to the impact of the enlightenment ideas on the one hand and the Arab positive image in the poem on the other. Fortunately, direct contact with Georgian scholars reinforced the positive effect of the epic poem.

In the same year, taking part in an international colloquium in Rabat organized by the master with the collaboration of the Laboratory of Comparative Studies, Professor Darejan Gardavadze chose to talk about the courteous love phenomenon in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*. She, therefore, gave an inaugural conference for our students about cultural and literary exchanges between Georgia and

¹ ‘*Alim bil-firâsa*, Al-’alam, 25-11-2012.

² *Al-intiââr*, An-nûr Center Site, 2013:
<http://www.alnoor.se/article.asp?id=225845>

the Arab world in the present time. During this conference, she introduced them to *A Modern Arabic -Georgian Dictionary – for the manual of Modern Standard Arabic*¹. This marked the start of a real process of cultural and Literary exchange between Moroccan and Georgian universities.

In the following year, 2014, the Laboratory of Comparative Studies hosted professor Darejan Gardavadze's doctoral student Nino Surmava for months. This event participated in consolidating Moroccan students with Georgian culture and gave a Georgian student a chance to have a deep idea about the unknown Moroccan productions in literature and criticism.

There is no doubt that translation is an important element in the expansion of literature out of its borders, but to help this element give the best and fastest results it seems that the best way is to introduce translation literature into academic programs. It helps this literature to expand its broad questions and answers and to have a new life according to different questions and expectations of the host culture, especially with a succession of generations of students.

And as my students became colleagues in different Moroccan academic institutions in Rabat, Kenitra, Beni Mellel, Agadir, to name a few, they supported my own efforts to introduce Georgian Literature to Moroccan scholars and then to Arab Scholars. Attesting to this is the paper about *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* as a symbol of the Oriental Renaissance and a proof of the richness and singularity of Georgian culture and literature, published in the annual book² of the Laboratory of Narratives at the Faculty of Letters, Ben M'sik – Casablanca, comprising articles of famous Arab writers and critics (Nabil Suleiman, Shahla 'Ujailî, Said Ghanîmî, ...) and presented in the International Moroccan Book Fair 2022 in Rabat.

¹ Maia Andronikashvili, Nino Antidzekakhiani, Darejan Gardavadze, IV. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, 2011.

² *As-sard wa chaghafu al-mahkiyâte*, chu'aib Halifi (Editor), N 6, Faculty of Arts and Humanities Ben M'Sick, Casablanca, 2022.

In 2016, one of my old students published in *Arab magazine* my own conference “The light image of the Arab in World Literature”¹. I noticed with satisfaction that this article succeeded in attracting the attention of some Arab readers and becoming a main reference for some Arab translators and researchers writing about Rustaveli².

Other students, some of whom became critics, mentioned Rustaveli and Georgian literature in their papers published in Moroccan or Arabic print or digital newspapers and magazines³. Thus, my students-colleagues and I, as a team, became interested in Georgian Literature in the midst of our interest in world literature based on a new postcolonial definition of it.

In collaboration with the young Moroccan researchers Fatima Zahra Ajjoul, Younes El Yousfi, Hamid Issafi, who participated in the Arab Panel “Texts and Visions Across Genres and Media: Re – thinking Arab Cultural History” in the ICLA XXIII Congress held in Tbilisi 2022⁴, we translated more Georgian narratives from English and French into Arabic, making, at the beginning of July 2022, the first Moroccan Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Georgian Writers, which comprises a bunch of selected Georgian short stories written by famous modern and contemporary Georgian writers⁵: Niko Lortkipanidze: Waiting, Grigol Rukabidze: Tbilisi, Cons-

¹ Al-wajh al-muchriq li al-'arabi fi al-adab al-'âlamî (Al- fâris fi ihâb an- namir namûdhajane): www.arabicmagazine.com/arabic/articleDetails.aspx?Id+4780

² Nadia Abdelwahâb Khunda, Qîrâa fi Al- fâris fi ihâb an-namir: Whispering Dialogue, Periodical for Arts and Humanities, 15/10/2021.

³ -Usâma Sghir, Al-muqâwama ath-thaqafiyya fi *Hub lâ yahtâju ilâ tarjama*, Al-quds Al-arabi Newspaper, April 17, 2019.

- Larbi Qandil, Binyât at-tanâdhur fi as-sard almaghribî fi al-mutakhayyal al-Georgei – Majmû'at *Hub lâ yahtâju ilâ tarjama* namûdhajane, Tangea al-adabia, 26-07-2022.

-Khaled Ait Tahmidite, Talaqqî malhamat Chota Rustaveli fi an -nasaq ath – thaqâfi al-'arabi, Al-'alam al -electronia, 28 July, 2022.

⁴ Re-Imagining Literatures of The World: Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins.

⁵ *Contemporary Georgian fiction*, translated and edited by Elisabeth Heighway, Dalkey Archive Press, London, 2012.

tantine Gamsakhourdia: The Dexter of the grand master, Zaal Samdashvili: Selling Books, Mamuka Kherkheulidze: A Caucasian Chronicle, Mariam Bekauri: Debi, David Dephy: The Chair, Zurab Lezhava: Love in a Prison Cell, Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili; Rain, and Kote Jandieri: Cinderella's Night.

Georgian culture and literature are thus becoming a source for a new generation of Moroccan Comparatists, the participation of five young Moroccan scholars in the Arab panel at the ICLA XXIII Congress held in Georgia was not by sheer coincidence. It is the result of all those efforts in the Arab World: Georgia is on its way out of the margins! And the appearance in the Arab field (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco,...) of books and articles, caring about the Caucasus in general or about Georgia specifically, is a remarkable phenomenon in the third millennium.

History books focusing on the classical Islamic period¹, some ideological journeys starting from the present to regret the past², and short cultural articles reflect, on the one hand, the pleasant surprise of discovering a beautiful country closed to foreign visitors for a long time, on the other, the extraordinary interest in the country and its literature and culture. This recent production, enriched by a novelistic production where Caucasus, since the nineties, and Georgia are a rich source of Arab imaginary, is on the way to growing up.

2. Contemporary Arab Imaginary

2.1. In The Machrek

Fundamental changes in the social and Arab cultural field took place recently, among which is the reconsideration of the Arab identity as a complex one. In this context, we notice the impact of Mamlûk period and the forced displacement of the Caucasian people at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth

¹ Isa Mohamed Bislanûw, *Al-Cucas min khilâl al-masâdir al-'arabia*, min bidâyati al-fath ilâ nihâyati al-'ahd al-umawî, Mujama' al-atrach, 2005.

² Mohamed ben Nâsir al-'aboudi, *Biladu al-'arabia ad-dâ'a -Georgia*, 2003.

centuries, on the Contemporary Arab Imaginary, specifically in Jordan and Egypt.

In Zahra Omar Abchadze's novels *To get out of Sûsrûka*¹, *Sûsrûka behind the fog*² and Maymûna A-Chichani's Novel: *A Wolf tear*³, for example, Characters assume their double and complex identity⁴: Caucasian / Arab, as the name of the Jordanian writers Zahra Abchadze, Maymûna A-Chichani show, and Caucasus is a narrative space sharing power with Jordan, through its myths, history, tales, traditions, policy, etc.

In Egypt, Caucasus in general is also a source for successful contemporary historical and political novels⁵. However, since the appearance of Mohammed Said Al-'ariane's famous novel *On Bab Zuweila*⁶, prefaced by Taha Hussein in the fifties, it has become clear that the impact of Mamlûk period is an important one in Egypt. And Egyptian writers approach this period from different points of view.

One of the most successful and prized novels⁷ which reconsider Egyptian identity by focusing on the intermarriage between Mamlûks and Egyptians in parallel with the urban and social progress of that long period is Rûm Bassyûni's novel *People's sons: Mamlûk's Trilogy* which appeared in 2018⁸.

Thanks to the reconsidering of Egyptian identity and the dynamism of Georgian cultural policy – diplomacy that the first Arab novel where modern and contemporary Georgia is hailed as an

¹ Zahra Omar Abchadze, *Al-khurûju min Sûsrûka*, Dar azmina, Amman, 1993.

² *Sûsrûka khalfa ad-dabâb*, Dar azmina, Amman, 2001.

³ Maimûna Chichani, *Dam'atu dhi'b*, Dar Akyul at-turkia, 2019.

⁴ The praise of complex identity, is present implicitly in the lebanon Raja Neama's novel *Hal raaytum Warda?* appeared in 2007; warda's mother is from Caucasus and her father from Turkey.

⁵ Munîr Al -'otaiba, *Asadu al-qafqâs*, Dar al-kitâb al-Arabi, 2017.

⁶ Op.cit.

⁷ Najib Mahfoud Price, 2019-2020.

⁸ Rîm Basyûni Rîm, *Awlâdu an-nâs, Thulâthiyât al-mamâlik*, Dar Nahda, Egypt, 2018.

important narrative space, appeared in Cairo in 2019¹. The author May Khaled commented:

I was invited to a literary conference in Georgia, I was surprised by some people talking to me proudly about their Egyptian origin, they told me about their Fatimide and Mamlûk ancestors, coming back to Egypt other people talked to me about their Georgian Origin. These exchanges inspired me, supported by the editor Sherif Bakr, and by a lot of stories from Dr. Hamdi Essissi of Georgian ancestry, to spun the threads of my novel².

The celebration of cultural differences in this novel is announced on its cover, the title: *Tamar* referring to Georgia's mythology and history (in Arabic and Georgian Characters تمار/ თამარო). And the praise of the Egyptian plural identity is clearly demonstrated by the name of the main character: "Tamar Abuladze Iashvili" تمارا أبولادزه ايلشوفيلى. As to Tbilisi -Symbol of Georgia - it is on an equal footing with the symbol of Egypt: Cairo. The first part of the novel is entitled 'Cairo', and the second "Tbilisi". Tbilisi in May Khaled's novel is not just a passage like in Khalil Alrez's novel *Strawberry napkin*³, but a major source of creativity! Tbilisi is a character, a principal narrative space, with its lifestyle, its details, boulevards (Shota Roustaveli, Abkhazi, Erakli, Agmachinibili...), arts, and stories ..etc.

What is as important as the novel itself is its good reception, not only in Egypt, where the author received a prize from the Cairo international Book Fair in the same year of the appearance of the novel (2019), but also in some Arab Cultural circles⁴.

¹ May Khâled, *Tamâr*, Al- 'arabi.

² May Khâled, Aktubu biquwwati al-jadhb, interview with Mona Nasr, Al'ayn al-ikhbaria:

<https://al-ain.com/article/mai-khaled-interview>

³ Khalil Alrez, *Mindilun bi al-farawla*, Difâf –Al-ikhtilâf, 2022.

⁴ Shaikh Ebrahîm Center in Bahrain for example.

2-2. In Morocco

I'm going to speak from my own experience, because as far as I know, apart from my stories, no Moroccan novelist, short story writer or poet has yet considered Georgia and its culture as a source of creation. But it is only a matter of time, I think!

My first **story** “A love with no Need to Translation” is inspired from my stay in Tbilisi in 2012. Its title –given after to the whole collection of stories, prefaced by a known Moroccan critic¹ and published in 2018 – is inspired from a Georgian music and poetry activity I had attended in Tbilisi. Tbilisi is the space of narration in this story, and Georgian popular songs, classical and modern history, painting, music and style of life in the present time are the main source of course.

A year later, the story was translated into French by the Moroccan translator Driss El Baouchari², and into Georgian by Doctor Darejan Gardavadze³, the whole collection to which I also added my translations of a chapter of Nodar Dumbadze’s novel ‘The law of Eternity’ and Niko Lortkipidze’s short prose-poem text ‘Waiting’, were celebrated in Khenifra and El Jadida during two activities organized by Ansâr⁴ and Mazagan⁵ associations, which were an opportunity to discuss ideas about Georgia and its culture. The collection was also introduced in English by Darejan Gardavadze in an article published in the international site *Orients Disoriented*⁶ with the support of the well-known French comparatist Professor

¹ Nûr Eddine Sadûq.

² Un amour qui n'a point besoin de traduction:

<https://www.dafatir.net/vb/showthread.php?p=1213644>

³ A short story “Love does not need Translation” by Fatiha Taib with the foreword “Moroccan writer and researcher fallen in love with Georgia”, translated into Georgian and introduced with the foreword of Darejan Gardavadze. Literary magazine “Sail (Afra)” # 19, Caucasian House Publishing, Tbilisi, 2013, pp.94-96.

⁴ 2018.

⁵ 2019.

⁶ Fatiha Taib’s Book “Love does not need translation” (hubb lâ yahtâju tarjamâ), publ. Rabat, 2018): Forword of Darejan Gardavadze (Tbilisi State University, Georgia), *Orients Désorientés*, 2018. <https://lesordesor.hypotheses.org/693>

Jean-Pierre Dubost who was among the first audience to receive with enthusiasm my first paper on Roustaveli's epic poem in Fes in 2012.

The second story "Live the child"¹, inspired by Georgian culture and modern history, appeared in 2019 in **Nor** Center site after winning its first prize². In this Story discussing Mikheil Javakhi-shvili's³ identity hypothesis, Batumi, where I have stayed for a few days, and its university are narration spaces. Thanks to **Nor** Center prize, the story was published, as a guest text, in the Egyptian writers union Newspaper "A-Dad" 's double Volume in 2020 dedicated to Criticism.

Based on my stay in Tbilisi as well, the main events of my recent published story "Tbilisi Blessed Tree"⁴, focus on Georgian contemporary history (events of 2008). However, Rustaveli Boulevard where the events take place connects implicitly and explicitly, the past to the present. To bring out more of the specificity of Georgian characters, while fictionalizing Georgian culture, literature, spaces, and events in my first and third stories, I used a few Georgian words in some dialogues!

Conclusion:

In sum, what is the place of Georgia and its culture among universal cultures, in the Arab imaginary in general?

In the Arab world, Georgia has almost ceased to be an unknown country. The names of some of its great poets and novelists (Shota Rustaveli⁵, Nodar Dumbadze, ...), are becoming more and

¹ <https://anwarpress.com/51205.html>

² <http://www.alnoor.se/article.asp?id=353754>

³ 1880-1937.

⁴ *Chajartu Tbilissi al-mubâraka*, Al -'alam , 2022.

⁵ The name of Shota Roustaveli is present in the second part of the recent Arabic encyclopedia entitled: *Mawsûratu al-a'alam al-'arabes wa al-muslimines wa al'alalmiyyines*, Aziza Fawwâl Babtî, Dar Al-kutub, 2009.

more popular. Georgian myths, history, and stories are also on their way to becoming familiar: Just do a search on Google and you will notice that Arab readers are becoming more and more interested in Georgian culture in general: *Ali and Nino*¹, *King Tamar* (Georgian mother), and other characters.

What is important in the Arab world is the beginning of a narrative process based on the part of Georgian culture and identity in Arab culture and identity, especially in Egypt, on the one hand, and on the efforts of Arab intellectuals to challenge Western literary dominance by opening up to other cultures, on the other.

It is only a matter of time before Georgian Culture and Literature will occupy a place among the great sources! The magic solution is the Nobel Prize. In this case, I am sure that Georgia will achieve its goal: It is such an achievable thing due to the quality of Georgian literature and its specificity and to the Georgian smart cultural diplomacy which forces admiration. While waiting for this to happen, it is desirable to create a prize for the translation of Georgian literature into Arabic

¹ Qurbân Said, *Ali wa Nino*, translated by Abd Al-maqsûd ‘Abdelkarim, General Organization of Culture Palaces, 2010.

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**New Trajectories in Postcolonial Narratives:
The Predicament of the Immigrant in
the Host Country in Laila Lalami's
*The Other Americans***

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Abstract:

During the last few decades Postcolonial studies have evolved to a considerable extent. The abundance of Postcolonial writings and rising polemical debates among Postcolonial writers, scholars and critics are benchmarks that marked the evolvement of Postcolonialism in the realm of intelligentsia. Among the most prominent and innovative key-figures of Postcolonial and diaspora writers is Laila Lalami. This paper seeks to explore new routings in Postcolonial writings. Therefore, the dynamic shift from locality to cosmopolitanism inscribed within Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans* (2019) will be discussed. How the migrant's moving identity is manifested in the Western host country through the prism of the Self and Other dynamics will be given much emphasis. Methodologically speaking, Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism will be used as a tool to discuss the polyphony of the novel; by the same token, this study draws upon Postcolonial theory; concepts such as displacement, moving identities, and Homi Bhabha's third space will be used as tools of analysis.

Keywords: The Other Americans, Postcolonialism, Polyphony, Third Space, Identity

Introduction

The chief concern of this paper is to explore the themes inscribed within Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans*. The methodological perspective adopted in this study is twofold. On the one hand, the relationships between the various characters of the novel will be explored on the basis of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, namely the concept of polyphony. On the other hand, the novel will be analyzed from a Postcolonial lens. Hence, concepts of displacement, identity and Homi Bhabha's third space will be used to explore the themes of the novel. Etymologically speaking, Robyn McCallum (1999, p. 28) argues that the term polyphony stems from the field of musicology; Bakhtin retains the musical precept and adapts it to the literary realm. In this respect, a polyphonic novel is defined as "one in which several voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms." (Baldwick, 2001, p. 199).

By the same token, in an interview with Lulu Garcia Navarro (2019), Lalami contends that *The Other Americans* is told through nine narrators, because it was impossible to "capture the complexity of the immigrant experience through just the one perspective of the man who dies at the beginning of the book" (Garcia-Navarro, 2019). Thus, narrating the book from different perspectives would provide the reader with different ideas about immigration. Due to the polyphonic nature of the novel, Lalami aims at casting light on the different socio-economic strata of the metropolitan society. The following section will discuss the immigrant's plight in the host country epitomized in Driss Guerraoui's death in a hit-and-run. This paper is, therefore, divided into three main parts, which are as follows: 1-The immigrant's predicament: Driss Guerraoui's mysterious death. 2- Moving identities and the quest for belonging. 3-The question of language and aesthetics in *The Other Americans*.

1. The immigrant's predicament: Driss Guerraoui's mysterious death:

The beginning of *The Other Americans* is *in medias res* as it opens with the death of Driss Guerraoui in a road accident, the only witness of which was Efrain who saw it happen while he was cycling back home from work. When his wife Marisela asked whether or not he had called the police, he reminded her of what happened to Araceli, an undocumented woman from Tucson, who called the police to report a neighbour who was beating his wife. However, when the police came to take her statement, they found out that she did not have her legal papers, so they referred her to the immigration services. In his turn, being an undocumented immigrant, Efrain was torn between whether to give his statement to the authorities and ease his conscience, or abstain from doing that lest he should be deported.

At first Nora had hope that the case would be forensically solved (ibid, p. 39); But, it seemed that any hope to achieve further progress in the accident investigations came to a halt, especially with Efrain's unwillingness to testify in front of the court of law. The following section casts light on moving identities and the quest for belonging.

2. Moving identities and the quest for belonging:

Roman-Velazques and Retis (2021, p.15) argue that identities are based on how one positions oneself vi-à-vis historical and cultural discourses. Identities are not only premised upon a shared sense of belonging, but they are constructed through difference. Roman-Velazquez and Retis approach identities as fragmented, ruptured and in a perpetual process of transformation (ibid, p.15).

Identity is fundamentally fraught with ambivalence at its core (Brett St Louis, 2009, p. 566). The multi-faceted nature of transnational practices is epitomized by the business formation by migrant

entrepreneurs, whose transactions are contingent upon the movement of goods and financial exchange worldwide (Op cit, p.12). In this context, Laila Lalami made reference to medjool dates from palms that were brought from the oasis of Boudenib in Morocco to Coachella Valley in the 1920s (Lalami, 2019, p. 152). Medjool production flourished as these palm trees grew easily in California. These sweet and chewy dates, which once grew only in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, are available in supermarkets in the United States; that is one instance, among many, where the local meets the global.

Related to the movement of goods and financial exchange is the mobility of people triggered by different incentives as alluded to by Spencer and Valassopoulos (2021, p. 65). Such motives subsume climate change, war, and impoverishment due to neoliberal policies. In *The Other Americans*, the Guerraoui family moved to the United States to flee from the 1981 Casablanca events and state violence against a mass of protesters. Laila Lalami depicts these bloody events from Driss Guerraoui's perspective:

“A girl. She couldn't have been more than fifteen or sixteen. From the other end of the street, police van drew up to her, cornering her next to a pharmacy with a crescent neon sign. Then a policeman jumped out of the Jeep and started beating her with a truncheon. Blood pooled around her head like a halo” (Lalami, 2019, p. 42).

As an aftermath of the 1981 Casablanca events, the Guerraoui family moved to the United States with the hope of setting up a business, becoming a success, and living the American dream. Many a time Driss had told Nora the story of the old country. From Nora's perspective, Driss liked that story, because “it had the easily discernible arc of the American dream: Immigrant Crosses Ocean, Starts a Business, Becomes a Success.” (Lalami, *ibid*, 35). Nevertheless, Driss's dichotomous status stems from the fact that his displacement towards the West / Metropolis, a would-be American dream, fleeing from a precarious situation in his homeland ends up in a tragic loss of his life. The American dream fades away with Driss's plight. He

fled away from insecurity, which he was doomed to encounter in the host country. Falling in the trap of such an ambivalent situation is the predicament of the Postcolonial immigrant.

The postcolonial immigrant is, by further implication, caught in the dilemma between home and 'out of place' (to borrow Edward Said's words, 1999). Departing from his own experience as an immigrant in the USA, Edward Said (2012, p. 554-5) investigates the fluctuating positionality of identity between two worlds, two cultures, and two languages. Said establishes a juxtaposition between himself and Joseph Conrad based on common affinities existing between them. Both of them experienced exile and feelings of dislocation and instability. Conrad's mobility took place within the same European world as he left his native country Poland to become an Englishman; whereas Edward Said moved from an Arab, non-European world to the United States. In his essay "Between Worlds" (ibid, 557), Said sheds light on his hybrid identity:

"I was uncomfortably anomalous student all through early years: A Palestinian going to school in Egypt, with an English first name, an American passport, and no certain identity at all. To make matters worse, Arabic, my native language, and English, my school language, were inextricably mixed. I have never known which was my first language, and have felt fully in home neither, although I dream in both." (Said, ibid, 557).

It is worth drawing upon an analogy between Said's hybrid and unstable identity and that of Guerraoui's family in *The Other Americans*. Maryam urged her husband Driss to move to the USA. Upon her arrival there, Maryam experienced culture shock. Despite this, she gradually managed to integrate into American society.

Seen from another angle, *The Other Americans* represents an interpellation of Otherness, because Bill Ashcroft asserts that "Post-colonial subjects, in their ordinary dialogic engagement with the world, are not passive ciphers of discursive practices" (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 47).

Inscribed within *The Other Americans* are instances of constructions of Otherness. In high school, Nora Guerraoui and Sonya

Mukherjee were the only girls in the jazz band. Their last names were shortened by their teachers to an initial. They were even assigned peripheral roles in the school's extra-curricular activities. Every year, during the performance of the Christmas play they were cast as the Magi despite their objections (Lalami, 2019, p. 91). However, after the 9/11 attacks, hostility towards the Muslims and Arabs was at its utmost. Consequently, Nora and Sonya were called Ragheads and Talibans, sweeping stereotypical generalizations that the Western Self associates with extremism.

Nevertheless, Nora is represented as an ambivalent figure. Initially, Homi Bhabha draws upon the Freudian concept of ambivalence. For Freud, ambivalence denotes the co-existence of two opposing instincts that are the sexual instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos) (Childs and Williams, 1997: 124). Childs and Williams contend that “ambivalence involves a process of identification and of disavowal” (ibid, 124).

Nora disavows the hostile attitudes of the high school staff that hailed her as an occluded Other. Yet, she identifies with American culture. Lalami portrays her as an easy-going and cynical woman rejecting the conservative standards that her mother Marayam tries to preserve. From the latter's point of view, “you still speak Arabic, but you no longer dream in it” (Lalami, 2019, p. 195). To prove her ‘Americanness’, she mimics American girls in their way of life. In Bhabha's terms, “mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of difference that almost the same, but not quite*”¹ (Bhabha, 1994: 86). Aymane Edouihri contends that “Lalami presents Nora as a symbol of assimilative diasporians who are ready to dissolve in the host culture's identity either due to fascination or concealment” (Edouihri, 2021, p. 5).

On the contrary to Nora, Marayam Guerraoui is represented as a reserved character who is celebrative of her roots. Every now and then, Marayam grows homesick, hankering for the hectic life of the home land. She is deeply concerned with celebrations; during the

¹ Bhabha's emphasis.

Eid El Kebir occasion, Marayam wanted the whole family to attend the morning services in the mosque in the Riverside (ibid, 57).

It follows, then, that the migrant's moving identity bears 'no pure' or clearly demarcated lines of a homogeneous entity. Identity is dislocated into a 'Third Space of enunciation' (to borrow Bhabha's words, 1994: 38). Such is the case of the hybrid identities of Driss and Efrain. Driss identifies with the American culture, which manifests itself in some instances of the novel. After the attack of the twin towers in New York, Maryam urged Driss to go back to Casablanca, but he refused (Lalami, 2019, p. 37). Although his business was arsoned and the suspect was never identified, Driss put up a huge flag outside his restaurant (ibid, 25). Despite having been acquainted with the cultural life of the Mojave, Driss is overwhelmed by a sense of disillusionment. He is caught in "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside." (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). Driss spent sometime digging into his family's history, tracing it from Casablanca to a tribe in the Chaouia region (Lalami, 2019, p. 119).

Similarly, Efrain Aceves, the only witness of Driss Guerraoui's hit-and-run, is a Mexican undocumented migrant. He lives in constant hesitation whether or not to testify about the accident lest he should be deported and his family would bear the consequences.

Efrain is the epitome of a number of Mexican / Latino migrants who fail to settle their legal situation when they cross the borders into the host country. The quest for negotiating a new identity flung Efrain into the purgatory, an interstitial space and identity that are neither totally Mexican nor fully integrated within the American society. The image of Driss stretching on the asphalted road with his head near the gutter repeatedly crops up into Efrain's mind. This induced Efrain to name him Guerrero instead of Guerraoui, a pun word which symbolizes an attempt to hail the unfamiliar Other as intelligible. What follows is a discussion of language and the aesthetics in *The Other Americans*.

3. The question of language and aesthetics in *The Other Americans*.

Substantially, Postcolonial texts hanker for interpolating the hegemony of the Eurocentric discourse. For Bill Ashcroft, “interpolation recasts our perception of the trajectory of power operating in colonization” (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 14). He contends that the “language is the key to this interpolation.” (ibid). Laila Lalami’s choice of English as the language of writing does not crop up from the vacuum. In an essay titled “So to Speak”, Lalami asserts that despite the fact that French was an indicator of class and that the education she received emphasized the importance of French, she holds a political stance against it. She sets forth the following argument for the adoption of English as the language of writing: “The role of French in my life became clearer. Writing in French came at a cost; it inevitably brought with it a colonial baggage that I no longer wanted to carry” (Lalami, 2009). Moreover, the linguistic shift enabled her to approach her stories with a fresh perspective, because English had not been imposed on her in her childhood.

In stressing the dialogism of the narration, no matter how vulgar a character is, Lalami gives them the opportunity to converse and interact with other characters. A case in point here is the conversation slots between Officer Jeremy Gorecki and Bryan Fierro. The latter is a vulgar character; his language is not decent and lacks in grammar rules and does not respect degrees of formality in addressing his interlocutors.

Amid this cacophony of voices and languages, moments of the encounter between the Self and the Other are highlighted in the novel as Lalami depicts the scene where Jeremy enters Nora’s house:

“I could hear the din of overlapping conversations inside some of them in a language that felt familiar to me but that I couldn’t understand” (Lalami, 2019, p. 22).

Language presents itself as opaque and untranslatable as it escapes his grasp; hence, the notion of incommensurability (to

borrow Homi Bhabha's words), which entails a lack of common denominator between the Self and the Other.

Still, closely bound up with the issue of language is the deployment of some idioms and figures of speech in the novel. "You have your head in the clouds!" (Lalami, 2019, p. 73) is a recurring idiom that is usually addressed to Nora to denote her absentmindedness.

Taken together, Lalami wrote *The Other Americans* in standard English, save for a few conversation slots in vernacular. Apart from Moroccan Arabic, Lalami amalgamates English with Spanish. Words and phrases enunciated by Efrain indicating his Mexican descent are scattered in the novel.

As far as the aesthetic aspect is concerned, Lalami deploys a bunch of narrative techniques in *The Other Americans*. The beginning is *in medias res* as the novel opens up with the mysterious hit-and-run of Driss Guerraoui. His death constitutes the climax of the novel followed by various quasi-chapters narrated by nine characters in retrospect through flashback and flash-forward techniques. This tragic event represents a fine thread that interweaves the different quasi-chapters of the novel, for it is focalized by the nine characters of the novel in a way that makes the reader suspects that Fierro is guilty of Driss's death due to his shaky and reckless driving. As the narration proceeds, this suspicion is refuted and J.A. is proven guilty.

Of paramount importance, too, are the cinematic techniques that Lalami deploys in this novel. Montage is a cinematic device that allows for the plurality of voices and perspectives. In this context, Paul Mathew argues that an "important narrative element necessary for expressing postmodern fragmentation is the ability to create multiple perspectives" (Mathew, 2019, p. 13). To achieve this, Lalami resorts to montage. For Mathew, cinematic montage provides the possibility to incorporate a spectrum of images and fragments into a narrative (Mathew, 2019: 12). Peculiar to the postmodern age are the articulation of a multiplicity of identities, preference for assemblage instead of organic unities (ibid, 12). Andrew

Shail defines montage as “the intentional juxtaposition, in time, of two shots, with no clear spatial or temporal relation to each other.” (Shail, 2012, p.108, quoted in Matthew, 2019, p. 12). An illustration of this is the scene of the dispute between Nora and Salma about Driss’s testament at the school cafeteria. In his will, Driss left all his fortune to his daughter Nora. This scene is narrated twice from two different angles. On the one hand, Nora, who is involved in a row with Salma, argued that she was the one who took care of Driss.

Part of the aesthetic tools inscribed within the novel is the use of symbols. For instance, in *The Other Americans*, the blue wall represents a liminal sphere that Nora occupied when she was at Yucca Mesa Elementary School. At recess, her classmates gathered in groups, but she would rather stay “behind by the blue wall that bordered the swings, and watched from a distance.” (Lalami, 2019, p. 17). By the same token, in *The Moor’s Account*, the creaky blue door of the city of Azemmur represents an interstitial space that separate two periods in the life of Estebanico / Mustafa al-Zamori, the first Moroccan slave who discovered La Florida when he set off in Panfilo de Narvaéz expedition to the New World. After spending many years healing different tribes, Mustafa imagined himself coming back to his home city Azemor and pushing open its creaky blue door to see his family (Lalami, 2015, p. 214-5).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Lalami employs her writing as a public sphere to articulate internal conflicts, disillusionment and unsettled identities of diasporians epitomized in Driss Guerraoui’s family as well as Efrain Aceves’ family. Lalami, as a Moroccan-American novelist, provides more questions than answers regarding displacement, home, and identity. From a hermeneutic perspective, the mysterious death of Driss Guerraoui raises a number of questions in the reader’s mind that remain open to different interpretations: Was Driss Guerraoui’s accident premeditated or extrinsic? Was the hit-and-

run investigation conducted in an appropriate way? What does it mean for a male or female migrant to find one's place in America? What is more, the open ending of the novel is liable to a multiplicity of interpretations by the readers as Nora makes speculations about what sentence would J.A get for the killing of Nora's father and how he would be freed on bail.

The Other Americans grants more prominence to the Post-colonial rerouting of the displacement of the diasporic subjects and unsettled, hybrid and moving identities. The relocation of the postcolonial migrant of the South in the Western metropolis engenders an alternative narrative that defines the third space –labelled as global – between the metropolis and the ex-colony (ibid, P.17). In this context, Bill Ashcroft *et al.* argue that the “Post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms” (Ashcroft et al. 2002: 35). Within the same vein, Janet Wilson *et al.* contend that “the route to cosmopolitanism is structured by the desire, if not the need, to understand the Other and establish a set of common values” (Wilson et al., 2010: 24). These values would allow for understanding and a cultural dialogue between the Self and the Other on equal footings.

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Media Art and Wearable Technology: Re-Thinking Media and Art in Post-Mediatic Forms

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Abstract:

When Marshall McLuhan stated, 'Clothing, [is] an extension of the skin...' (Understanding Media, 129), the technologies were already out-running over imagination. Further, into the chapter, extensions of man, and media are extensions of our bodies and psyches. In the centuries before technology changed our perspective on media as a conceptual object. Thus, forcing us to accept the technology to question; how to write traditions in post-mediatic turn in the Art.

This article discusses the roles and meanings of Friedrich Kittler's "visual" media in the current mediatized society where inter-transmedial visual art mediums as creative methods. As well as examine how the performative motifs surface in contemporary arts and wearable technology in performance arts. A media installation & performance artist 'Bill Shannon' explores body-centric video installations through technology to incorporate the movement practice of 'extension of the skin' as McLuhan stated. The two main aspects of this discussion are; how media developed from the time of early cinema up to current new media as a form of Art; how technology changed along with the post-mediatic turn in cultural forms. These two aspects will try to discuss through Bill Shannon, Yonghui Kim, Kieun Kim, and Ikeuchi Hiroto's wearable media arts and look at the possible viewpoints of how digital media facilitate new

approaches to wearable technology in the influence of media and hardware versus traditional concepts of Art.

Keywords: Media Art, Wearable Technology, Post-mediatic Form, Media, Installation Art, Media Studies

1. Thinking media and art in 'Post-mediatic' forms

All media is once 'New' Media and then there is 'Old' Media. After that, there is 'Post' Media that people want to talk about the most. Today, the nature of Media is heavily computer-based digital technology where computer hardware and software experience give us the most digital novelty. When Marshall McLuhan stated, "Clothing, [is] an extension of the skin..." (Understanding Media, 129), the concept of media and technologies was already out-running over imagination. Further into McLuhan's 'Extensions of Man', today the media is a huge part of the extensions of our bodies and psyches. In the centuries before technology changed our perspective on media as a conceptual object; thus, forcing us to accept the technology and question 'How to write traditions and histories in the form of Art in post-mediatic turn?' For this statement, first and foremost, to talk about 'What is a Post-mediatic form?', we need to consider the death of media in an archaeological sense before discussing any forms in Media Theory.

In media theory, 'The death of media' (Understanding Media, 120) can be defined as the end of analog media and its transitions into digital media. Although it is not as simple as that, media has been dead from old, reborn as new, and new became old repeatedly as the various technology evolved. With this analogy, we know how

media became more than a literal sense of technology but also a symbiosis relationship with humans. If writings, paintings, and drawings are considered analog media, an extension of everyday life that McLuhan's theory intended, digital media is now part of our bodily symbols. For example, there are television, radio, telephone, etc.; for McLuhan, humans are the main subject of his theory that media centers around us. Friedrich Kittler emphasizes that media has already existed among us to determine our situation. McLuhan sees media as an extension of human life, and Kittler recognizes media as the factor that determines our lives. Either way, their theories explain that humans are the operator as technology continuously changes and discovers new ways to incorporate and live along in the human culture.

The roles and meanings of Fredrich Kittler's visual media in today's mediatized society are inter-transmedial visual art and its mediums as creative methods. As well as how the performative motifs surface in contemporary arts especially wearable technology in performance arts. As Kittler himself interprets literature as a kind of media and reads the political, academic, and technical institutions surrounding it as a broad media system or 'recording system', his book, "Discourse Networks 1800/1900" is more of a heuristic to the text itself, not the media function of literature.

To reference his later book "Gramophone, Film, Typewriter", Kittler claims that there is no difference between magical 'media' and technical 'media', or unconsciously defining the media. (Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, 80) At this point, we can try to connect to the most interesting psychoanalytic dimension in Kittler's recording system-media analysis, that the media records our previously unrecordable reality and redefines the whole discourse. Thus, as is widely known, the media of the 1900s, namely, the connection between Gramophone / Real, Film / Imagination, and Typewriter / Symbolic, is analyzed. However, 'Gramophone, Film, and Typewriter', which expanded the latter part of the recording system of 1800-1900, have discoursed and continued to examine the composition of the media system in the 20th century in depth.

The roles and meanings of Fredrich Kittler's "visual" media applied in today's mediatised society are emphasized in the use of inter-transmedial visual art mediums as a creative methodology that can be considered a cultural movement. Also, this can analyze how the performative motifs surface in contemporary arts through wearable technology in performative exhibitions.

As for Kittler's heuristic approach to Media, a video installation & performance artist, 'Bill Shannon' explores body-centric video installations through technology to incorporate movement practice of Real, Imagination, and Symbolic in a form of 'extension of the skin' as Marshall McLuhan stated media as a cool medium. Although Kittler is excluding the human body from the media that McLuhan's important proposition, 'Media as Extension of Man', his radical

technology-first perspective can emphasize not only the medium as an extension of the body but also technology in current media art as a visual medium. For that matter, media artist Bill Shannon's body-centric video installation plays both roles of a screen and wire where fragmented body images project with/without an actual body.

The main aspects of this discussion are; how media technology developed into current media as a form of art and how technology emphasizes the form in a post-mediatic turn. These aspects will try to discuss through Bill Shannon, Yonghui Kim, Kieun Kim, and Ikeuchi Hiroto's wearable media arts and look at the possible viewpoints of how digital media facilitate new approaches to wearable technology in the influence of media and hardware versus traditional concepts of Art.

2. What is Wearable Technology?

First, Wearable Technology can be applied to Media art and as extensions of man. The concept of Wearable Technology started with a small watch that people wore as necklaces in the 1500s in Germany. Thus, wearable technology started as analog as it can be.

Centuries later, there are digital watches, mobile phones, blue-tooth headsets, etc. Today, Wearable Technology Art is nothing new. It can be a lot of things in various fields with many different layers of usage and interpretation. Conceptual Arts are direct to kinetic arts fused with computer-based technology with clothing, and everyday machines, considered artistic mediums, and/or based on specific environmental installments. It also has been further developed as an integrated technology that can monitor daily life mainly used in the form of machines in operating rooms of medical fields, smart-watch or health monitoring bracelets, etc. Furthermore, it performs the gaming industry by adding more headsets to play in augmented reality and virtual reality. The specifics of wearable technology of media art is a mutual security form of technology and art in the form of a mixture of performance elements and extends to the realm of existing new media art. This means the concept of wearable technology in the art field dismantles the classical idea of pictorial and formal traditional art and also enables reconstruction including entertainment elements for the audience (such as 3D or 4DX in the case of Cinema). The convergence of art and wearable technology induces intimacy with the audience, transforms the environment to which humans belong, and amplifies the visual and sensory aspects a person can feel.

In the current flow of media art, Wearable technology mainly centers on a concept of performance art that allows media devices controlled by light, sound, or specific patterns depending on the directions and movements in which they are worn as clothes or body garments and accessories. Also, human bodies, participants in some cases, become part of the projection devices or screens and the subject of the body becomes an exhibition object. So, the images of the body become available without an actual body. These examples are the universal concept of wearable media projection and performative art and they are possible with the direct involvement and participation of a controller who operates the technical aspects of computing and performing; an actual person. The examples of the relationship between human/machine/world and human-mediated

technology in the media artist Bill Shannon's wearable projection art explain specific relations between these convergent concepts of media art and technology as post-mediatic forms.

Second, wearable technology projects body images into screens through wires to express an artistic view. Before looking into Bill Shannon's works, some wearable technology artists have experimented with cyborg or futuristic designs that are sensitive to certain impulses, as if they were a second skin (especially in the high-end fashion industry). In the gaming industry, wearing headsets or hardware to experience augmented or virtual reality to experience meta-verse while playing games. This is very well known and already pretty popular among various people. Even at a place like Spatial.io (Picture 1), one can make up his/her avatar and surf around augmented reality to experience the metaverse. In Spatial.io the reality is what you see on a computer screen and projected body images, the avatar, replace the movements you manipulate with your keyboard. This property does not cover wearable technology but once you put on the tech gadget over your head, you are in augmented reality in real-time. And recently, wearable technologies are an extension of the skin and also an expansion of space. For this notion, there are a few selected media artists to examine besides Bill Shannon who specifically practices wearable technology with their media art. (Picture 2, Picture 3) Their works are mixed media art and convergence art with various materials and traditional sense of art mediums developed with computing and media technology that refer to post-mediatic forms.

For the earlier notion of wearable technology and media art, Yonghui Kim's wearable media art (Picture 4) is strictly forward to the concept that art develops new platforms for clothes and hats and puts content in them. Throughout the works, her wearable media art is an art of alternating new platforms for clothes or hats and body-wearing content. Simply wearing them becomes an art that visualizes or expresses a body's rhythm, humidity, temperature, gestures, and objects using small computer micro-controllers, sensors, and technology materials that create and mimic body movements.

Yonghui Kim's media art is about expressing and experimenting with body motion. Her media arts activate when body movements trigger the sensors of wired lights and create patterns. Yonghui Kim's wearable media arts are a more traditional sense of the existing body wearing hardware. The next phase of wearable technology elevates in Kieun Kim's media arts are more sculpted technology and the human figure.

Kieun Kim, who is a media artist in Physical Computing art performance with wearable technology, is also part of the practice. Kieun Kim's media art 'Revealuxion' series explores shapes and mechanisms in interactive garments inspired by cocoons and marionettes that incorporate brain waves to move LED lights and use finger movements to mimic the marionettes' performance. Kim also mixes acrylics for space installations and projection images to perform kaleidoscope effects so the audience can experience the full of wearable performance technology. She started with a circuit bending technic with fabrics to make an 'interactive wearable paper garment for performance which uses thermochromic pigment, soft circuits, and Arduino connected to my vital signs such as heartbeats or brainwaves.' <Brainwave-Controlled Paper Garment> (2014) (Picture 5) and uses kaleidoscopic lights as the motif for movements. Kieun Kim's wearable technology media art is centered around performing art. Unlike Yonghui Kim, her arts require a physical body as an installation-supporting medium. The body does not need much of the movements but a display piece for the wearable hardware like a close idea to Bill Shannon.

Another wearable technology media artist Ikeuchi Hiroto's wearable technology gadgets are Cyberpunk Aesthetic-inspired Conceptual art from movies like the Star Wars series and other futuristic and nostalgic images. (Picture 6, Picture 7) Hiroto's media art pieces are very different from the rest of the artists mentioned in this article. His goal is to create a dystopian-esque resemblance version of wearable technologies to salvage in the name of science and art. The art pieces are constructed as masks or body wears for the high-end fashion industry or gaming gear prototypes. His com-

puterized gadgets are inspired by Japanese anime robots and the cyberpunk aesthetic that he took parts from broken computer motherboards, and plastic to electronic wiring and bending circuits to establish the aesthetic. His concepts brought the augmented bodies out from the screen and made them function in everyday life as we live. For his wearable gadgets tries to establish visualization from a meta-view perspective (from his interview with <http://metal-magazine.eu>) His different approach to handling media and technology is not only for the human body to become secondary but the technology is the body. Accordingly, going back to McLuhan's notion of 'clothing is the extension of the skin' Hiroto extends the idea of technology as skin to technology as body parts that are both bones and organs.

3. Post-mediatic forms as Conceptual Media Art

To ask the question again, are augmented gadgets or virtual reality a part of the post- mediatic form? It is hard to conclude at this point. Because in Bill Shannon's Media Art, the body becomes the screen and wire and the body becomes an object. Augmented or virtual reality is another web space where body images are projected with or without a body unless the operator or participant puts our body with wearable technology that mimics the movements the cyberspace remains within the internet and only leaves traces of codes. Additionally, Ikeuchi Hiroto's wearable tech gadgets are calling back that nostalgic cyberpunk culture into the current time frame and mimicking functional life forms. Therefore, in the scheme of media art with wearable technology, this art form is expanding human culture in a way that interferes with the actual body and space.

Media plays the role of expanding human skin so that it triggers the body into a place where it becomes a location-specific art medium. Bill Shannon and the other media artists' wearable technology arts are the body in a location-specific art medium. In some ways play as a performing object and eventually loses its

human aspect. In their work, the body is the only supporting actor to make technology to its body form from fragmented images. Hence the idea of post-mediatic forms, in general, was conceptual even before technology and media became part of our bodies.

4. Re-thinking media and art in post-mediatic forms

What is next? Questioning the rapidly changing style of Art and technology expressed in convergent forms that what is next and what is not may seem a cliché. Also, the post-mediatic form is nothing new anymore as the concept continues to evolve into something spectacular or highly functional. The methodology is changing along with new technology as it started as new media. The post-mediatic form takes part in the changes with new ideas and methods. Borrowing the notion of the borderless and hybrid culture from Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 1994), mimicry not only exists in human culture anymore but also in cyberspace. Wearable technology in Media Art is an alternative aesthetic genealogy for current digital culture. Media artists like Bill Shannon, Younghui Kim, Kieun Kim and Ikeuchi Hiroto, and many other artists who were not mentioned in this article, seek to 'materialize' digital culture by proving that digital has reconstructed and reformed physical experiences and re-recognized materiality with the disembodied, the formless, and the placeless. These cultural movements reconfigure bodily experience and reconceived materiality in multi formats. (*Materializing New Media*, 86-90) For the part of the human culture, the newness and technology penetrating between the cultures as post-mediatic forms forces the translation of Art forms into a media-specific language. It is continually reconfiguring the human body and re-constitute its post-mediatic forms. Therefore, the human being considers himself as a major media rather than secondary to the technology when the media becomes the skin or the core layer of the human consciousness. We need to understand the new relationship between digital and matter, digital and human internally, linearity, learn new hierar-

chical arrangement, produce organic and artificial over binary, create sense and thought, and the connection between arts and science. That's how we rethink media art in post–mediatic forms.

Picture Reference



Picture 1
SPATIAL.IO Augmented Reality Meta-Verse play space
<https://www.spatial.io>



Picture 2

Bill Shannon Touch Update Wearable Video Masks 2018
With Projectile Object Hardware Coding.

Video Mapping Performers: Ron Chunn and Jacquea Mae
<http://www.whatiswhat.com/>



Picture 3 Bill Shannon,
'Video Mask' (2014)
<http://www.whatiswhat.com/content/test>



Picture 4
Yonghui Kim, HCI party 2010 Body Graffiti + Last For One
<https://absurdee.com/gallery/bodygraffiti/>



Picture 5
Kieun Kim, {REVEALUXION N°6}
Designing Multiplicity: Performance & Screening, 2015.
<http://kieunkim.com>



Picture 6
Ikeuchi Hiroto,
Tokyo's Sai Gallery 2022
the exhibition
<https://www.saiart.jp/>



Picture 7
the Ikeuchi Hiroto exhibition,
<https://www.saiart.jp/>;
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeuchi/>

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