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Editorial

Literary Studies, an annual publication of the Literary Association of Nepal (LAN), is a peer-reviewed research journal of language, literature, and culture. Founded in 1981, the Association has been conducting workshops, monthly lectures, performances, seminars, and conferences regularly in addition to publishing the Journal. The present collection is the 38th volume which adds one more step to our milestone in the journey of literary studies. In this volume, 15 scholarly papers have been published from different countries such as Bangladesh, India, and of course Nepal. The papers cover various aspects of literature, culture, language, and life, such as ethnicity, ecology, gender, and psychology.

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Literary Art as Countercheck to Women Trafficking: An Explication of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters Street*

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Abstract

Trafficking has been described as all activities that entail, sheltering and trade in humans within or across national and international boundaries through deceit, kidnap, or other forceful means with the intent of engaging victims in forced services or labor. Trafficking, particularly of women and children, is considered by the international community a fast-growing global avarice. Dominant features of the trafficking trade include: domestic servitude and prostitution which is different in comparison to the context of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This study takes on prostitution in trafficking, engaging the inherent potential and the existing influence of the literary writer to redefine and reposition the society. This is done by examining portrayals of character-types, development of the plot and depths of the thematic preoccupation and literary elements which have contributed immensely to the re-definition of Africa in Africa, and Africa before the international community. This paper employs Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*, novels that thematically dwell on this global concern. It critically engages national and international postures in examining dimensions of trafficking like industry and cartel, prostitution as a vocation for the trafficked, portrayals of the stakeholders, portrayals of the victims, value systems that promote the desire of young women to live and earn money abroad, and psychological, physiological, and sociological import of being trafficked and serving as a sex-slave. *Trafficked* and *On Black Sisters' Street* are Nigerian literary templates that serve as deterrence for the class of women this new tool of trade targets.

Keywords: Boundaries, deterrence, trafficking, deceit, and prostitution

Introduction

By the end of the last millennium and beginning of the new one, national and international agencies and pressure groups began to report gruesome findings on trafficking as a global crime. More startling was the extent to which the global avarice had become trafficked and pressure groups began to decry the industry and its cartel bringing forth to the center its implication on the international community as a whole. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) by 2007 provided detailed information on this crime that reportedly shames human existence (United Nations 2017). Among several

definitions of the trade is the much favored and quoted United States Government definition in Miko and Park:

> All acts involved in the transport, harbo[u]ring, or sale of persons within national or across international borders through coercion, force, kidnapping, deception or fraud, for purposes of placing persons in situations of forced labo[u]r or services, such as forced prostitution, domestic servitude, debt bondage or other slavery-like practices. (United Nations 2017)

Other definitions consider cases of minors and the polemics of consent and lack thereof by the trafficked persons and their relations. The dimensions of trafficking that become evident in this engagement include the well-established, cartel-controlled agencies and industries that are rooted deeply as international enterprise. The consistent rise in trafficking in people, a flourishing international crime activity across continents, belies accurate statistics because it is a clandestine criminal activity. Roughly, about 700,000 people are victims of trafficked each year mostly in the South East and South Asia, former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa (Miko and Park 4).

The trade flourished due to the manifold crises of the 20th and 21st centuries like large displacements from wars, stark poverty, induced misplacement of priorities in governance, youth unemployment, and migrants seeking greener pastures. Besides, poor families traded and pawned their children for other reasons as well. The extreme low risks associated with trafficking, particularly inadequate legal instruments to combat the enterprise and its perpetrators spiked trade further. The other attraction lies in the huge tax-free profits generated from the same persons over a long period.

Traffickers lure victims by offering phony jobs, or lucrative ones abroad, or kidnapping them. Miko and Park observe that there are no universal stereotypes about recruiting victims (4). Age, however, seems to be a common denominator because victims range from early, mid and late teens to adults and elderlies. This is understandably so because:

> The fear among customers of infection with HIV and AIDS has driven traffickers to recruit younger women and girls, some as young as seven, erroneously perceived by customers to be too young to have been infected. (Miko and Park 4)

The Polemics and Economics of Trafficking

Reports of several agencies including Miko and Park portray prostitution as the most profitable vocation for both traffickers and the trafficked (4). Other publications succinctly capture the economics and the politics of prostitution as the preferred vocation of the trafficking agency globally. However, Miko and Park is most germane to this inquiry (4). It reported that victims are subjected to "cruel mental and physical abuse" so as to keep them subdued and servile (4). Narratives of battering, confinement, rape and sexual abuse abound. All categories of victims are on arrival to their destination have their travel documents collected by the agents of the agencies that facilitated their migration. Very many are forced to endure unprotected sex with large number of partners, working very long hours therefore "…suffer mental break-downs and are exposed to sexually-transmitted diseases…" (Miko and Park 4).

In 2013, Abiodun Oluwarotimi wrote of the United States of America's report on Nigeria being a major contributor to human trafficking (13). The report noted that the Nigerian government neither particularly responsive to the menace of trafficking in Nigeria nor its consequent effect on other nations.

According to the U.S Secretary of States, "Nigeria was a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking" (Oluwarotimi 13). The reports implied that as at 2013 Nigeria had not fully complied with the minimum standard for the elimination of trafficking despite demonstrating a fair attempt in engaging the anti-trafficking laws with which the country had prosecuted twenty-five traffickers. The country had embarked on the training of several agencies and personnel to address the extensive rate of trafficking. Nigeria was reported as responsible for supplying women and girls for forced prostitution in most parts of the world. It was also established that young as well as mature females "primarily from Benin City in Edo State – are subjected to forced prostitution in Italy…" while those from other states served as forced prostitutes in other parts of the world (Oluwarotimi 14).

Plambech's seminal paper on "Sex, Deportation and Rescue: Economies of Migration among Nigerian Sex Workers" opens up vistas in trafficking in Nigeria (138). It corroborates U.S report on the location most Nigerian trafficked women came from, but not on their being subjected to forced prostitution. Plambech's ethnographic study uncovers the politics and economics of migration among Nigerian sex workers (138). It observes the active time line for the Edo migrants began in 1986 as a response to the National Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The Edo people of Benin had prior to that time been reputed for taking high level risk migration through the Sahara deserts and across the Mediterranean Sea or relocating to Europe with false travel documents ultimately fitting into European sex agency. The evident push and pull factors were largely influenced by SAP in Nigeria and high demand for sex workers in Europe.

The Benin experience however negates the single sided narrative and empirical realties of "victimhood" in trafficking and migration. Plambech therefore captured the reality of contracted labour: Most of the participants in the trade:… did not know all of the conditions and hazards involved in their job in Europe, yet all but one knew they were going to sell sex (139). They also knew they would work under a "madam," and they anticipated and accepted two to three years of hard work while repaying the debt. By then, they hoped to have repaid their madams and to have started working for themselves. Thus, in most cases it seems more precise to conceptualise the processes in the Nigerian context as indentured labour (Plambech 139).

Most Nigerian women migrants to countries like Italy are "self-recruited," members of their families consult with persons that can facilitate travel documents as well as reliable "madams" they can depend on even when they are or become exploitative. Chika Unigwe's four characters fall within this category (113). They know before setting out that they will have a relationship of dependency on their Madams. Bettio, Giusta and Di Tommaso describe this pattern as:

> …"informed" enrolment into a system of indentured sex work migration, choice of occupational choice identity within the sex work industry, access to credit, or more general ability to make economic choices under constraint. (2)

This largely makes a clear distinction between "trafficking" and "illegal" migration. Plambech observed that as the boundary policing in the last two decades became tighter, established migrants inhabiting Europe set up a comprehensive agency to facilitate passages and practice earnings from such restricted territories (Plambech 140). In Plambech's words:

> …migrants already in Europe began to recruit and practice the migration of women from Nigeria, fronting the money for travel, providing temporary accommodation and job brokering, and creating a system of indentured sex work migration. (140)

The value system that promote the desire of young women to live and earn money abroad are numerous. The four characters in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters Street* had been pushed to the wall. Sisi, a graduate, was driven by her hopeless state of unemployment and even a future bleaker than her parents. Ama is child raped by her '"father" for several years before discovering that her mother had lied about her who her real father was, strangely her mother was willing to send her away the minute she opened her mouth to accuse her mother's husband of the rape he did commit. Efe loses her mother at a tender age, her father slips into a state of drunkenness and she ends up with a teenage pregnancy having been lured by a married man who refuses to accept his child. Joyce is a victim of war. Sudanese born girl who witnesses the wiping out of her entire family and who is at the same time, gang-raped by the same soldiers. She is temporarily given hope, consoled and comforted by a soldier who creates to her an impression that he could marry her. At some point he is sternly warned off Joyce by his mother, and he is quick to relieve himself of her burden by registering her with the indenture agency. Dele, the Lagos agent, we are told is "... the common denominator in their lives." The lives of the four women (Unigwe 113).

Plambech who actually lived among the retuned sex workers in Edo State observed that the families of the deported victims that she studied claimed that their families were poor due to under or unemployment and had to skip one or two meals a day. Migration for them is a quest for business opportunities. They all, upon migration, became sole providers for their families through remittances (Plambech 144).

The agency established for the purpose of such migration is described by Plambech as 'the facilitation economy' (Planbech 144). The chain consists of young male contacts in Benin who characteristically have established female relatives -Madams- in Europe. These networks make up the facilitating agency for the migrants. The Madams most of whom would have served in states of indenture and are able to pay off and invariably take up the 'madam' or supervisory roles of a madam. The migrant women often voiced ambiguous moral perspectives about their madams in which they simultaneously viewed them as role models, mother figures, and exploiters (Kastner 18; Plambech 144). It is crucial to look at the many ways in which the "job" of facilitating women's journeys to Europe emerges as a business opportunity and how it is related to the political economy of men's unemployment and immobility in Benin. The villainous evolving role of the Madam in the agency is understandable. The trafficked and deported victim who still holds her in high esteem does so because she remains a bundle of unforgettable emotions and experiences conditioned by the totality of the agency.

The Writer and her Art as Countercheck

Adimora-Ezeigbo and Chika Unigwe have, through their narratives, placed deliberate restrictions on the actors of the trafficking and sex work migrant agency. Both writers from different perspectives portray innocent victims or a deliberate participants who are the victims in the trafficking agency. The ethnographic economics reveals this much.

While Adimora-Ezeigbo leans towards precaution and advocacy. Her narrative style is laced with instruction for the youth who may be at risk and for the mature woman who still stands the risk of being trafficked. Her thematic preoccupation lies mainly in the narrative of Nneoma and Efe two out of fifteen deported sex slaves, the stigmatization they suffer and the effort of the government and Non-governmental bodies in Nigeria put in to rehabilitate the victims, and prosecute the agents of the cartels that deceive the victims into slavery. Adimora-Ezeigbo takes every opportunity to raise the hydra headed Nigerian problems that triggers most forms of migration. She subtly introduces a pleasant ending, which is unlikely to be plausible, for Nneoma. Nneoma secures admission into the university after her rehabilitation and runs into Ofomata, who she had been engaged to be married to before her unfortunate adventure to Europe, on her first day on campus. Adimora-Ezeigbo writes about and for the pre-teens and the work is published by Lantern Books which dominantly publishes for young readers. It is clear that the thematic preoccupation in *Trafficked* leans heavily towards precaution and advocacy for rehabilitation and reintegration in to the society without consequences or practice.

Unigwe moves from the popular and politically correct narrative that practice all categories of participants in the sex-trade to support ethnographic findings that portray the reality that most of the actors know precisely what the trade entails and what it requires of them. She acknowledges the fact that these participants may not have the exact details of full implication of what being a sex migrant entails nor the risk of being deported or the psychological or physiological implications of the trade. She, however, does make it clear that the participants do understand the terms of reference and that the trade in contemporary times needs very little or no deception. Her characters deliberately decide to go with the proposals and protocols of the agency having considered the implication of all the information that was made available to them. Ama, for instance says, "I made this choice. At least I was given a choice. I came here with my eyes wide open" (Unigwe 114).

Adimora-Ezeigbo and Unigwe paint portraits of different experiences. While, Adimora-Ezeigbo portrays the agency and the operators of the cartel, who run the trafficking cartel as villains and the trafficked as the innocent and unconscious victims – which is the side of the story possibly narrated to deter the "innocent". Unigwe's narrative deters in a different type of way. It painstakingly narrates the challenges that leads to the choice of the migrant indentured sex worker who is "knowingly" "trafficked." She also shocks the reader with the pain and torture of the characters undergo. Sisi on her first date at work thinks she is a woman sinking, a woman required to smile while she sank (Unigwe 208) as her client caresses her she sat still... her heart heavy with a sadness that was close to rage" (Unigwe 212). She is so miserable and pained as her client "inaugurates" her "into her new profession" that …she "baptised herself into it with tears hot and livid" (Unigwe 213). Unigwe's women's narratives give a sharp distinction between "willingly" or "knowingly" participating in the trade. Unigwe neither celebrates the characters: their actions and inactions nor takes up an air of a condescending omniscient narrator. She, instead, allows the reader to encounter and come to terms with the harrowing realities of the trade. This approach to narrating sex work is on its own deterring.

Advocacy for Agencies of Restoration and Integration

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo paints a close portrait of two deported trafficked sex workers the structure of the plot is similar to Chika Unigwe's. Of the fifteen girls that make the trip back. Adimora-Ezeigbo, as Unigwe does, narrates the experiences of two; Nneoma and Efe through the omniscient

voice, strong authorial voice, flashback and biographical narratives. Efe, as Unigwe does with her four characters, initiates the process of 'telling' as therapeutic purgation. Efe says 'Look, why don't we just tell each other what happened to us? Perhaps finding our voices will help us heal (Adimora-Ezeigbo 97). Efe tells of her birth in Benin. She is raised by a poor family that struggled to put meals on the table she and her elder sister had gone to college while three of her brothers are unable to complete primary education. In her words "one day I saw an advertisement in a newspaper while I was on a visit to my cousin in Lagos. It asked young men and women who wished to work abroad to come to a certain address to be interviewed (Adimora-Ezeigbo 99) it was during the military regime when things were really chaotic in Nigeria and people sought for opportunities to work abroad.

She responds to the advert without her cousin's knowledge and was interviewed along with a group. She noted much later that none of the men had been recruited and the ten persons who had been recruited were shortly given a travel schedule. They were made to take an oath and to work for the agency until the debts incurred on processing passports tickets and so forth had been paid.

They were taken to Italy, and settled in Palermo and sold to a certain Madam Gold (Adimora-Ezeigbo 99) who she claimed used them 'shamelessly' and made them 'walk the streets every night' (Adimora-Ezeigbo 99). After four years of hard labour Madam Gold Sells Efe to a White pimp, from whom she eventually escaped after working for another two years. Efe flees to Verona teams up with a prostitute and works independently for another year hoping to save up money and return home. Shortly after this, the police intercepts and deports her (Adimora-Ezeigbo 100).

Nneoma, Adimora-Ezeigbo tells us, is able to relate with Efe's misfortune because of her personal experiences in Europe. She tearfully takes Efe's hands upon practice…They had both been forced to sell their bodies to all comers" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 100). Nneoma in her case had rebelled against the status quo, her would-be husband, Ofomata, is to take a traditional role she cannot imagine him occupying in the society because of the sociological implications. She flees from home and without telling her family to a friend who had informed her that an agency had assisted her in securing a teaching job in the United Kingdom. She travels to Lagos with her and in no time the sponsors arrange passports and flight tickets for them. To make the offers plausible to the six of them that were processed simultaneously Nneoma recalls:

> They show us pictures of the schools where we will be teaching and give us appointment letters signed with people with English names. They tell us we will have plenty of time to pay back our debts to the agency when we start earning money… I am so happy, I thank my chi. The only thing that worries me is that we have to take an oath and they tell us that the consequences will be severe if we disregard the terms of agreement, disobey them or cut links without settling our debts… (Adimora-Ezeigbo 127-128)

It happens that Efe also has similar experience, while Nneoma was made to take an oath with a bible and the image of an *arusi* (idol), Efe's team take their oaths in a shrine between Lagos and Ibadan (Adimora-Ezeigbo 128). Adimora-Ezeigbo as earlier stated would create a happy ever after for her characters after they are rehabilitated. It seems not plausible, for instance, that in a real context Nneoma will find the love in the hands of the same man she had fled from and who finally runs into her in the university campus after she is restored.

Portraits of the Agency and the Agents

Nneoma in *Trafficked* relates with Efe and Maria, Nigerian contacts for the agency. These contacts remain warm and friendly treating their recruits like their younger siblings before handing them to unknown fellows, a man and another woman, they explain that they are the foreign owners of the agency who are traveling with them from the Muritala Mohammed International Airport. From that point onwards the plans change. Nneoma along with others are informed they will travel to Britain enroute Italy. Nneoma as matter of fact states; 'In Italy I discover that I am trafficked' (Adimora-Ezeigbo 128) without having a say in the matter.

Dele in *On Black Sister's Street* is the Nigerian agent and source for all the characters portrayed as sex workers in the text. Referring to himself as Senghor Dele, he lives a very flashy and flamboyant life with lace suits and makes a show of his wealth in a bid to entice the girls he desires to recruit. Madam in Europe is full of accolades for him," Dele was right about you, Ah that man knows his stuff. He never disappoints. He has the best girls on show…" (Adimora-Ezeigbo 128). However, the portrayal of his encounter with Ama is the most exploitative and remarkable as it helps her define her posture as a sex worker before she leaves Nigeria.

Ama, had initially turned down the offer of being indentured and spits at Dele for insulting her. The realities of her subsistence makes her eat the humble pie and apologetically goes back to him to accept the offer. Dele accepts her apology but with a pacification request:

> You be fire. I shall sample you before you go… but I must sample you… I must, I swear! Ama stood still in front of his table. She knew what was coming and did not move her hand away when he pulled it towards his crotch… (Unigwe 168)

A satisfied and very pleased Dele insists:

> You be real fire' he drawled and smiled at her she also smiled back. Her thoughts already on a new life far from here, earning her own money so that she could build her business empire. And once she was a big woman, people would respect her, even Brother Cyril. This was the dream that spurred her on in Antwerp; the men she slept with were like Dele, just tools she needed to achieve her dream. And her dream was big enough to accommodate all of them. (Unigwe 168-169)

Dele says he is deadly, he proves it when he instructs Madam and Segun to kill Sisi. The structure of the receiving agents follow a pattern. A madam and her bodyguard or henchman.

When Nneoma meets her Madam, Madam Dollar, she is disgusted, her opinion of the woman she describes in white heat:

> …nothing comes between her and money, she owns us and the man, whom we learn to call Captain, is her bodyguard she keeps us prisoner in her flat…I am completely devastated by the life I'm forced to live: hit the night street, waiting for customers, winter, spring, summer and autumn; come back at dawn, wash, eat and sleep till it all begins again at nightfall. (Adimora-Ezeigbo 129)

Their job description was repetitive; always walking at night, selling sex to Italian men and foreigners. 'I hate Madam Dollar' she says.

Unigwe deliberately paints the picture of Madam, in On Black Sister's Street as a person to be respected yet dreaded, she drops hints of these all over the canvas of the work imagery created in the work… madam was dreaded (Unigwe 4) would not tolerate rough hair, lateness to work and her decisive

responses (Unigwe 5), would not attend the party if she was invited (Unigwe 5) you don't want to be in Madams bad books she had dealt with Efe by kicking her out of her booth for one week! Ama, the hothead, does not mince her words: "I don't like Madam. She's a bitch." Madam in Antwerp is really sophisticated. She introduces herself to Sisi authoritatively 'I am your Madam,' light-skinned, round and short as Sisi expected, she had a Master degree in Business Administration from the University of Lagos and spoke impeccable English and Dutch (Unigwe 116). Her hardness manifests in getting rid of Sisi yet playing innocent by disposing her things and burning an incense.

Madam's bodyguard is Segun. Seemingly uncoordinated, but fixes furniture and stuff around the house. He is the surveillance person who tracks and kills Sisi. The bodyguard in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* is violent often assaulting Nneoma for refusing to cooperate with the customers or not delivering the expected amount of money. He beats her up when she returns empty handed but ensures that she is not disfigured. Madam would remind her that the less money she brings the longer she would have stay with her. Nneoma and two girls are bought by Baron who commences fresh transactions with them. She eventually escapes having stolen his money. Worthy of note is the semiotic implication of the cover page of the narratives. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* has the painting of a young frail looking skimpily dressed subdued woman in a room that is fast secured by metal bars and a padlock while Unigwe's On *Black Sister's Street* is the picture of the back and backside of a curvaceous black woman sitting on a bathtub creating an erotic setting.

The Soul as Countercheck to Sex Trade

Man is in tripartite dimensions: spirit, soul and body. It is apparent that the arguments from ethnographic and other critical studies on trafficking and prostitution focus on the victims of the trade. Having established two types of participation: the forced sex work and the indentured sex work, what comes to the fore is that there are different dimensions and levels of victimhood in both contexts. Common denominators remain the economics of the trade, the practice of the tools of the trade by the agencies of the trade, the practice and labelling that pursues the tools of the trade long after they are rehabilitated.

The first condition is an absolute situation where the ideals of the worker who had prepared for legitimate work and psychological impact brought about by the deception and assault of the forced sex slavery are deepened by the lack of preparation or readiness on the part of the trafficked person. The act of forced prostituting and the psychological and physiological consequences of the same is portrayed by Adimora-Ezeigbo as she portrays Nneoma as almost always unwilling and uncooperative.

> Sometimes I refuse to cooperate with the customers, especially when thy demand for positions I find despicable or when they refuse to use a condom or make one of the other nasty demands …(Adimora-Ezeigbo 129)

> Baron is a sadist he rapes and beats me. I refuse when customers demand oral or anal sex and insist that they use condoms and I'm sometimes assaulted for this. (Adimora-Ezeigbo 132)

The other context is that of the 'persons' who appear to be prepared for the enterprise until they are faced with the realities and the consequences of the trade until they practically engage in the enterprise. Unigwe the omniscient narrator portrays characters that are psychologically distressed and

ravaged at the realm of the soul. The same characters carry on as though they are contented with the indentured sex work, the consistent upward review of their indebtedness to the agency and the proceeds from their slave hood. While Adimora-Ezeigbo's dominant characters are rehabilitated and have regrets over being deceived into the trade.

Unigwe's characters are contrastingly portrayed as challenged and broken women who pursue their career as sex workers with all the dignity they can muster. Unigwe does not condemn them but engages them as a deterring agency by portraying the sorrowful soul and depression they consistently live with. Unigwe's masterstroke is in dropping these details when the reader lest expects thereby portraying consistent bitterness overlaying whatever impression of joy or fulfilment the characters display. For instance, Ama is consistently angry while Sisi, the most educated and who seemed to be the most prepared to take up the indentured sex slave role, remained the most troubled and discontented. Unigwe revealing the circumstances of her death to the readers and not her housemates is a very loud authorial statement. She refuses to condemn but wills the reader the introspection of the consequence of living such fashion. The cartel is portrayed as an agency that is intolerant of disloyalty and will do anything to protect and uphold its "integrity."

Conclusion

Trafficking remains a global avarice and the dimensions of the trade; the agency which includes the ruthless traffickers, the madams and the categories of indentured sex workers continue to be the concern of the international community. Most of those enrolled in indentured relationships, do so without full understanding of the realities of the trade. Their immediate consciousness leans towards the economics of the trade and perceived opportunities. They, however, go ahead with the terms when the agencies alter the agreements, looking to the time they would be free to start the life they desire when they got committed to the indentured sex work.

The persistence and viability of this trade opens up growing theoretical and literary discourse on trafficking. Literature has, in several ways and across continents, served as countercheck to trafficking. Biographical writings, novels, documentary narratives and practice texts that capture the syndrome abound. The purpose they serve must be practiced, for instance as biographies they grant entrance into the ordeals of individuals who have experienced the trade while as documentary narratives they give practice historical views of the same. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Chika Unigwe's works are fictional and documentary in several ways. By portraying the gory experience of the indentured sex workers they offer a counter check.

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Conceptual Foundation of Framing, Media Framing, and Rhetorical Scholarship

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Abstract

This article seeks to situate the concepts of framing in the rhetorical act of communication domain. The article's objective is to expand the application of framing analysis in the context of rhetorical criticism and perspectives. It argues that given the contemporary multimodal mode of communication, there is a necessity to expand the horizon of the understanding of rhetoric and rhetorical criticism. Methodologically, the article is designed on qualitative research patterns to understand an in-depth relationship between frames and rhetoric. Anchored to this theme and method, the article is structured on a three-fold pattern: first, it spells out the fundamentals of what counts as frame, showing its disciplinary orientation; second, it delineates its philosophical lineage, and third, it sketches out how the concept of framing can be profitably used to grasp the impact of rhetoric in the complex system of multidimensional human communication. In the ever-expanding and unprecedented burgeoning of communication system, it has become increasingly necessary to adopt a new lens to account for the diversities of rhetorical situations as the ancient or classical methods/approach has become too narrow and failed to capture diverse gateway of rhetorical communication.

Keywords: Communication, frame, media framing, rhetoric, and schemata

Introduction

Rhetoric should be understood against this new technological and academic scenario to understand the ties between new forms of information dissemination and the impact that it has on the audience. The contemporary world is steeped in a multi-model communication structure. Mode and channel of communication have become extremely diversified. As new forms of communicating a message emerge, a meaning-making process also takes on a parallel growth, with numerous perspectives and criticisms vying for creating novel results and scholarship. One of the most recent developments in the domain of rhetoric is an attempt to approach rhetorical scholarship from the perspective of framing. To understand the relationship between these two seemingly disparate entities, it is crucial to know what counts as a frame and what its characteristic features are.

Primarily, framing entails a process of (re)constructing meaning in a restrictive manner by drawing attention to a specific dimension of reality or a phenomenon. It marshals some aspects of an event or issue and (re)configures them selectively to encourage a particular viewpoint. In short, frames emphasize some elements of reality by obscuring others. Analogically, the act of framing is akin to that of having a picture framed in a photo framework. Putting a frame on a picture is to highlight certain aspects as Jim A. Kuypers asserts "some elements of the pictures at the expense of others" (181). Framing a picture in a certain way prevails its influences upon onlookers on how the picture is to be viewed and understood. Changing a frame looks like a simple physical act of transferring one object from one location to another; however, at a deeper level, the switching triggers a ripple effect on the audience by upsetting existing perspectives and bringing in new ones. In the words of Kuypers when framed, facts and events that occur daily evoke a certain frame of mind, encouraging the audience to view them "in a particular way" (181). Thus, in the process of meaning-making of a phenomenon, as Kuypers points out framing "can be understood as taking some aspects of our reality and making them more accessible than other aspects" (181). Approached this way, the act of framing is to promote a particular perspective, interpretation, or viewpoint in place and to induce readers to see the related facts in a certain way. Framing, for Kuypers, involves amplifying some items at the expense of others and is "a process whereby communicators act—consciously or not—to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner" (182). In other words, it entails a process whereby aspects of reality are portrayed and interpreted in a particular way.

Frames are contested for prominence, reflecting Sarah T. Tracy's argument that the act of framing is a "communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another" (715). They are mediated through various cultural symbols and devices by influential and strategic social actors. Showing how frames are maneuvered in society, Tracy notes that framing is "accomplished by cultural leaders' strategic use of a variety of organizational symbols, including metaphor, stories and myths, rituals and ceremonies, jargon, and strategic use of artifacts. All of these symbols are created and maintained through communication" (715). As Tracy believes, frames are circulated and perpetuated in human communication environment via a wide variety of cultural products.

The subtly of how framing functions is deeply intriguing. It operates employing foreground and background, magnifying whatever it shows and obscuring the rest in a fuzzy background. This implies that framing has tremendous power in that it shapes how issues or events are interpreted or portrayed. Echoing the idea of Kuypers, Richard Andrews notes that a communicator "selects from an infinite range of possibilities and presents us with a selected viewpoint" (93). As Robert M. Entman points out, a fully-developed frame performs four specific functions: it defines, categorizes, classifies, and makes suggestions about the material world. These functions are discussed in the later paragraphs.

Media Framing

Media framing refers to the way events are portrayed in different media of communication. As a systematic and organized body of scholarship, the term framing was formally theorized by Ingrid Volkmer "in the mass media age of the 1970s" (408), when the media research made a shift from "a unidimensional media-effects model and began to address quite specific forms of media influence on audiences" (408). From the perspective of news reporting, the word framing is applied to explain by David Weiss "the process of organizing, defining, and structuring a story" (32). News coverage or

reporting is a very tricky and subtle process. Generally, journalists or reporters are supposed to communicate news in an unbiased, neutral and detached manner. However, despite this approach, journalistic reporting is riddled with nuances. According to Weiss many media scholars and researchers' arguments suggest that "even when journalists intend to be objective or balanced in their coverage, they necessarily report on issues in ways that give audiences cues as to how to understand the issues, including which aspects of the issues to focus on and which to ignore" (32). As Weiss notes, framing is inherent and unavoidable even in such a writing that is regarded as objective, balanced and unbiased -- journalistic.

Following the 1970s when there was a surge of research in the media as pointed out above, inquiry into framing took into a new lease of life, with an urge to trace the philosophical underpinning of the concept of framing. Kuypers, Tracy, and Weiss state that frames refer to the strategic way of portraying an event, issue or a fact in a particular way. Volkmer resonates with them and remarks that framing theory "aims to identify schemes in which individuals perceive the world" (407). Volkmer attempts to extend the concept by adding that frames are the "schemes" (407) that allow cues to audiences to explain and interpret a phenomenon.

Framing theory has a sociological orientation, with its conceptual lineage linking the concept back to the Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman. Volkmer summarizes Goffman's argument about framing as "interpretative designs" that are "central elements of cultural belief systems" (407). Volkmer elaborates Goffman's ideas even further thus:

> Goffman called these interpretive designs frames that we use in our day-to-day experience to make sense of the world. Frames help interpret and reconstruct reality. Goffman's concept of frames has its conceptual roots in phenomenology, a philosophical approach that argues that the meaning of the world is perceived by individuals based on their lifeworld beliefs, experiences, and knowledge. Whereas traditionally, world meanings were conveyed through socialization. (407)

> Thus, Goffman maintains what Volkmer asserts that people view social events and realities according to what he calls "cultural belief systems" (407).

By molding people's outlook, frames delimit their interpretation. In Framing Analysis, Goffman clarifies this idea. He notes that frames are used to define and explain the social world. He adds that people perceive events and issues via primary frameworks that would later be known as schema. Furthermore, he defines a primary framework as "neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules" (21) that guide people to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" (21) an array of social occurrences/events. Thus, Goffman states that people are led to categorize, organize, and interpret their social/personal experiences through schema.

Goffman contends that frame plays a vital role in the meaning-making process of social activities. It emanates from a source in which knowledge about social events or facts are selected and reconfigured (26). While framing an idea, "alternative frames are generally blotted out, paving the way for the emergence of a fresh framing process" (26). Goffman also argues that a frame reflects epistemic orientation in the human cognitive faculty of mind. As Tracy points out that frames are maneuvered in human society through culturally informed schema, Goffman concurs with him and adds that frames

constitute a general framework available to people to interpret, understand, and imagine human activities and material realities.

The operation of frames and the way they influence people is subtle. Framing contrivances signification by a simultaneous process of selection and elimination. In other words, the very process of choosing a dimension of an event/issue already implicates obscuring some others of the same event. M. J. Edelman explains this interesting phenomenon thus:

> [t]he character, causes and consequences of any phenomenon become radically different as changes are made in what is prominently displayed, what is repressed and especially in how observations are classified . . . [T]he social world is . . . a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized. (232)

This extract succinctly reinforces Edelman's observation that frames are extremely capable of altering perspectives swiftly through the process of selection and exclusion.

Gaye Tuchman in his article "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected", relates the concept of framing to media. He views that the media creates social realities "through redefinition, reconsideration, and recounting in an ongoing process" (129). He captures this idea so:

> Individuals, groups, and organizations not only react to and characterize events by typifying what has happened, but also they may typify events by stressing the way things happen. Of particular importance may be the way events may be practically managed, altered, or projected into future. (129-130)

In this explanation, Tuchman emphasizes the concept of typification. One significant point stands out in Tuchman's observation: typification that shapes interpretations is an act of artificial construction.

Leading on from the ideas of Goffman and of Tuchman, Robert M. Entman defines framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (164). Relates frames to how the media disseminate information, Entman notes that "if the media are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about, they must also exert significant influence over what they think" (165). To Entman, the media achieve this result through two powerful tools: selection and salience. He writes that "salience accentuates a piece of information and proffers it to readers in a very noticeable manner" (392). These two tools disseminate information faster than usual.

Entman says that full-fledged frames serve four specific functions. They define a problem or an issue, show causal variables, provide moral judgment, and suggest remedies or recommendations (392). Entman also identifies "four locations" where frames are seen. These locations comprise "the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture" (392). First, the communicators point out the premier issue of an event, problematize it, and explain it. This whole process is, however, "guided by frames that organize their belief systems" (392). The frame functions within certain media belief systems.

Among the four locations, the text is the place where the communicator harnesses textual strategies to achieve the objective of the message. According to Entman, the communicator manipulates the textual tactics through "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped

images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (392). In the case of media framing, the communication process involves "some bits of information," "making a piece of information more noticeable," reiterating vital statements, and "associating them with culturally familiar symbols" (392). Therefore, media text is made significant localizing the symbols.

Receivers of information is the third location where the communicators pitch their frames. In this location, the frames are contrived to "guide the receiver's thinking and conclusion" (392). The last site, as mentioned by Entman, culture, is a key site in the entire gamut of the communication process. Cultural location, he notes, refers to "the stock of commonly invoked frames"—the frames that both the communicator and the receiver rely on (392). Further, the media text invokes cultural context, which is explained: "as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (392). In this way, frames are contingent upon a network of references and information within the cultural framework of the reader, reflecting Potter's views that frames "convey values and ideological convictions of a group" (212). Thus, for Entman, frames become pervasive and inform people's worldviews through the speaker, text, receiver, and conventional values.

Cultural ethos influences media framing. According to Entman, culture plays a vital role in the process of media framing. He elaborates on this issue in the article "Cascading Activation: Contesting the While House's Frame After 9/11" published in 2003. In it, he distinguishes two important points: "cultural resonance" and the "magnitude" (417). He defines cultural resonance as having "the greatest potential for influence" (417). He also notes that culturally resonant frames employ words and images that are "noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged" (417). Additionally, the magnitude of such images exerts a tremendous influence on readers/audiences. The concept of magnitude as referred by Entman "extent and frequency with which communicators exploit signs to frame a signification of an event" (417). Culturally resonant words and images are harnessed repeatedly and prominently in the words of Entman "the more the framing is likely to evoke similar thoughts and feelings in large proportions of the audience" (417). Entman asserts that those frames that contain culturally informed words and images have the best potential to sway people's opinions and thoughts.

William Gamson defines a frame as "a central organizing idea" (3). Gamson echoes Entman's concept that the act of framing allows communicators to highlight some bits of information about an item (selection) and magnify them in prominence (salience). The effect of selection and salience results in the constructing and reconstructing of meaning in the words of Gregory V. Button "in a selective manner that legitimizes some accounts while obscuring others, privileging some political agendas and negating others" (146). For researchers working within journalism, the most commonly used explanation of framing stems from Entman. He states: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (391). The two framing processes as mentioned in this definition entail gathering a few elements of "a perceived reality" and then structuring them into a narrative that promotes the desired interpretation on behalf of the target audience.

For Kuypers "Media texts function in two ways: agenda-setting and agenda-extension" (183). The former "focuses the public's attention on a particular event or issue over another" and the latter "involves the influencing of the public" (183). It is at the second level of agenda-setting-- "persuasive

aspects of news coverage" (183) that the values and perspectives of the audience are "primed" (183). The rhetorical function of agenda-setting is limited to suggesting what to think. On the contrary, that of agenda extension is to tell us "How to think about an issue" (185). Kuypers writes, "it is the process whereby news stories and editorials act to shape our awareness, understanding, and evaluations of issues and events in a particular direction" (299). According to Louis A. Day Although journalism ethics suggests that the media must separate "fact" from "opinion" and provide "relevant backgrounds" to "perspectives (35), newspapers in the view of Kuypers "editors often frame issues by how they decide to tell a story" (183). The process of telling is as important as the content.

Framing analysis is a particularly useful method to understand the way the media frame the social world and what impact they produce on readers' perception of that world. Todd Gitlin asserts that the "[m]edia frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some degree, for us who rely on their reports" (7). Concurring with this observation, Button notes that media frames help journalists to "organize the world; they also strongly shape how we, as readers, perceive the world" (146). As "the packages in which the central focus of a news story is developed and understood" (146), argues Button, it is necessary to examine and understand how the media frame the material world. Thus, the impact of framing in newspaper editorials is far-reaching as asserted by Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friendenberg "structuring our social reality" (135) and for Kuypers to "strongly influencing political decision-making" and setting "government agenda" (182). Media framing influences political pronouncements and substantial government agendas.

Relationship between Rhetoric and Framing

There is a burgeoning trend to examine the ties between framing and rhetorical scholarship. Richard Andrews envisages that framing can be of immense reinforcement to expand the study of rhetoric. He states the potentiality of using a framing analysis as "a tool in the application of rhetorical study" (97). He argues that the concept of framing can be used profitably as a method to enhance and enrich the rhetorical impact of any human communicative activities and experiences. Noting that framing "is not a theory, but a '"servant"' to rhetoric, Andrews enumerates four distinctive functions of framing concerning rhetoric:

> it is (a) the activity via which meaning is made and communicated; (b) a creative and critical resource for the rhetor and the audience; (c) a lightweight form of "scaffolding" that, once the meaning is communicated, becomes invisible and superfluous to need; and (d) flexible, adaptable, breakable, and transgressable. (97)

Showing the complementarity between framing and rhetoric for a communicative experience, Andrews expresses his enthusiasm by saying "It is almost impossible to conceive of a theory of rhetoric without the operational function of framing to enable meaningful communication to take place" (97). He reiterates the ideas of framing theorists like Entman to point out that framing remains crucial for Andrews "in a vacuum unless it is informed by functional purposes that are defined by rhetoric" (97). Andrews avers that framing is not innocuous: "Although the act of framing looks to be a neutral act, it is always informed by the rhetor's intention and the audience's preparedness" (97). Framing is ubiquitous, but very complex to recognize because of its subtle presence in the variegated forms of human communication. Hence, Andrews states that although a frame is "not always evident" (98) in

communication, and adds that "the power and possibilities of framing as a rhetorical device" (98) is immense and far-reaching.

The role of framing as a rhetorical apparatus has been ignored or overlooked. Andrews states that "Framing has been neglected in rhetorical studies" (98). He recognizes the importance of the two and declares that in the absence of framing, "rhetoric could be seen as ethereal, academic, and irrelevant to the operation of the world; with it, rhetoric becomes closely connected to all forms of human communication, from the literary and artistic to the mundane, from operative scores and their realization in theaters to the exchange of tickets on a bus or train" (99). In the operative act of communication, Andrews emphasizes the need to approach framing and rhetoric as complementary for each other and observes that:

If rhetoric is to have credibility in a fast-changing world, the way in which framing operates to shape the problems that encountered, the debates that take place on them, and solutions that are generated that in turn lead to consensus and action is crucial. Framing is the engine and principal operating device of rhetoric in the twenty-first century. It makes rhetoric happen (99).

The use of the framing method for rhetorical criticism seems quite compatible because the nature of media framing is to advance a particular interpretation of phenomena. To understand the rhetorical impact of a complex web of communication, framing analysis provides what Kuypers has rightly pointed out, "a particularly useful way to understand the impact of rhetoric" (182). He notes that although this method is amenable to studying "any rhetorical artifact, I feel it is particularly suited for understanding the effects of mediated communication" (182). Kuypers further adds that framing theory is "especially well-suited for comparative analysis" (198). Using this approach, "critics can compare and contrast frames across different rhetorical texts" (198).

Conclusion

This study aimed to delineate the origin and tenets of framing theory and to understand framing from a rhetorical perspective. Fundamentally, framing analysis is one of the approaches of rhetorical criticism that offers a theoretical lens to examine various issues found across a wide range of media texts. Frames make some ideas more noticeable than others. They operate by making some information more salient than others. In the process of magnifying some ideas, communicators omit, reemphasize, relegate or subordinate some others. The precursor of framing theory is Erving Goffman, who argues that people perceive social reality through what he calls schemata. Other prominent theorists and researchers invoked in this study include Robert M. Entman, Jim A. Kuypers, William Gamson, Todd Gitlin, M.J. Edelman, Gaye Tuchman and Gregory V. Button. Unanimously, they all define framing as a process whereby aspects of reality are portrayed and interpreted in a particular way.

Framing theorists explain that frames operate by means of salience and resonance. Media texts employ different frames to induce readers to filter their perception of the multidimensional world. Themes remain neutral until they are framed. According to Entman, a fully developed frame serves from problem raising to solutions through causes and judgments.

Implications

In the process of framing, readers and audiences are subjected to different frames that the media compete to impose on. As a result, they receive a filtered perception of a phenomenon. Thus, by

constantly feeding the readers with the same frames, rhetorical artifacts like newspaper editorials induce them to accept the proffered frame as the legitimate signifier to view a phenomenon. They are also likely to struggle to navigate through the maze of media interpretations. The danger here is that the confused readers imbibe a fractured view of the world offered by the media, which is quite misleading and confusing. Since framing is far from being innocuous, its implication entails significant repercussions. The key point of this study is that framing color people's opinions about what is being interpreted in the media. When the media consistently harness a certain frame about a phenomenon, they customize readers to accept a particular point of view about it, forcing them to ignore others.

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Nineteenth Century Spanish American Novels: A Search for Nationness and National Identity

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Abstract

The article explores the role of literature in the formation of national identity across Spanish America during the nineteenth century. In a time of political upheaval and social change following the wars of independence, novelists sought to define and construct the emerging nationhood of their respective countries. The historical novel, a dominant genre during this period, became a significant medium for reflecting on national origins, celebrating heroic struggles, and articulating the desire for unity and independence. At the same time, the costumbrista novel, rooted in the depiction of everyday life and regional customs, played a crucial role in shaping the cultural aspects of national identity, often through a nostalgic lens that sought to preserve traditional values amid modernization. As Spanish American societies continued to evolve, realist and naturalistic novels emerged, challenging idealized portrayals and instead focusing on the social realities and inequalities that hindered the formation of cohesive national identities. These works highlighted the tensions between the ideal and the real, offering a critical reflection on class struggles, economic challenges, and the tensions between indigenous, African, and European cultural legacies. Through these various novelistic traditions, Spanish American writers navigated the complex and contested terrain of nation-building, revealing the shifting contours of identity in a post-colonial context. This article analyzes these genres and their contributions to the ongoing search for "nationness" in the Spanish-speaking Americas during a formative historical moment.

Keywords: *Nation, nationness, identity, historical, costumbrista, realist, and naturalistic.*

Introduction

After gaining independence from Spanish rule, the former territories in the Americas faced challenges of political, social, and territorial fragmentation. Despite having a shared history, culture, and language, these nations struggled to form stable systems and were engaged in numerous conflicts, such as the British occupation of the Malvinas Islands in 1833 and territorial disputes with the United States and France. In this context, literature, particularly the novel, became a means for intellectuals to explore national identity and unity.

Historiography from the colonial period no longer suited the needs of the newly independent nations. It was written to serve the colonizers' purposes, and after independence, Spanish Americans sought to rewrite history in a new, more personal narrative form. Venezuelan scholar Andres Bello noted that with historical documents fragmented and incomplete, the narrative form became essential for expressing a nation's identity (Benitez-Rojo 417). Novels, thus, allowed writers to craft a new sense of national unity, representing the diverse demographic of indigenous, European, African, and mixed heritage. The novel became a tool for readers to connect with their national identity, experiencing the land through the characters' stories.

National identity emerged from the cultural consciousness shaped by indigenous, African, and European influences, as well as local customs, songs, and folklore. Writers, through their novels, were expected to shape and promote this national sentiment and contribute to the debate around nationalism. Intellectuals like Bello and Bolívar envisioned a unified Spanish America, and writers had the responsibility of strengthening both national unity and solidarity among Spanish-speaking nations. Spanish became the language of creativity and administration, but even as writers used European forms like the novel, the content was deeply rooted in local experiences, blending European ideas with Spanish American realities.

Three major intellectuals dominated 19th-century Spanish American literary thought: Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and José Martí. While not all were novelists, their contributions to language, education, and political thought influenced the direction of Spanish American literature. Bello's work on Spanish grammar helped standardize the language across the continent, Sarmiento's *Facundo* explored national identity, and Martí's writings on independence shaped Cuban and broader Latin American thought. In the 19th century, Spanish American novelists expressed themselves primarily through four novel forms, and these forms: Historical, costumbrista, realist and naturalistic novels were experimented with in the search for Nationness and National Identity.

Historical Novels

To give their novels distinctive characteristics, 19th-century Spanish American novelists created historical novels based on past events, rewriting chronicles or historical texts in fictionalized forms. In their search for imagery and symbols, many novelists used Indian protagonists from Spanish American history. They often preferred setting their novels in the pre-Columbian era rather than the conquest or colonial periods, as they sought to find the identity of the new republics in the past. René Prieto supports this view, stating, "Having made a historical break from the Hispanic rule, authors begin to consider the mother cultures of America as an attractive lineage for the identity of the budding republics" (140). Writers idealized the aboriginal inhabitants with romantic fervor. Francisco Solares-Larate defines this historical approach as "counter historical discourse," as these narratives were subject to change and reinterpretation (59). Through romantic passion, these historical novelists aimed to reshape perceptions of history in their works.

Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), Venezuelan freedom fighter and liberator of Spanish America, contributed to the development of a nationalistic prose narrative with his *The Jamaica Letter* (1815), written in the style of classical epistles. Bolívar justifies the revolutionary war and expresses his opposition to traditional monarchy, outlining his vision for the republic of Colombia, uniting New

Granada and Venezuela, with a grand idea of a world capital in Panama (Echevarria 32-33). Bolívar's nationalist feelings about Spanish America, leading the world, influenced other 19th-century writers.

La novia del hereje by Argentine poet Vicente Fidel López, set in the late sixteenth century, derives its subject matter from English voyager Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the world and the naval disaster of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Benitez-Rojo calls it "the first Spanish American historical novel. . . which through romance tries to reconstruct world history in depth" (449). López drew from scattered historical sources, aiming to prepare a history book. Both Benitez-Rojo and Solares-Larate agree that the novel rewrites Spanish American history. Like many other historical novels, its events are considered authentic historical events by Spanish American readers (Solares-Larate 64-65).

Amalia by José Mármol, an anti-Rosas novel published in 1851, tells the story of a widow in Argentina. Amidst the political turmoil of the time, the novel advocates for self-rule and portrays Amalia as a hero, with her repeated widowhood earning sympathy. Doris Sommer remarks that Mármol's *Amalia* addresses the political course of Argentina, adding, "This is precisely what many narrators did, producing novels that can be considered the classic novels of their respective countries" (114). The novel thus became politically significant for Argentina.

Cuban poet and novelist Gertrudis de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841) follows a Mulato slave named Sab, who falls in love with his master's daughter Carlota. The novel contrasts Sab's purity with the selfishness of a rich English businessman, raising questions about slavery and social roles in Cuba (Rodriguez 402). Avellaneda's second novel, *Guatimozin, the Last Emperor of Aztecs*, idealizes indigenous Indian themes and criticizes the conquest of the Aztecs, viewing it as an overthrow of the legitimate regime.

In Colombia, José Joaquín Ortiz's María Dolores o la Historia de mi Casamiento (1841) and Juan José Nieto's *Yngermina o la hija de calamari* (1852) are among notable early historical novels. Nieto's novel attempts to legitimize the mestizo origin of Colombia and establish the writer's identity as an interpreter of Colombian nationality (Benitez-Rojo 457). *María* by Jorge Isaacs, widely read throughout Spanish America, uses the romance between cousins María and Efraín as a metaphor for Colombia's identity. Benitez-Rojo notes, "It is no less necessary for Isaac's vision of Colombia than it was for Mármol's Argentina" (458).

The portrayal of Indians shifted in Spanish American literature from being seen as barbarians during the colonial period to being idealized in the 19th century as part of the emerging national identity. Writers critiqued the Spanish conquest, idealizing the pre-Columbian era. *La Peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863), by José Raron Yepes, written in Puerto Rico when it was still under Spanish rule, imagines the union of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. The novel praises Bartolomé de las Casas as the protector of the Indians.

Enriquillo by Manuel de Jesús Galván, based on Bartolomé de las Casas' chronicles, tells the story of a chivalric chieftain who led indigenous resistance against the Spanish from 1519 to 1533. José Martí praised the novel, noting its unique way of presenting Spanish American history (Sommer 116). This work stands as a powerful reminder of the indigenous struggle for justice and sovereignty in the face of colonial oppression.

Mexico, the most powerful viceroyalty in the colonial period, faced political instability post-independence, with conflicts between federalists and centralists and the loss of territory to the U.S. and France. Writers remained active amid these struggles. Juan Díaz Covarrubias's *Gil Gómez la Insurgenta*

focuses on Mexico's recent national past, using history to promote patriotism, rather than evoking a distant past like Walter Scott's historical novels (Brushwood 305). Through such works, Mexican writers sought to forge a collective national identity amid the turbulence of the nation's early years. Ignacio M. Altamirano, Mexico's most popular novelist in the late 19th century, believed the novel was key to national consolidation. His works, *Clemencia* and *El Zarco,* served both nationalist and didactic purposes (Benitez-Rojo 463). Vicente Riva Palacio's historical novels, though prolific, lacked artistic value.

Peru, another major Spanish American viceroyalty, produced notable scholars post-independence. Juana Manuela Gorriti, an Argentine writer who settled in Peru, wrote novels like *The Queen* and *The Treasure of the Incas*, blending Argentine and Peruvian themes and seeking to correct the political course of her homeland (Beatriz Uraca 152). Narciso Arestegui's *El Padre Horan* (Father Horan) depicts a greedy priest exploiting Indian labor, calling for a new nation free from colonial structures. Benitez-Rojo describes it as one of the first political and social denunciations in Spanish American fiction (454). Luis Benjamin Cisneros wrote two novels, Edgardo and Julia, addressing social problems faced by Peru's indigenous population.

Costumbrista Novels

The advancement made in the methods of social sciences and anthropology led to the emergence of a new kind of writing style known as Costumbrismo. Costumbrismo prevailed in Spanish American writing, especially in short and long fiction, in the first half of the nineteenth century. The realm of costumbrismo, according to Echeverría, "is to depict the customs of the folk, particularly those living in the marginal neighborhood of the cities" (34). Elaborating on the definition of costumbrismo, Echeverría further notes:

> Costumbrismo emerged from a combination of a romantic interest in the common people, in nature in all its detail, and the conventions of realism, which had been developing since the work of Cervantes. The tendency favored brief, highly focused descriptive texts that came to be known as cuadros de costumbres and in French tableau des moeurs; the development of newspapers encouraged this propensity. "Cuadro" and "tableau" reveal costumbrismo's kinship with painting, its effort to paint with words, as it were. "Costumbre" means custom, so costumbrismo concentrated on mores, habits, activities, often crafts and trades. (34)

Costumbrista writers in Spanish America depicted peasants, workers, and people inhabiting the countryside or the poor neighborhoods of the cities. The costumbrista writers paid attention even to the people's clothing, the tools they use, and the animals they keep. Costumbrismo became a central form in short stories and novels in the nineteenth century, identifying who the Spanish Americans actually were. Enrique Pupo-Walker adds, "The costumbrista narratives also blend autobiographical information with satirical remarks while incorporating quotations from journalistic sources, bits of poetry, and traces of popular culture" (492). In short, costumbrista novels are about people, places, and their customs.

José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, according to Benítez-Rojo, was the first Spanish American novelist as well as the first costumbrista writer, with his novel *El Periquillo* being the first costumbrista novel to express Spanish Americanness. Written in the European picaresque tradition, *El Periquillo,* in the words of Benítez-Rojo, reveals the aspiration of Spanish American Creoles. According to Benítez-Rojo, *El Periquillo* "tended to continue the theme of social marginality as well as its journalistic style,

its costumbrismo, its didacticism, and its melodrama" (437). Benítez-Rojo further explains that the Spanish American readers "experienced the illusion of accompanying Periquillo along the roads and through the villages and towns of the viceroyalty, which helped to awaken in them the desire for nationness" (438). As a picaresque hero, Periquillo goes through a varied career in his life: a student, monk, physician, barber, scribe, pharmacist, judge, soldier, beggar, thief, sacristan, and merchant. These professions, according to Benítez-Rojo, were the universal professions the readers could associate "with particularities native to the country" (438). Lizardi's novel, thus, aroused the feelings of nationalism and national identity in Spanish American audiences by creating protagonists like them. The costumbrista tradition of Lizardi was continued in Mexico by Manuel Pyano in *El Fistol Del Diablo* and it found full expression in José Torna Cuéllar. His most accomplished costumbrista novels are *Ensalada de Pollos* and *Historia de Chucho el Ninfo.* The characters in his novels are spoiled children, ambitious military men, corrupt politicians, small merchants, dandies, and coquettes.

Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851), an Argentine novelist, is another successful costumbrista writer, whose novella *El Matadero* (The Slaughterhouse) is considered one of the most successful fictional works in Spanish America in the nineteenth century. The story denounces the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. The plot is about a young man who is brutally assassinated by a group of thugs at Buenos Aires slaughterhouse. As González Echeverría points out, "the costumbrista element is the detailed gruesome description of the activities at the slaughterhouse and the role the institution plays in the city's culture and economy" (37). Similarly, Benítez-Rojo remarks, "The piece begins with a series of descriptions that are noteworthy for their naturalism" (448). Chavarria's use of costumbrismo is influenced by European naturalism in literature.

After Echeverría, Lucio V. López, José María Miro, Eugenio Cambaceres, and Eduardo Gutiérrez are known as the major novelists of 19th-century Argentina. Among newly established Spanish American countries, Argentina achieved political stability earlier, and the country's economy came under the control of wealthy individuals. The reflection of the economy appeared in the literary field as well. The development of press, publishing houses, libraries, and literary institutions motivated professional writers. *La gran aldea* by Lucio V. López discusses the transformation of Buenos Aires over twenty years. Julio, the protagonist of the novel, as an outsider, cannot adjust to the "priggish pseudo-patriotic and militarized society of his childhood nor with the bourgeois civilian and materialistic society of his adulthood" (Benítez-Rojo 469). The novel is a supreme example of costumbrismo.

The costumbrista trend appeared in Colombia after 1850, and Eugenio Díaz's novel *Manuela* is a perfect example of this trend. Set in a small village in Bogotá in 1856, *Manuela* is the story of a U.S.-educated young scholar and an uneducated local woman, Manuela. Demóstenes, the scholar, dissatisfied by the political turmoil in the city, packs his things and goes to the village to radicalize the villagers. At that time, Colombia was in a tri-part confrontation among Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals. In the village, the people do not understand Demóstenes, and Manuela triumphs over Demóstenes' bookish knowledge. The novel, thus, gives significance to the primitive knowledge and experience of the local people.

By 1830, when most of the Spanish areas of South America had gained independence from Spain, the idea of separatism did not gain support from local Creoles in Cuba because, as Benítez-Rojo understands, "the white Creoles thought a revolution of this kind could easily turn into a racial war" (440). The Creoles were afraid of the large number of black slaves on the island, and they feared that it

could turn into a black republic like Haiti. They wanted Cuba to remain white-dominant and gradually freed the black slaves, replacing them with cheap white laborers from Europe. Though not in favor of separatism, the creators and writers wanted certain autonomy on the island, and intellectual production was directed in that direction. Poet and critic Domingo Delmante started a private tertulia (a kind of club) for writing and publishing. Out of six renowned novelists in nineteenth-century Cuba, four of them belonged to Delmante's tertulia. The novelists Ramón de Palma y Romay (1812-1860), Cirilo Villaverde (1812-1894), José Antonio Echeverría (1815-1885), Anselmo Suárez y Romero (1818-1878), Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, and José Ramón de Betancourt (1823-1890) all wrote about Cuba and her people. Cirilo Villaverde, according to Benítez-Rojo, "was the most prolific and important storyteller of Delmante's group" (442). Villaverde was an erudite person, who had read preceding and contemporary European novelists. Along with the influence of European novels, in Benítez-Rojo's views, there is a "strong impact of costumbrista writers" (443). Villaverde's characters are like real people from Habana.

Realist Novels

Sometimes, it is very difficult to determine which particular form a novel belongs to because Romanticism, historiography, and realism often overlap in nineteenth-century Spanish American novels. Spanish Americans borrowed many elements from European literature, especially regarding novel writing. After independence, many Spanish American writers visited Europe and tried to introduce European literary fashions to their new lands. Some imitated Scott, others Balzac, and some even emulated Zola. Regarding the nature of realism in Spanish American novels, George Antony Thomas remarks, "It is important to recognize that Spanish American realism was part of the European tradition, although it was conditioned by American realities" (56). The novels written in nineteenth-century Spanish America served particular purposes, and according to Thomas, "European realism further influenced the development of nation-building novels" (56). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, like historical novels and costumbrista novels, realist novels also played a role in strengthening nationality and establishing national identity.

Jose Victorino Lastarria, Manuel Bilbao, and Alberto Blest Gana were three major novelists in nineteenth-century Chile. As the country was slowly entering the realm of literary scholarship after independence, Lastarria founded the Literary Society in Chile in 1842 and outlined the nature of Chilean literature in his inaugural speech. According to Benitez-Rojo, Lastarria honored Bello for enriching the Spanish language, Sarmiento for giving social orientation to literature, and both for referencing the nation, its history, and customs in literature. Lastarria's short story "El Medingo" deals with the life of a provincial youth. The most influential Chilean novelist was Alberto Blest Gana (1830–1920). The author of novels like *La aritmética en el amor, El pago de las deudas, Martin Rivas*, and *El ideal de lin Calavera*, Blest Gana's works are thoroughly realistic. His novels focus on urban and middle-class society, with an emphasis on money and the changing moral codes. Commenting on Gana's novels, Benitez-Rojo remarks, "Money is desired in order to dress elegantly, shine in social gatherings, possess mansions and luxurious furniture, eat and drink well, flirt and have lovers..." (455). Blest Gana was influenced by the French novelist Balzac in his interpretation of money and pleasure.

The black people and the indigenous population felt the significance of independence in Peru during the early decades, as black slavery was abolished outright after independence and the Indian tribute system was gradually abolished. However, deep down, Peru was not transformed into a prosperous

nation. Soon, the oligarchy of landowners and entrepreneurs held control of the economy. The railroad network burdened the country with foreign debt, and the war with Chile resulted in the loss of coastal regions producing guano and nitrate. The most influential Peruvian intellectual in the later part of the nineteenth century, Manuel González Prada, criticized the government-oligarchy relationship and argued that the education and social improvement of the indigenous people were essential to uplift the nation. Clorinda Matto de Turner wrote the novel *Aves sin nido* (Birds Without a Nest), set in the Andes with numerous characters from indigenous backgrounds, written to expose the deplorable treatment of indigenous people by their Peruvian landlords. The novel advocated for the education of indigenous people "as a means of integrating the nation while denouncing at the same time the immorality of the institutions which regulated the Indians' lives" (Benitez-Rojo 486). Similarly, Wade and Archer view the novelist as "boldly realistic in her condemnation of village bosses and priests" (211). Two other novelists, Narciso Aresteguí and Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, also wrote novels of national consciousness. Cabello de Carbonera's serial urban novels contributed to spreading positivist ideas among the audience.

Argentine novelist José María Miró published *La bolsa* under the pseudonym Julián Martel in 1891. *La bolsa* tells the story of a lawyer's rise and fall. Dr. Glow, a celebrated lawyer, becomes rich through stock market investments but falls into poverty when the market crashes. Finally, the bankrupt lawyer goes mad and believes he is constantly threatened by a monster—none other than the stock market itself. Ericka Beckman comments on the novel's depiction of Dr. Glow's rise and fall, "Glow's prosperity, the novel notes from the chapter, is not meant to last: after depicting the free-flowing, easy money of the stock market boom, the novel follows him down the 'maelstrom' stock market" (21). The novelist's purpose was to show how people suffer in the race for easy money. Eduardo Gutiérrez wrote more than 35 novels, which were published by prestigious newspapers. His work contributed enormously to spreading a very different image of the Argentine nation to the humble sectors of society, including immigrants. Benitez-Rojo characterizes Gutiérrez as a pure realist nationalist writer.

La Emancipada (The Emancipation) was the first novel written in Ecuador during the ultra-conservative dictatorship of Gabriel García Moreno. It can be read as an allegory for the liberal alternative rule in the country, advocating "the equality of women within the nation" (Benitez-Rojo 460). La Emancipada tells the story of a woman who revolts against her father's decision for her marriage to an old man and follows an independent life. To survive in a male-dominated society, she dresses as a man. *Cumanda* by Juan León Mera was admired by contemporary readers and critics. León was a follower of García Moreno, and he tried to justify his dictatorship by giving an intellectual rationale, relating it to the missionary activities of the Jesuits in the eighteenth century, arguing that they were necessary for the wellbeing of the country, just as the Jesuits were in 18th-century Americas.

Eduardo Acevedo's Ismael, Carlos Reyles' Beba, and Javier de Viana's Gaucho were three major realist novels written in Uruguay at the turn of the century. These writers, who had lived through civil wars and military dictatorship, wrote about their nation, suggesting ways for its betterment. According to Benitez-Rojo, these writers believed that the novel "should contribute to the development of national consciousness" (474). *Ismael,* Díaz's best novel, is both a historical and political work advocating for the federalist cause. Reyles' Beba and Viana's Gaucho offer different depictions of the country. Benitez-Rojo explains this difference: "In reading Beba by Carlos Reyles and Gaucho by Javier de Viana, the reader has the impression of being in a different country than the one portrayed by Acevedo

Díaz" (475-6). The differing perspectives of these novelists resulted from their social and economic backgrounds, as well as their attitudes toward their country.

The last decades of Venezuela were marked by military dictatorship and confrontation between the military regime and conservatives. This period of dictatorship was characterized by authoritarianism and corruption. The most important Venezuelan novelist of this period was González Rincón Febres, whose novels *Fidelia, Nieve y lodo,* and *El Sargento Felipe* are considered his best works. The action of *El Sargento Felipe* takes place during the dictatorship of Guzmán Blanco, and the novel portrays how the dictator's army crushed the rebellion of conservatives. The novel also describes life in the countryside, with coffee farms, cows, and livestock breeding. Benitez-Rojo comments on the novel: "He takes the side of the rural peasants, who have been and will continue to be the losers, regardless of which strongman emerges victorious" (487). The novel seems pessimistic and conveys the message that the people in Venezuela will never be liberated from power-hungry rulers.

Naturalistic Novels

Most of the novelists in Spanish America in the second half of the nineteenth century appeared to be influenced by realism; however, towards the end of the century, the influence of the naturalistic school began to be seen in some writers. Realism in Spanish America should not be understood as a mere Xerox copy of the European model, but rather in relation to the local conditions. According to Antonio M. de la Torre, Spanish American realism presented the social problems of the young republics as reflected in the upper levels of society, and naturalism did the same. He defines naturalism in the Spanish American context: "The naturalistic novelist was also typically a member of the upper social levels, but in his search for a character to be studied as a genuine product of environment, he got away from the cosmopolitan upper classes and found his ideal character among the colorful humbler folk" (147). In contrast to realist novelists, Torre argues, the naturalistic novelists focused on the lives of common people.

Eugenio Cambaceres, a follower of the French novelist Zola, introduced naturalist fiction to Argentina. An educated and wealthy individual, Cambaceres caused a scandal among the upper class of Buenos Aires with his novel *Pot-Pourri*. Commenting on the novel, Benitez-Rojo writes, "Cambaceres criticizes the hypocrisy of politics and marriage; for him social life is undermined by lies, opportunism, and immorality" (471). In his next novel, *Música Sentimental*, Cambaceres imitates Zola's model. The action of the novel takes place in Paris, where the main character, Pablo, falls in love with both a countess and a prostitute named Loulou simultaneously. The count dies in a duel with Pablo, and Pablo dies of syphilis infection, while the prostitute continues working in the brothel, aborting Pablo's child. It is the characters' environment and their physical drives that shape their actions. Two more of Cambaceres' novels, *Sin rumbo* and *En la sangre*, are also well-known. Writing about social values, customs, and mores, Cambaceres also registered his name among the group of costumbrista writers.

After independence, Uruguay suffered from devastating civil wars and a confrontation between the Blancos (federalists) and the Colorados (centralists). This conflict led to the military dictatorship of Lorenzo Latorre, which lasted until 1890. It was during the 1890s that some important novels were written in Uruguay. Eduardo Acevedo Díaz wrote seven novels, among which three stood out: *Soledad*, *Ismael*, and *El grito del Gloria* and *Lanza y sable*. *Soledad* tells the story of an ostracized gaucho who has a clandestine love affair with the daughter of a wealthy rancher. Most of the minor characters are

from the upper-class society, but the novelist chose a gaucho as the hero. Calling it a true naturalist novel, Torre writes, "What better subject could a naturalistic novelist find for the study of a man as a product of a given environment than the colorful Argentine and Uruguayan cowboy, that proud and indomitable master of the pampas..." (148). Díaz made a daring effort to present a cowboy as the hero of the novel, a choice not often expected during that period.

Conclusion

To sum up, the 19th-century Spanish American novel played a crucial role in shaping national identities through its exploration of historical events, social structures, and indigenous themes. By blending fiction with historical narratives, these novels both challenged colonial legacies and reimagined the future of the emerging republics, contributing to the ongoing discourse on nationhood and cultural identity in Spanish America. The costumbrista novel emerged as a vital literary form in 19th-century Spanish America, reflecting the social customs, struggles, and cultural dynamics of everyday life. Through vivid depictions of common people and their environments, these works contributed to a deeper understanding of national identity and the complex realities of post-independence societies. The realist novel in 19th-century Spanish America became an essential tool for exploring social issues, national identity, and the realities of post-independence societies. Writers across the region used realism to reflect on the complexities of economic, political, and social changes, ultimately contributing to the formation of national consciousness and the development of distinct literary traditions. Finally, the influence of naturalism in late 19th-century Spanish American literature brought a shift in focus from the upper classes to the marginalized and common people, reflecting their environments and struggles. Writers like Cambaceres and Díaz challenged societal norms, using the naturalist approach to critique social systems and explore the darker sides of human nature shaped by environment and heredity.

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Anti-romance in *Arms and the Man*

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Abstract

This study examines and interprets Arms and the Man through the lens of anti-romanticism and literary realism, focusing on how Shaw dismantles the idealized views of love and war. In contrast to the Victorian Age's romanticization of these themes, Shaw defies traditional romantic ideals by revealing the truths they obscure. Through characters like Sergius, who embodies conventional heroism, Shaw portrays society's superficial valorization of war, where soldiers receive the status of noble heroes. Sergius's grandiose actions embody society's naïve view of war as an honorable, almost theatrical pursuit. However, Shaw introduces Bluntschli, a Swiss mercenary whose realistic views expose the disillusionment underlying such heroism. Bluntschli, who prioritizes survival over glory, carries chocolates instead of ammunition, embodying a soldier's natural inclination to preserve life rather than sacrifice it for abstract ideals. Similarly, Shaw critiques romanticized love through the relationship between Raina and Sergius. Initially, Sergius's heroic ideal captivates Raina, but her encounters with Bluntschli awaken her to a pragmatic view of love. Disillusioned by Sergius's bravado, she ultimately gravitates toward Bluntschli, symbolizing her rejection of romantic ideals. By elevating Bluntschli, the play's anti-hero, Shaw redefines the qualities worth admiring in individuals, shifting focus from empty heroism to grounded realism. This study employs a qualitative approach to reveal Shaw's complex portrayal of human relationships, challenging audiences to reconsider the alluring but deceptive nature of romantic ideals.

Introduction

This paper examines and postulates George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (*AM*) that challenges the hollow romantic notions of love and war. Through its characters and plot, Shaw introduces the futility of war and humorously addresses the hypocrisies of human nature. Known for his critique of romanticized ideals, Shaw's opposition to these notions begins in *AM*. Ward introduces the play's purpose by asserting, "the play has two themes: one is war, the other is marriage. These themes are interwoven, for Shaw believed that while war is evil and stupid, and marriage desirable and good, both had become wrapped in romantic illusions, which led to disastrous wars and also to unhappy marriages" (85). Thus,

Shaw portrays the play as anti-romantic and didactic, discouraging naïve engagement in love or war by exposing the unrealistic expectations attached to these ideals. As Shaw himself claims, "I do not accept the conventional ideals; to them I oppose in the play the practical life and morals of the efficient, realist man, unaffectedly ready to face what risks must be faced, considerate but not chivalrous, patient and practical" (qtd. in Laurence 427). Shaw's *AM* thus challenges romanticized life, presenting it as picturesque and heroic but ultimately misleading.

Shaw's inspiration for such anti-romantic themes largely stems from Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian dramatist who pioneers modern realistic drama. Ibsen's works, including *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, heighten awareness of social issues and reshapes audience expectations. As Daiches asserts, "Shaw's study of Ibsen presented the Norwegian dramatist as the exponent of reforming naturalism with the emphasis on the prose social plays" (1104). While Ibsen focuses on characters and their actions, Shaw prioritizes ideas, creating plays that explore natural morality rather than romantic ideals. His works often contain extensive prefaces, detailed stage directions, and character speeches that advance his social critique. These early didactic plays such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *The Devil's Disciple*, and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, address pressing social issues of Shaw's time, including, in *AM*, the illusions surrounding war.

Shaw borrows the title *AM* from Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*, which begins with, "Of arms and the man I sing, who forced by fate, / And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate" (1). While Virgil glorifies war and heroism, Shaw subverts this by satirizing the romanticized view of heroism in war. Through Sergius, a figure portrays as heroic but later reveals as foolish in *AM*, Shaw mocks not only on war but also on the glamorization of valor and courage. Nayar observes, "Arms and the Man focused on war as a theme" (368), noting Shaw's critique of romantic illusions about war, which he replaces with a more realistic and often unflattering portrayal of soldiers. By showing soldier Bluntschli's pragmatic approach in the play, including his decision to carry chocolates instead of ammunition, Shaw de-romanticizes the idea of the noble soldier, stripping it of its idealized sheen.

AM opens on a scene that blends heroism with satire, as Raina learns of Sergius's cavalry charge in the Serbo-Bulgarian war. Initially awes by Sergius's supposed heroics, Raina's views begin to shift as the play exposes the hollowness of such romantic ideals. *AM* ultimately reveals that Sergius, the so-called hero of Slivnitza, deserves not praise but criticism for his actions. Shaw's play is an "anti-romantic comedy"—a work that overturns the familiar tropes of heroism, sacrifice, and romantic love. By presenting love and relationships as idealized and often transactional, *AM* critique the unrealistic portrayals of both romantic and martial heroism. Shaw frames the play as both a comedy and a critique, satirizing romantic illusions about love and war rather than glorifying them.

Shaw's *AM* faces criticism for its anti-romantic ideals. Smith asserts, "Shaw's Arms and the Man serves as a prime example of anti-romance in drama, challenging romanticized notions of war and love through satire and wit" (45). This perspective highlights Shaw's satirical approach, which mocks the conventional glorification of war and romantic relationships by exposing their unrealistic foundations. Brown adduces, "the play strategically undermines romantic conventions to convey a more nuanced and critical perspective on societal expectations" (12). Through humor and irony, Shaw encourages audiences to question traditional views on heroism and love, especially within the Victorian context. *AM* does more than simply entertain—it dismantles the ideals of love and war, offering a practical and grounded vision of relationships and heroism rather than one rooted in fantasy.

Statement of the Problem

In *AM*, the primary characters embody romantic ideals akin to those found in the works of Byron and Pushkin, highlighting notions of heroism, love, and honour. However, Shaw, influenced by Henrik Ibsen's commitment to realism, presents a contrasting perspective by weaving anti-romantic elements throughout the play. This study examines Shaw's portrayal of these anti-romantic elements as a critique of the Victorian Age's dominant romantic ideals, which often glamorize war and romanticize love without regard for the harsher realities of human nature and society. By analyzing Shaw's divergence from these ideals, the study aims to explore how *AM* reflects Shaw's broader vision of realism as a means of challenging and deconstructing romanticized heroism and relationships.

Research Questions

This study centers on the following research questions:
(a) How does Shaw use anti-romantic elements to challenge traditional ideals of romance and heroism in *AM*?
(b) In what ways does Shaw incorporate aspects of literary realism to frame *AM* as an anti-romantic comedy?

Objectives

This research attempts to draw the following objectives:
(a) To explore anti-romantic elements to challenge traditional ideals of romance and heroism in *AM*.
(b) To analyze Shaw's aspects of literary realism to frame *AM* as an anti- romantic comedy.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to research to examine the elements of anti-romance in *AM*. It employs literary realism as a genre to define anti-romance of the Victorian Age. This genre avoids speculative fiction, supernatural elements, and artistic conventions. It portrays objective reality, and depicts banal activities and experiences. This research considers *AM* as a primary source of the study. The book-reviews, commentaries, academic journals, literary criticisms, online resources, etc. constitute its secondary sources of the study. It employs thematic analysis to analyze the sources of the research. It uses a systematic approach to coding and categorizing the sources to ensure the rigour of the analysis. It compares the findings from the analysis of primary and secondary sources, to enhance the reliability of the study.

Limitations of the Study

This research primarily focuses on the text of *AM*, limiting its scope to an analysis of anti-romantic themes within this single play. As such, the findings and interpretations may not be directly applicable to Shaw's broader body of work, where themes, characterizations, and styles may diverge significantly. The study's analytical framework does not extend to Shaw's other plays or his general philosophies on romance, realism, or social criticism.

Furthermore, while the research briefly references the Victorian Age to highlight the romantic ideals challenged in *AM*, it explores its historical context superficially. The study does not provide an in-depth examination of the Victorian cultural backdrop, nor does it analyze how specific societal expectations or literary norms of that era might have influenced Shaw's anti-romantic approach.

Additionally, this research does not address how *AM*'s anti-romantic themes resonate with modern audiences or intersect with contemporary discussions of romance, gender, and social norms. By focusing solely on the textual analysis, the study does not consider Shaw's reception in the modern era or the play's potential relevance to today's societal debates.

Finally, this research acknowledges the interpretations of anti-romance vary widely among scholars, and the conclusions presented here reflect only one perspective within a broader academic conversation. Therefore, this study's findings should be viewed as an interpretive, rather than definitive, analysis of anti-romantic elements within *AM*. The following discussions likely to meet the objectives of this research paper.

Raina Petkoff and Sergius Saranoff: Their Romantic Notions

The play begins with Raina Petkoff, a young Bulgarian woman, standing on her balcony to enjoy the night and gazing upon the snowy Balkans. Here, the theme of romance quickly emerges, as the notions of heroism and honor tie to war captivates Raina. When her mother, Catherine, brings news of the recent Serbo-Bulgarian conflict, Raina learns that her fiancé, Sergius Saranoff leads a successful cavalry charge. This victory reinforces her image of Sergius as the epitome of heroism. Shaw explores her view by likening Sergius to "a knight in a tournament with his lady looking down at him!" (34). For Raina, Sergius embodies her "hero" and "king" (Shaw 34), while he, in turn, idealizes her as his "queen" and speaks of their relationship as a "higher love" (Shaw 34). Together, they inhabit a shared fantasy, shaped by ideals and fueled by romantic influences from literature, including Byron's *Childe Harold* and the poetry of Ruskin. As their dialogue unfolds, Shaw's choice of language and metaphors further emphasizes their mutual adoration. For instance, Sergius exclaims, "Let me be the worshipper, dear. You little know how unworthy even the best man is of a girl's pure passion!" (34). This metaphor of worship reveals Sergius's inflated view of their bond, suggesting that he perceives love as a near-spiritual pursuit. Raina reciprocates, pledging her unwavering trust: "I trust you. I love you. You will never disappoint me, Sergius" (Shaw 34). Yet, amidst their lofty declarations, they reveal a shared disconnection from reality—both characters build their relationship on romanticized ideals rather than grounded experiences.

Shaw employs the idealized romance between Sergius and Raina to critique the exaggerated societal perceptions of heroism, which often glamorizes bravery and nobility while overlooking practical realities. Through references to the Byronic hero—a figure marked by arrogance, sophistication, and a tendency toward self-destruction—Shaw invites the audience to question the authenticity of such romantic ideals. As the play progresses, the researcher witness Raina's gradual awakening to this disconnect, particularly when she meets Bluntschli. His entrance serves as a pivotal moment in Raina's journey. Unlike Sergius, his pragmatic and straightforward view of war challenges Raina's beliefs. His practical outlook stands in direct contrast to the ideals that Raina holds, highlighting the divide between romance and realism. Through her interactions with Bluntschli, Raina confronts the limitations of her fantasy, setting the stage for her transformation as she grapples with the more realistic approach that he embodies.

Intrusion of Reality: Disillusionment

The romantic illusions between Raina and Bluntschli quickly shatter upon their first encounter with reality. Raina declares to Sergius, "Our romance is shattered. Life's a farce" (Shaw 65). Realism intrudes in the form of Captain Bluntschli, a pragmatic Swiss mercenary fighting in the Serbian army, who climbs into Raina's bedroom seeking shelter from Bulgarian soldiers. Bluntschli, a figure of anti-romantic ideals, carries no illusions about war; he brings the "naked truth" before Raina, dispelling her idealized views of heroism. Holding her at gunpoint, he bluntly asserts, "If I'm caught I shall be killed" (Shaw 9), showing that he prioritizes survival, not glory. When Raina attempts to uphold her romanticized view by stating, "Some soldiers, I know, are afraid to death" (Shaw 9), he replies, "all of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can" (Shaw 9). This sentiment, groundbreaking at the time, prefigures the modern disillusionment with war and introduces a tone of anti-romantic revelation that continues throughout the play.

Bluntschli further reveals his motivations as a soldier, making it clear to Raina that he participates in war as a professional, not as a patriotic. "I'm a professional soldier: I fight when I have to, and am very glad to get out of it when I haven't to" (Shaw 65). His practicality becomes even more apparent as he confides in Raina, "What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead" (Shaw 13). Bluntschli's priorities of survival and sustenance over arms dismantle Raina's romanticized ideas of war, illustrating the stark reality of a soldier's need to prioritize survival over heroism. He even remarks disparagingly on the intelligence of most soldiers, saying, "nine soldiers out of ten are born fools" (Shaw 11), indirectly hinting that even her military hero Sergius falls into this category. Through this candid, pragmatic lens, Raina's romantic ideals of war begin to unravel.

Bluntschli also critiques Sergius's notion of heroism, ridiculing Sergius's military blunders mask as bravery. Sergius prides himself on leading a dramatic cavalry charge, unawares of the fact that his success in it becomes possible due to a logistical error on the enemy's part, as they have been supplied with incorrect ammunition. Bluntschli's commentary exposes the folly rather than the heroism in Sergius's actions, which Purdom aptly describes as "unconsciously but devastatingly" (159) dismantling Raina's cherished ideals. This encounter eventually leads Sergius himself to a bitter disillusionment, as he realizes soldiering as merely a trade like any other. He ultimately defines war as "the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak... Get your enemy at a disadvantage and never on any account fight him on equal terms" (Shaw 47). Disenchanted, Sergius resigns from his military post, telling Catherine that he has "no ambition to shine as a tradesman" (Shaw 48). Disillusioned with the nature of military service, Sergius resigns, explaining to Catherine that he has no desire to pursue soldiering as merely a transactional occupation.

In the end, both Raina and Sergius, once enthralled by romantic ideals, reject their initial plans to marry each other. Instead, they align with more realistic partners—Sergius with Louka, the practical and perceptive servant, and Raina with Bluntschli, the consummate realist. Through these unions, Shaw critiques the allure of romantic ideals, presenting instead a pragmatic, realistic view of relationships and human motives.

The Exposure of the Heroic

Shaw's *AM* centers on exposing the superficiality of conventional heroism, challenging traditional ideals of bravery and honor. Through characters and events, Shaw satirizes the romanticized notions of heroism and war that were widely accepted in society at the time. For instance, Bluntschli, the play's unconventional hero, embodies pragmatism and realism rather than traditional valor. He prioritizes practicality and survival over ideals like honor or glory. Rather than attempting a dramatic escape, Bluntschli seeks refuge in Raina's bedroom, which starkly contrasts with the romantic expectations of a soldier's bravery. Raina's label for him as a "chocolate cream soldier" (Shaw 44) itself satirizes society's unrealistic expectations of heroism, underscoring Shaw's critique of these shallow ideals.

In addition to exposing the romantic heroism, Shaw's play explores the idealized notions of love, as in the disillusionment of Raina and Sergius. Sergius struggles to reconcile his romanticized love with the reality of his relationship with Raina. It leads him to flirt with Louka as a means of finding the genuine connection he craves. For him, Louka's love feels more authentic. Similarly, Raina turns to Bluntschli, draws to him not because of his profession as a soldier but because of his honesty and practicality. Unlike Sergius, who remains tangle in illusions, Bluntschli faces reality head-on. By interacting with him, Raina begins to see through the romanticized aura surrounding Sergius, ultimately recognizing the flaws in her idealized views on heroism and love.

Shaw's Anti-romantic Intentions: Distortion of Reality

AM presents the truths of life-specifically about love and war—not merely through a realistic lens, but with a distinctly anti-romantic perspective. Rather than adhering to simple realism, Shaw heightens reality to reveal its underlying contradictions, pushing the boundaries of credibility to challenge conventional ideals. His anti-romantic stance goes beyond straightforward representation; in some moments, it verges on the unbelievable. For instance, while a soldier in famine might logically seek food, Bluntschli's craving for chocolates seem an unexpected twist, introducing a sense of absurdity that undercuts the traditional expectations of heroism.

Furthermore, Shaw employs Raina's character to illustrate the shift from fantasy to reality. Her encounters with Bluntschli prompt a re-evaluation of her values, challenging her to confront the real over the romanticized. Through Raina, Shaw navigates the tension between idealized visions of love and war and the harsher truths of life. Her developing attachment to Bluntschli disrupts societal norms, questioning both heroism and the authenticity of romantic ideals. The play, as a result, encourages a more practical and honest view of both love and war, replacing the fantasies of heroism with grounded perspectives.

Additionally, Shaw makes a study of romantic conventions in relationships. He finds how love often follows certain pattern, while reality does not need any ideality. While characters like Sergius and Raina might naturally end up together in a romantic tale, Shaw subverts this by hinting at Sergius's attraction to Louka, suggesting that real-life relationships don't always align with romantic ideals. Similarly, Shaw exaggerates to humorous effect when he portrays a soldier failing to notice a visible pistol, only to have Louka, a maid without military training, spot it immediately. These intentional

exaggerations further show anti-romantic intentions, compelling the audience to re-evaluate conventional ideals and embrace a more pragmatic view of heroism, love, and war.

The Note of Romance

Shaw portrays Raina and Sergius as embodying heightened romantic ideals, which the play both exaggerates and scrutinizes. It opens in an atmosphere reminiscent of romantic melodrama, fills with thrilling sensations, gunfire, and the classic trope of fugitives and pursuers. Raina, in particular, romanticizes war and heroism, seeing Sergius as her "ideal hero" (Shaw 29) following his cavalry charge in the Serbo-Bulgarian war. She worships him as a noble war figure. However, her perception shifts dramatically after an encounter with Bluntschli in her bedroom, as he reveals to her the unglamorous realities of war, challenging her previously cherished ideals.

Sergius, on the other hand, clings to chivalric notions of bravery and honor, seeking to embody the traditional image of a heroic soldier. He performs extravagant acts, such as leading a cavalry charge with a saber, as proof of his valour. His romantic notions also extend to his relationship with Raina, where he expects an idealized love. Yet, these expectations frequently clash with the complexities of real human connections. Shaw employs irony and satire in Sergius's character, using his exaggerated actions to explore society's unrealistic expectations of military heroes. Despite Sergius's valour, his character often serves as a humorous commentary on the artificiality of romanticized heroism. Through Sergius, Shaw underscores the impracticality of adhering rigidly to chivalric ideals in the face of modern realities.

Both Raina's and Sergius's ideals come under Shaw's satirical lens, exposing a contrast between romantic illusions and worldly realities. This contrast serves as a critique of the authenticity of the heroic and romantic narratives that influence human behavior. Shaw uses their characters to question conventional views of love and heroism popular in his society, exploring the tension between idealism and the more pragmatic aspects of war and relationships. Interestingly, Shaw includes a "note of romance" in Bluntschli as well, despite his otherwise realistic disposition. Bluntschli, unlike Raina and Sergius, recognizes his own faults in a candid, self-aware manner. He asserts:

> I, a commonplace Swiss soldier who hardly knows what a decent life is after fifteen years of barracks and battles: a vagabond, a man who has spoiled all his chances in life through an incurably romantic disposition, a man—I ran away from home twice when I was a boy. I went into the army instead of into my father's business. I climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar. I came sneaking back here to have another look at the young lady when any other man of my age would have sent the coat back. (Shaw 73)

Here, Bluntschli's admission of his "incurably romantic disposition" reveals his own susceptibility to idealism, yet he approaches it with a practical humor absent in Raina and Sergius. Raina's reaction to Bluntschli's self-awareness is also telling; she playfully refers to him as a "romantic idiot" and remarks, "Next time, I hope you will know the difference between a schoolgirl of seventeen and a woman of twenty-three" (Shaw 74). Bluntschli's wry acceptance of his own romantic inclinations offers a foil to Raina's earlier idealism, as he initially mistakes her for a naïve schoolgirl when, in fact, she is

a mature young woman of twenty-three. Through these contrasts, Shaw highlights the irony and complexity of romantic ideals and their intersection with real life.

Shaw's Satires on Romantic Ideals of Life

AM demonstrates traditional notions of heroism and love, using satire to question romantic ideals and conventions. First, Shaw addresses the concept of "higher love" between Raina and Sergius, exposing its superficiality. Though outwardly engaged, Sergius betrays this ideal by secretly courting Louka. In his attempts to woo her, he praises her as "witty as well as pretty" (Shaw 36) and ultimately follows her suggestions to meet in a secluded place "where we can't be seen" (Shaw 36), moving with her into the stable yard gateway. Through this behavior, Shaw highlights Sergius's divergence from romantic ideals, as he pursues an affair with Louka while supposedly committed to Raina. This hidden romance does not escape Raina's notice; she later confronts Sergius, saying, "you were with her this morning all that time" (Shaw 65). Thus, Shaw presents Sergius as estranged from the ideals of faithful, lofty love.

Similarly, Shaw portrays Raina as distancing herself from Sergius in favour of Bluntschli, whom she finds more aligned with her evolving perspective on love and war. When Raina realizes the stark realities of war through her interactions with Bluntschli, her affections subtly shift. Louka even hints at this shift to Sergius, commenting, "gentlefolk are all alike: you making love to me behind Miss Raina's back; and she doing the same behind yours" (Shaw 36). With this statement, Louka suggests that romantic deceptions are common among the upper class, positioning them as betrayers of love. She then warns Sergius, "Miss Raina will marry him, whether he likes it or not" (Shaw 37), hinting at Raina's intentions to pursue a relationship with Bluntschli. This remark reflects both Louka's desire to critique romantic notions and her own aspirations to elevate her social standing by aligning with Sergius.

The resulting tensions lead Sergius to question his own beliefs, as he exclaims to Raina, "Oh, what sort of god is this I have been worshipping!" (Shaw 65). Through these exchanges, Shaw exposes "higher love" as an illusion, tarnished by betrayal and self-interest. This romantic ideal, once perceived as noble, is ultimately reduced to a world of artifice and self-serving desires. Raina's eventual choice to marry Bluntschli reflects her embrace of his realistic approach to life, rejecting the illusions that initially defined her relationship with Sergius. In this way, Shaw contrasts romantic ideals with practicality, revealing the fragility of conventional notions of love when confronted with reality.

Conclusion

In *AM*, the researcher identifies and examines the anti-romantic elements through Shaw's realist lens on love and war. By dismantling traditional romantic ideals, Shaw exposes the truths hidden behind the facades of romance and respectability. Instead of glorifying war, he unearths its horrors and the folly of romanticized notions of heroism. Love, as Shaw presents it, is neither an idealized fantasy nor a transcendent ideal but rather a grounded, complex reality. Marital union, as he suggests, requires no embellishment. Additionally, Shaw exposes the supposed glory of war and soldiers' heroism, portraying these concepts as illusions that lead only to destruction and suffering. Sergius, initially celebrated as a hero, ultimately emerges as a foolish and easily manipulated figure, while the play elevates humaneness above militaristic valour. Further emphasizing the instinct of self-preservation, Shaw explores soldiers'

concerns lie less in achieving glory than in ensuring survival. Through Bluntschli, who opts to carry chocolates over cartridges, Shaw illustrates man's vulnerability and the natural prioritization of life over heroics. This study underscores how Shaw's realism redefines heroism, proposing a perspective that values human resilience over empty valour. Finally, this examination opens avenues for further research in other literary contexts where similar discussions on realism and anti-romanticism engage audiences and challenge conventional views.

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Crossing the Boundaries: The Traditions of Kumaon and Nepal in Kumaoni Literature

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Abstract

Kumaon is a region located at the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand. It shares not only a boundary with Nepal but also a long cultural history that dates to the Doti kingdom. The paper proposes to look at the history of their shared traditions and the current changing environment of the region due to the immense rate of out-migration leading to the formation of several 'ghost villages' (i.e. villages with zero population) and its literary representation. The primary cause of migration is economic deprivation in the hills due to lack of employment. In tandem with the economic deprivation, the agrarian economy of the region is also faltering due to the climactic changes. Deeply embedded in Kumaoni and Nepali culture is the love and reverence towards nature. However, various factors like ill-planned construction of dams are disturbing the ecological and cultural balance. Agriculture depends upon rainfall that has become quite irregular due to the recent ecological imbalance, which is also driving wild animals out of their habitat and becoming a threat for human beings. Since Nepali-Kumaoni culture is centred on community, a community not just of humans but both human and non-human, the non-human does not stay untouched by the effect of migration and unplanned development. Thus, the cultural loss does not entail only the human's way of living but also the loss of flora and fauna. Through Neil Evernden's idea of "interrelatedness" and Christopher Manes' idea of nature as a speaking subject, I argue that the ecocentric Nepali-Kumaoni culture is a part of the "self" of the Kumaonis and Nepalis which is suffering from dissociation.

Keywords: Borderland literature, ecocentrism, liminality, orality, migration, Kumaoni-Nepali culture, collective memory, and anthropocene

Introduction

Much work has been done on the cultural unity of Kumaon and Garhwal prior to the formation of the independent state of Uttarakhand in 2000. However, the cultural unity of Kumaon and Nepal has eluded scholarly attention. The paper explores the transnational phenomenon of cultural amalgamation in the Uttarakhand-Sudurpaschim border and its literary representation in Kumaoni literature. The paper traces the history of the Katyuri kingdom, throwing light on Kumaon-Doti relationship, racticee on their shared culture. This will be done through the analysis of oral and written narratives indicating a shared

collective memory. Along with shared culture and tradition, these regions along the border also face similar predicaments. The environmental impact of migration and (ill)development plans is looming on the Himalayan region. The 'money order economy' of this hilly region is not only distancing its inhabitants from their homeland but also from their culture causing a schism in their sense of self.

Historiographic Analysis:

While exploring Kumaon-Nepal as a single cultural unit, the paper first lays down the definition of the term "culture." The term 'culture' has a widespread use in our quotidian life. It is hurled as a slang to call someone "uncultured" or a biological sense of cultivation of bacteria or as a heritage that one needs to preserve through cultural heritage programmes or as a lifestyle of a particular group, for example, "It's in their culture to bow before an elder." Raymond Williams investigates the etymology of the term "culture" in his essay "'Culture' and 'Masses'" where he proposes that "The fw is cultura, L, from rw colere, L. Colere had a range of meanings: inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship" (Williams 1). The primary connotation of the term "cultura" is cultivation or tending. It is a noun of process, a process of tending crops or animals. Later the meaning of tending extended from the natural growth to a process of human development. Currently there are primarily three broad usages of the term "culture." The first is an abstract independent noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development. The second is an independent noun that indicates a particular way of life of a group (be it a group of people or a period.) The third usage of the term culture is again an abstract independent noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. The third usage is the most widespread use of the term culture that connotes music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre, and film. The meaning of the word "culture" is still evolving. Like the active history of the word "culture," the term "culture" itself is evolving in nature. In this paper, Kumaoni-Nepali culture denotes an amalgamation of the given three usages of the term. Kumaoni-Nepali culture is a particular way of living in the hills. It is also a process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development. The most obvious among all is the Kumaoni and Nepali works of art like Kumaoni and Nepali music, folk performances that entails Kumaoni and Nepali folklore, folk dance, and folk spiritual practices, Kumaoni and Nepali literature etc.

A culture is shaped by the socio-political and geographical realities of the region. Thus, a study of the political history of Kumaon and Sudurpaschim region becomes necessary to this research. The Kuninda dynasty of the Indo-Aryan region sought domination in the Central Himalaya circa 500 BC. They ruled for several centuries Kuninda dynasty becoming a socio-political entity. As quoted by M.P. Joshi "According to Carneiro, due to demographic pressures, the people within such an area struggle for limited land and/or resources which leads to competition, mutual defence, and cooperation. Ultimately a governing body is formed which keeps peace and allocates resources" (22). The history of Kunindas is in oblivion from the 4th century AD. Kuninda power declined with the rise of the Imperial Guptas. Sometimes in the mid-4th century AD, Karttripur (Kuninda's chiefdom) acknowledged the suzerainty of Samudragupta as evidenced in the Allahabad Pillar inscription. For some time, Paurava Varmans ruled the region. However, towards the latter half of the 7th Century, when the Paurava-Varmanas lost power, the Kunindas regained political ground and recovered as the new ruling dynasty first from Joshimath and later from Katyur, hence came to be called Katyuris. Therefore, we can infer from this historiographical analysis that Katyuris are lineal descendents of the Kunindas. During its zenith, the

Katyuri dynasty in Kumaon stretched from the eastern region of Nepal to the western reaches of Kabul, Afghanistan. However, it eventually disintegrated into various smaller principalities by the 12th century. Doti was formed after this disintegration around the 13th century. It was one of the eight princely states Katyuri kingdom was divided into for their eight princes and became a different independent kingdom. Niranjan Malla Dev was the founder of Doti kingdom. During the period of Gorkha expansion in 1790, the Doti Kingdom was defeated. The Gorkhas were defeated by the East India company in Anglo-Nepalese war and were forced to cede Kumaon to the British as part of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816 and remained a sovereign country. Therefore, one can glean from the facts that the far western Nepal (Sudurpaschim) and Uttarakhand has been a single political and cultural unit time and again in history.

Narrative(s) analysis:

After a historiographic analysis, the research seeks to understand the cultural spectrum of Kumaoni -Nepali interaction through oral and written narratives. Orality being one of the primary characteristics of this culture, the paper looks at the folktales of "Maula/Jiya Rani" and "Brahma Deo and Birma Dotiali." These oral narratives not only show a connection between Kumaon and Doti region but also highlights the importance of context which shapes one event in different ways elucidating the significance of orality in catering to the socio-political and moral fabric of a society. The narratives highlight the particularities of the regions besides the universality of the Kumaoni-Doti culture. Even though the whole region has similar traditions and beliefs, the particularities of the socio-political contexts add a different finishing touch to the story of Maula/Jiya Rani.

The folk legend of "Brahmadeo and Birma Dotiyali" illustrates the marriage ties between Kumaoni and Dotiyali families which persist to this date. Marriage ties prove the depth of the cultural unity of the region as marriage is a marker of the culture of a society. Since the society has similar traditions and beliefs, marriages between the families of the given region are considered socially acceptable. In the legend, Gambhirdeo, the king of Katyurgarh engages his son Brahmadeo with the daughter of a Dotiyali chief, Iswaru, who is called Birma Dotiyali. However, due to ill health and death scare, Gambhirdeo marries his son Brahmdeo to the sister of the princes of Kalunikot, Bijora. He begets seven daughters with Bijora. Meanwhile, Birma comes of age and is asked for her hand in marriage with the son of the king of Champawatgarh, Raja Nirmal Chandra. However, Bijora sends a message to Brahmadeo to come and take her away which he does with the help of his magic and various disguises. After the army of Raja Nirmal Chandra regains consciousness, they come after the couple to which Brahmadeo shows indifference and condemns his seven daughters for not being a son and fighting off the army. However, the daughters pray to their family Goddess and fight against the army valiantly, killing almost most of them and go for rest. Raja Nirmal Chandra comes back with the leftover soldiers and kills them like "wild guards." Brahmadeo then kills Nirmal Chandra and performs the funeral rites of his daughters. Apart from showcasing the obvious marriage ties between the region, the story also highlights the strength of women for which Pahari women are still known. The naturalistic imagery of "wild guards" echoes the vicinity of the culture with nature which will be discussed in the next part of the paper. Religion is a major common factor binding the region today with a blend of Hinduism and folk spiritual practices. Family deities are found common in both the regions.

The two versions of the next story of Maula/Jiya Rani narrate the event of the capture of the queen of a Katyuri king. The settings, characters and circumstances however cater to the specific socio-

political aspects of the regions after the disintegration of Katyuri kingdom by 12th century AD. The Bharat (legend in Doti region) of Maula represents Pirthamadeo as the king of Ajaimiryakota (Far western Nepal) and the king who captures Maula is a Kumaoni chief. The Jagar of Jiya Rani is sung in Kumaoni districts of Nainital, Almora and Bageshwar in which the queen, Jiya Rani is captured by Turki/Pathana which connotes a Muslim king. As Joshi quotes Atkinson:

> It invariably situates the event in the context of Jiyā Rānī's capture by the Turkī /Paṭhāna (i.e. Muslims) at Chitraśilā (Ranibagh-Kathgodam) and their encounter with the Katyūrīs. Interestingly, available evidence from the works of contemporary Muslim historians coupled with local traditions clearly shows that the Muslim inroads into the Kumaon hills from this region took place when the Chandras were ruling in Kumaon and the Paṁvāras in Garhwal (Atkinson 1884: 520-29, 537-39, 543-49, 561-65 and 581-90, Zaidī 1997: in passim, Joshi 2012). Therefore, the Muslim encounter with the Katyūrīs is a fiction. (Joshi 17)

Both the versions are also performed for different purposes. The Bharat is sung to entertain people and the Jagara of Jiya Rani is performed in spirit possession rituals. However, both the narratives are based on a shared history that has bequeathed a collective memory to the inhabitants of the region.

Even after the disintegration of the glorious Katyuri kingdom, the memory of their valour and concomitant reverence for it did not end in the region that includes both the current Nepali and Kumaoni region. The collective memory shared by its people lived in oral narratives sung in the region. As oral culture is prominently revisionist, it shapes the narratives according to contemporary beliefs and values. After the decline of the Katyuri kingdom and the rise of the Chandra dynasty in Kumaon, the political rivalry between the Raikas who were the "Later Katyuris of Doti" and Kumaoni kings of the Chandra dynasty intensified which resulted in prolonged war. Therefore, in the Bharat of Maula, the capture of the queen is representative of the antagonism between the two kingdoms and the return of Maula to king Pirthamdeo of Doti is representative of a reconciliation between them. Whereas, in the case of the Jagara of Jiya Rani, the capturer being a Turki/Pathana (meaning a Muslim) is representative of the Rohela (Muslim community of Rohilkhand) invasion of Kumaon and their subsequent defeat. The Rohelas seized Almora, the capital of Kumaon and were eventually defeated by King Kalyana Chandra of the Chandra dynasty around 1743-45 AD. As mentioned above, the Muslim invasion of Kumaon was only post Katyuri period. However, the folklore singers were performing in Kumaon region where the Katyuris were esteemed by everyone greatly. Therefore, to warn the people of Kumaon and Garhwal of the imminent dangers of Muslim inroads into the hills, the performers used Katyuri characters as they were respected equally by the people of Kumaon and Garhwal as their rulers before the rise of the two factions. As quoted by Krengel:

> The protection of territory and keeping it free from guilt and the intrusion of evil is relevant for both, house- and dhuṇi-jāgars. In both contexts, actively dancing and speaking supernaturals are linked to a mythological past. The deceased kings who were the original owners and protectors of the land form the core of the mythological past. Their sufferings and struggles as well as their authority are present today and are kept virtually alive through the rich folklore presented in the first part of the jāgar. These legends are an indispensable part of every jāgar and they contain a message in their own right. They strengthen the territorial identification of

the listeners, although these deified kings are not bound to one place. (Spirit Possession in the Central Himalayas)

Therefore, the collective memory of the rule of Katyuri dynasty is kept alive through such rich folk narratives shaped according to the socio-political condition of the region.

The research paper aims to study the effects of the ongoing unprecedented rate of migration on the ecocentric Kumaoni-Nepali culture. One of the chief aspects of Kumaoni-Doti culture is its oral nature that needs to be studied through writing and reading. The study aims to shift from the palace paradigm as termed by Jawaharlal Handoo to consider oral discourse as important as written literature to create a non-hegemonic view of Kumaoni-Doti culture. However, the paper also addresses a chirographic short-story collection 'Bhauji' that deals with the effects of migration on the psyche and culture of Kumaonis. Indeed, the written text incorporates elements of orality as it is impossible to have a purely written text. Therefore, the objective of the study is to maintain a balance of oral and written components without creating a hierarchy between them. Walter J. Ong argues for the inevitable destiny of orality to result in writing in "Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word."

> Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. (14)

The push-pull theory explains lack of employment as one of the greatest reasons for out-migration from Kumaon and Sudurpaschim. This phenomenon is depicted in Mahara's short story 'Devta' where all the three sons of Bhavaan Singh migrate to other cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Haldwani for better education, better employment, and an overall better standard of living. Sandhya AS also throws light on migration brokerage becoming an institution in Nepal. "The study argues that the interaction between the state and the recruitment industry presents both opportunities and vulnerabilities for Nepalese migrant workers" (AS 2). The transformation caused by migration from the hilly villages is aptly described through the term "Money order economy." Kumaon and Sudurpaschim were primarily an agriculture-based economy. However, due to the out migration caused by the employment opportunities outside the hilly regions, it came to be known as a money order economy where the migrants send money back home for their livelihood. Pokhariya writes, "इन सब आर्थिक श्रोतों के बावजूद पहाड़ की अर्थव्यवस्था "मनी ऑर्डर इकॉनमी" कही जा सकती है। जब तक मेहनत-मज़दूरी करते व्यक्ति का मनी-ऑर्डर नहीं आता, तब तक घर में नमक-तेल या लत्ते-कपड़े का जुगाड़ भी मुश्किल हो जाता है।" (8). (Despite these financial sources, the economy of hills can be called "Money order economy." Till the money order does not come from the labour of the migrant hill resident, the arrangement of basic necessities of food and clothes also become difficult; my trans.; 8).

The title of Mahara's short story 'Pahadi Babu (Clerk from the hills)' becomes significant in depicting the joblessness in the hills that push people like Pahadi Babu to migrate to cities like Bombay to work in big firms. The word "Babu" signifies the attraction of job opportunities outside the hills of Kumaon whereas the word "Pahadi (hilly)" signifies the spectral identity that leaves its traces in various Kumaoni and Nepali migrants like Pahadi Babu. The migrants are not only pulled towards the job

opportunities offered by the cities but also pushed by the depletion of the traditional jobs offered earlier by these hilly villages of Kumaon. The tribulations of grappling with the decline of the demand for jobs inherited from the traditional culture is presented in Mahara's short story 'Sheruva.' Sheruva is a traditional folk artist who is adept in the "Chhalti '' dance. Chhalti or Chholiya dance (known as Hudkya in Doteli and Hudkeli in Nepali) is a traditional folk-dance form originated in the Kumaon-Doti region. It is a sword dance accompanying a marriage procession but now it is performed on many auspicious occasions. Due to the changing cultural dynamic of the village, Sheruva finds it hard to earn a decent living through his traditionally inherited profession. Sheruva's party was once flourishing in the village even when they had various competitors but now his profession is on the verge of death. *"एक समय था जब पूरे इलाके में ४-५ पार्टीयाँ थी तो उनको काम की कोई कमी न थी और आज इलाके भर में उसकी इकलौती पार्टी होने पर भी आधा महीना चले गया पर कोई काम मिलने का नाम नहीं था..... सोचते हुए शेरुबा अपनी बूढ़ी लाश को भीतर ले जाने वाला ही था कि अपने घर को आने वाले रास्ते में उसे दो लोग दिखाये दिये। शेरुबा की आंखे चमक उठी....."*(Mahara 35). (There was a time when there were 4-5 parties in the whole region who never had to face the deprivation of work. And now there is only one party in the whole region who is still not getting any work when half of the month has gone...... thinking this, Sheruva was about to drag his old corpse inside when he saw two people coming on the way to his home. His eyes started shining…"; my trans.; 35). The phrase "बूढ़ी लाश (old corpse)" signifies not only the ageing body of Sheruva burdened with the crisis of demand crunch for his art which was once much in demand but also the ageing corpse of the dying traditional folk arts. Sheruva can sense the dwindling respect paid to his art and his party which is also ridiculed by the younger generation.

Ecological Perspective

As established earlier in the paper, Kumaon-Doti is a single culture unit. Thus, it faces similar challenges of migration from the region. As the culture of this region is based on a community of humans and non-humans, the effect of migration on the environment is consequential for this research. The culture of the hills suffers from an ecological change brought about by the introduction of modernity with the onset of migration. The reverence for nature also declines with the decline of animism practice by the inhabitants. Various factors like ill-planned construction of dams and practices are disturbing the ecological and cultural balance of the region. It has disturbed the habitat of wild animals which results in the wandering of these wild animals in the area where farming is done. The changing dynamics of ecology brought about by migration have bolstered out-migration further. These erratic changes in the ecology of the region have deeper causes that lie at the intersection of industrialization, practice, and cultural diminishment. Bora mourns the loss of the natural environment in his poem 'बाँज कुड्कि पहरू *(The caretaker of the Deserted House).*'

> यो खन्यारै खन्यार
> यो बाँजै-बाँज
> यो खौड़ - खौड़, खडियारै खडियार,
> यो खुमै-खुम
> देखीनई, जाँ-जाँ नजर पुजैं।

पैरै-पैर, मैं जथकै चाँ । (बाँजि कुड्कि पहरु 18)

(These endless ruins

These barren lands

These trunk of deforested trees

Are the only things that you can see

As far as your eye can reach

Only feet (of the trees) are all I can see!; my trans.; 18)

The elegiac tone of the poem describes the condition of ghost villages (villages abandoned by the migrants) where the poet has become a caretaker of those deserted lands. He correlates the deforestation of the villages with the phenomenon of migration. As more and more people leave their land and never come back, their houses turn into ruins and the fields become wastelands. The cutting of trees indicates the exploitation of the natural resources of the hills which causes further ecological imbalance leading to irregular rainfall and climate change. Therefore, the desire to desert their land to move to a city for a better lifestyle comes at the cost of severe consequences for the environment of hills.

At this juncture, the paper argues that the environment of the hills and the individuals inhabiting the hills are not separate entities. As can be learned from the community-based culture of Kumaon and Nepal, everything is a part of a single unit or community. Therefore, the idea of "interrelatedness" proposed by Neil Evernden can be observed in his quote "the question of the role of the environment in the life of the individual is now transformed. Rather than thinking of an individual spaceman who must slurp up chunks of the world — "resources" — into his separate compartment, we must deal instead with the individual in-environment, the individual as a component of, not something distinct from, the rest of the environment" (Evernden 18). Christopher Manes' idea of "nature as a speaking subject" also becomes significant in the discourse of the eco-centric culture of the hills of Uttarakhand and Nepal. In Bora's anthology of poetry 'बाँजि कुड्कि पहरू *(The Caretaker of the Deserted House)*,' the poet throws light on the voice of the nature of hills screaming its agony of abandonment by one of the parts of its body. The poetic voice of the caretaker is merging with the voice of the hills in some stanzas of the poem. Their voice is resonating with each other because they are practiced. The non-human hills are not silent and speak for themselves instead of a human speaking for them.

Conclusion

Migration is a common universal phenomenon. However, migration in the hills of Kumaon and Sudurpaschim is burgeoning in the last few decades. Such an unprecedented rate of migration has a drastic impact on the culture of Kumaon and Sudurpaschim. On one hand, migration is disturbing the ecological balance of the villages of Kumaon and Sudurpaschim, on the other hand, it is also beneficial for the deprived villagers. As the culture is transforming immensely due to migration, the hill people are also in constant negotiation with it to form their identities. Both the individual and collective identity are situated at the liminal space between tradition and modernity.

The psychological impact of outmigration reaches on both sides. The people who are left behind feel an emotion of loneliness. The ghost villages suffer from ecological imbalance where nature feels

deserted. The Kumaoni and Nepali migrants feel a different kind of loneliness which stems from a confusion in their collective identity. Certainly, a feeling of fragmentation is felt by the whole region that leads to the loss of a sense of collective belonging and a fractured collective identity. As the ecological balance is disturbed, the anthropomorphic sense of self of the migrants is also disturbed. Due to a separation of human from non-human, the migrants are suffering from a schism in their sense of self. The paper establishes Kumaon and Sudurpaschim as a single cultural entity which is facing the challenge of ecological crisis. Due to interrelatedness, the ecological crisis is triggering an identity crisis in the self of the migrants. Therefore, we can conclude that Nature cannot be divided by anthropomorphic borders. Nature transcends such boundaries and the geographical unity urges the region to make collaborative efforts to mitigate the problem of immense rate of out migration and concomitant environmental damage.

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Clones and Commodification: An Ethical Issue in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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Abstract

The paper explores an ethical concern of clones' commodification in the novel *Never Let Me Go*, set during the late 1990s in England. It revolves dominantly around three clone characters; Kathy H, Tommy D and Ruth. Their initial position as happy students at a seemingly idyllic Hailsham school is erased when they are identified as clones. They are ostracized and excluded from society as the society does not acknowledge them as humans. Their unnatural birth creates more complexity of moral questions while fulfilling the selfish purpose of normal people. The mention of words/phrases like "guardians", "carers", "donors", "completions", "practice" and "the Gallery" is a tactful strategy of the dominant humans, the creators, to put the clones in the position of painful servitude. Do clones exist to serve the humanity? Are they different to humans? Who owns these bodies? are pertinent questions to discuss about the ethics of cloning and subsequent impacts on clones. Since clones are the victims, the ethical issues fall on the part of humans – the guardians. Clones' meaningless life, in Agamben's term, the bare life and their constant supervision in Hailsham similar to the concept of panopticon in Foucault term, raises the ethical issue of what it means to be human. The research follows textual analysis as research method within qualitative research design. It concludes that the clones' state of servitude and their position of donors showcase commodification of clones and the inhumanity of humanity. It raises ethical and moral questions regarding advancements of medical science in which Kathy, Ruth and Tommy live.

Keywords: *clone, commodification, ethics, humanity*

Introduction

The novel *Never Let Me Go* is set at the backdrop of high technological advancement in the field of cloning. Technological advancement in genetic transformation marks a significant shift in creation of cloned humans. In the novel under scrutiny, the clones are presented as different creatures in comparison to normal humans. Thus, "ormals" are the non-cloned humans. Initially, the clones are students at the Hailsham School, then they are the carers, and finally they become donors who donate their vital parts of body to needy people. They are destined to donate their vital organs to the prospective patients. The clones are hegemonized and agree to donate without any resistance. Meanwhile, the novel uses euphemism in the language use. It plays with the language using the words in indirect way to mean

"harsh." The words; donation, guardians, possible, deferral are tricky ones. The operation of the body for organ extraction is called donation. The original human from whom the clone is produced, is called possible. The medical surveillance of the clones ensures their healthy condition. However, the question comes what the healthy condition has to do with clones if they are to be completed after four donations. They are repaired like machines for the usefulness of humans. They are owned by others at the school.

Cloning is an artificial way to create new life form. A clone is genetically identical copy of a biological entity. It has marked a great turning point in scientific and medical contexts. It was first implemented when the first clone Dolly sheep was produced through cloning. John Harries argues about the ethical side of cloning in reference to Dolly, "There are two rather different techniques available for cloning individuals. One is by nuclear substitution, the technique used to create Dolly. . ." (353). Dolly is first cloned creature. After that, it has been used as instrumental tools to create identical bodies that are supplied in the market. In this regards, Dickenson argues that the trade of human organ is increasing: "The use of condemned prisoners as cadaver 'donors' for the international organ trade was openly acknowledged by the Chinese deputy health minister, Huang Jiefu, in November 2006" (155). In the trade, the prisoners are used as donors giving certain amount of money which is never worth-noticing in comparison to the priceless value of body itself. He brings reference from Amnesty International, "Amnesty International had been reporting large-scale 'harvesting' of vital organs from prisoners since 1993. In 1998, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the sale of organs from executed prisoners" (Dickenson 155). The large-scale "harvesting" of vital organs from prisoners since 1993 has been reported.

The Hailsham School where the clones spend their childhood period is understood as one of the privileged institution. The narrator remarks, "People from Hailsham, or one of the other privileged estates" (4). The children in Hailsham are easily convinced that they are in best school and they are hegemonized for the organ donations, "Hailsham. I bet that was a beautiful place" (5). In this supposedly beautiful place, the guardians work in such a way that they foreshadow the sale of the body of the clones. It is done through the art exhibitions. They draw what is appealing to them and it is put in exhibition, "That was why we collected your art. We selected the best of it and put on special exhibitions" (256). Actually, it is not art that is on sale rather it is their body that is on sale. So, their existence in Hailsham is questionable from ethical point of view.

Literature review

After its publication in 2005, the novel has got good reviews. It has raised the debate on cloning and its ethical consideration. It also opens a discussion for how and where the world is heading in collaboration with science and technology. The novel has also been interpreted as a typical dystopian text. Arnab Chatterjee, for example, brings utopian setting of the novel to the fore to talk about dystopian features of the text. Chatterjee asserts, "The first part of the narrative shows the predominantly pastoral setting of Hailsham, only to deflate it with the description of the Cottages that carry with them the dark purpose of the growing up of these clones and coming to maturity and the ultimate knowledge, something that they come to know as the narrative progresses" (112). The clones' experience with the ideal landscape in the Hailsham school prepares ground for the dystopian settings in which the vital organs of

clones are taken. They were designed for the dark purpose of death.

The clones are watched and monitored as a representative figures of surveillance. In this regard, Chatterjee mentions, "This theme of surveillance is a central feature of regulatory control in NLMG. For example, the school begins with an assembly: children are not allowed to smoke and the guardians are strict. There are routine examinations of the clones and a considerable amount of time is spent on this business" (115). This issue related to surveillance to have regulatory control of the clones deprived them of doing their own activities. The school prohibits children to smoke and they have routine examinations in the name of medical examination.

Chatterjee further explores the issues of William Blake's two worlds; the world of innocence and the world of experience. The children are deprived of the world of experience because they cannot go to the woods due to the fear of ghost story associated with them. He argues, "The image of the woods beyond the confines of Hailsham indicates the world of experience, to take it in Blakean terms" (117). The quote means to say that Hailsham students were controlled going to the woods.

In the same way, the critic, John Marks mentions about the status of clone as less than humans, "In the popular imagination the clone is less than human but has the appearance of the human" (331). The clones in the novel are the objects in the form and structures of humans. The purpose behind clones is morally questionable. Marks asserts, "Cloning may fascinate, and maverick organizations and individuals may express the desire to clone individuals, but mainstream discourse on cloning invariably attributes the desire to clone to a morally misguided" (332). The process of cloning is wrong if seen from moral judgement. The clones are told to art their emotions in painting in the school, "Art plays a key role in the life of the students at Hailsham: their art work is collected as evidence of the fact that, contrary to received wisdom, they have 'souls'" (349). The clones as understood in the society are not devoid of souls; emotions and feelings. It is also a part of experimentation done from the side of controlling mechanism.

Josie Gill also raises this issue, "The Guardians' reduction of the students' art and creativity to functioning as evidence of their humanity echoes the artificial relationship between art and humanity that historically characterized Europeans' judgment of the nonwhite subject" (851). The projection of humanitarian implication through the art work of the clones in fact projects the superiority of humans over other creatures. Kathy draws a picture where humans' facial expressions are described rather than facial features, "Rather than describing physical features, Kathy instead describes facial expressions. Her narrative abounds with descriptions of people's countenances and her interpretation of the thoughts and feelings that these looks express" (854). Kathy's highlight on expression rather than on facial features marks common features of humans across the world. Gill mentions, "Specifically, her description of faces challenges the emphasis in much Victorian literature" (853). It is expression that matters rather than physicality in term of height and color. Thus, "Kathy's emphasis on a universal, biological means of expressing emotion has, however, implications beyond repudiating the primacy of racial forms of identification" (857). The racial issue as stated above is less significant and it is projected through Kathy's emphasis on a universal, biological means of expressing emotion.

Josie Gill, similarly, brings the issue of clones' role to the fore as carer of organ donor and donor themselves. The clones are happy to be carer and donor as they were grown up with the same ideology. They were brainwashed in the Hailsham. Gill remarks, "Ishiguro's tale of human clones brought up at a

kind of boarding school, Hailsham, before preparing for their future roles as carers and organ donors is not a novel that engages with science, race, and the relationship between the two in any overt way" (845). Though the racial issue is not covertly mentioned in the text, the clones are the colonized creatures. They were hegemonized to play a role as carer and donor.

The novel has also been interpreted as speculative fiction. Rachel Carrol elucidates, "Never Let Me Go – published in 2005 but located in 'the late 1990s' imagines the near past as speculative future. It depicts a recognizable and far from futuristic British cultural landscape but one in which the mass production of human clones in the service of therapeutic medical technology has become normalized" (133). It is a debate if therapeutic medical technology is acceptable or not. The clones are dehumanized. What goes to them in the process of organ extraction is beyond imagination. The various spaces and activities designed to monitor them are the sports pavilion, the pond, the lunch queue and all the 'hiding places, indoors and out: cupboards, nooks, bushes, hedges, "The struggle over prescribed and sequestered spaces – the sports pavilion, the pond, the lunch queue and all the 'hiding places, indoors and out: cupboards, nooks, bushes, hedges' recalls the ways in which child and teen identities are mapped out through peripheral social territories" (136). The clones are mapped out, measured, and marked out in the school periphery. In fact they are the docile characters, "The trusting docility of Hailsham's pupils is suggestive of the successful internalization of its regime; both within and beyond the school their lives are policed by 'unspoken' and 'unwritten' rules and agreements, many concerning what cannot be openly acknowledged" (140). The quote explains that the boundary of school and beyond the unspoken and unwritten rules and agreements restrict the clones.

The clones are hegemonized with ghost stories, "The ghost stories provide an oblique literary model for how the clones of Hailsham can simultaneously know and not know of their deplorable circumstances" (431). The miserable situation of clones is depicted through the depiction of ghost stories. Tiffany Tsao also highlights on the limited space of freedom of clones. Tsao mentions about the narrative background and subsequent deplorable situation of clones, "The office scene from Never Let Me Go takes place after Ruth, Kathy, and Tommy have left Hailsham boarding school to enter their new phase of life during which clones are relocated to small, isolated communities in various parts of rural England. There is no more adult supervision, and they are given relative freedom to do what they wish" (216). The clones live in the communities of their own which has been isolated with the rest of the world. The lack of religion also marks the issue to freedom:

> At first glance, religion has no place in Ishiguro's version of late 1990s, England, and in this respect, would appear to mirror its real life counterpart which has been experiencing a decline in religious practice among its citizens over the past few decades. In the novel, Christianity appears to remain only in the form of relics: during their adolescent years the three main clone characters—Ruth, Kathy, and Tommy—take to hanging out in the yards of an 'old church'. . . (219)

The influence of religion is not seen in the novel. Only in the distant past where clones play in pastoral settings, Christianity is found in the form of relics. The clones like Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy play near the old church. From religious point of view, producing clones is debatable issue. The production of clones reminds humans of their similar situation. Tiffany Tsao again mentions, "Hitherto,

scholarship on Never Let Me Go has tended to emphasize the parallels between the clones and ourselves rather than the human characters and ourselves. . . has observed that the clones' devotion to a certain Order is no different from our own loyalties to our school, our profession, our country" (220). The modern people are also clones as their life is determined, monitored and calculated.

Arnab Chatterjee's take on dystopian elements, John Marks's idea of clones' artworks, Josie Gill's focus on clones as colonized people, Rachel Carrol's idea on speculative fiction, John David Schwetman's comparison of clones with the victims of the concentration camp show that the clones are in the state of servitude. Along with these readings, it is remarkable to delve into the narration of Kathy, the thirty-one years old middle aged clone, to expose the inhuman practice in the name of cloning with due emphasis on Foucault's idea of supervision of political bodies, and Agamben's idea of homo sacer.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach underpinning the paper comes from the ideas shared by Michael Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Donna Dickenson. Human body, according to Foucault, is owned, controlled and constantly observed through political mechanisms and falls into the category of object to be watched. Its agency is restricted due to the direct interference of power. Foucault asserts that, "the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault 26). The body is valued when it serves the purpose of dominant group and it becomes a subjected body. Foucault contends that the subjection is achieved through violence and ideology:

> This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force, bearing on material elements, and yet without involving violence; it may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order. (26)

The body is subjected to act as desired by power. The subjection takes place in two-fold ways; violence and ideology. First, the body is exercised through the consent and if it does not work, power is exercised which is violent form of manipulation. The subjection is done through constant watching. Foucault calls it surveillance. The cloned characters of Never Let Me Go undergo through the surveillance of guardians. They have strict rules and regulations to follow. They are motivated for their organ operation which they understand as donation. Their life as students ends when they become carers, and finally when they become donors, their life completes or ends after four or five donations. They are objectified and their body is on sale.

The disciplinary mechanism is made in such a way that the subject is watched from anywhere "The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a center towards which all gazes would be turned" (173). The single gaze from the certain point can observe the subjects. No one can escape the monitoring mechanism. Foucault asserts, "This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised" (197). The lives are monitored and examined. They exist to serve dominant ideology. This is represented in the novel through the projection of clones created to serve mankind in need. The clones living in Hailsham as students resemble a group of penned animals or scapegoats waiting to be

slaughtered. They are happy to serve their vital organs to other people. They are, in Foucault's terms, "docile and disciplined" body. Undisciplined and unexamined bodies are threat to ruling class people. This involves politicization of bodies. This is what Foucault means by a new micro-physics of power, "a certain mode of detailed political investment of the body" (139). The body in the context of political dimension is subjected to be controlled. The docility of the body is political and constructed through power.

In this regard, Foucault gives political contour to body. The bodies are political tools, "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved. The celebrated automata, on the other hand, were not only a way of illustrating an organism, they were also political puppets, small-scale models of power" (136). The bodies are manifestations of power projection. They are fragile bodies, "Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (138). They are controlled through the monitoring and suggestions, "Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere" (195). Since monitoring is a never stopping task, the subjects are watched and observed in regular basis. They are warned and given guidelines. The gaze surrounds both bodies and surrounding. Foucault argues:

> This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. (197)

The space which is used to monitor the subjects is tactfully designed. The individuals are inserted in a fixed place with disciplinary strategies. Power is exercised continuously in dualistic trend. The subjects are constantly observed, examined and located in the fixed territory. It constitutes a panopticon which for Foucault, ". . . is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for practice with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them. The Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms" (204). The panoptican with disciplinary mechanism is a space where power is used for the experimentations. This is applied to the structural set up of Hailsham School in the novel. The narrator mentions, "Hailsham stood in a smooth hollow with fields rising on all sides. That meant that from almost any of the classroom windows in the main house—and even from the pavilion—you had a good view of the long narrow road that came downacross the fields and arrived at the main gate" (34). The classrooms are designed in such a way that they are constantly watched and supervised. The supervision is seen when the narrator mentions, "Hailsham was full of hiding places, indoors and out: cupboards, nooks, bushes, hedges. But if you saw Miss Emily coming, your heart sank because she'd always know you were there hiding. It was like she had some extra sense" (43). Miss Emily easily finds the whereabouts of the clones due to the monitoring.

Similarly, Agamben's concept of controlled and inspected life brings the issue of cloned life to the fore. This life is devoid of value reminding the bare life of homo sacer, "The new juridical category of "life devoid of value" (or "life unworthy of being lived") corresponds exactly-even if in an apparently different direction-to the bare life of homo sacer and can easily be extended beyond the limit imagined by Binding" (139). Such life in Agamben's terms becomes worthless. It is the politicization on life where basic rights are snatched. He asserts, "It is as if every valorization and every politicization of life (which,

after all, is implicit in the sovereignty of the individual over his own existence) necessarily implies a new decision concerning the threshold beyond which life ceases to be politically relevant, becomes only "sacred life," and can as such be eliminated without punishment" (139). When the life ceases to work on one's own impulses, it is a political exercise on body which is significant. In fact, it becomes a bare life, "Bare life is no longer confined to a particular place or a definite category" (140). Humans, according to quote, are in the zones of exception. The life becomes meaningless and bare one without having a definite category.

Commodification and Subjection on Cloned Bodies

The controlling mechanism for the clones is strategically designed in the Hailsham school. The clones cannot escape the supervision. They are not aware of this in their initial stage. The clones are the students under medical surveillance in Hailsham. The constant watching on clones is practiced by guardians including Miss Lucy. The narrator mentions, "But Miss Lucy was now moving her gaze over the lot of us" (79). The clones like Kathy, Ruth and many others are watched and observed by Lucy. She represents power of Hailsham. The narrator further observes that the clones do not have a decent life. Lucy hightlights about the purpose of cloned people set by normal people in power:

> If you're going to have decent lives, then you've got to know and know properly. None of you will go to America, none of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do. (79-80)

The guardian Lucy mentions about the purpose of clones. Their lives are already set for organ donation. Though Kathy mentions they are happy as students in the Hailsham school in the first few pages of the novel, the readers were never told who/what they are, it's not until Miss Lucy's revelation that the readers understand who the clones are. The ethical question behind such practice of cloning is self-centered notion of humanity. The guardian tells the clones about their position in the society. They are not working in the significant space. Their lives are determined. They are destined to donate their vital organs. Then, they will complete (die). Even if they do not die, they will be switched off. They don't have basic human rights. They are controlled with consent by guardians. Since the name of owners of the fictional boarding school, Hailsham is not mentioned in the novel, the guardians are ones who own the clones. The implication behind presenting clones under fate having no choice in the matter is to raise question related to unethical and immoral practice. Their body is on sale along with their arts.

Donna Dickenson in the book *Body Shopping* argues that in consumer society the body is often on sale. She asserts, "What do you expect? We live in a consumer society, where money is the measure of all things. Bodies and parts of bodies are no different. Yes, of course, it's dreadful, but only the terminally naïve are shocked by it. You'll never be able to regulate it, either. There's too much at stake for the big biotechnology firms, and they can make life very uncomfortable for any government stupid enough to try" (7). To claim to own one's body is a illusionary realm because what counts in consumer society is money not the soul. The trade on blood, cells, tissues, sperms and eggs marks the objectification of human lives, "Trade in human tissue, like any other consumer commodity, now stretches from the time before birth to the treatment of the body after death" (1). This has made the human body a mere

object. It is reflected in the novel when the guardian asserts that they have put their arts on sale. It is not the art but the body which is on sale. It raises ethical issues in commodification.

The ethical concern for the reproduction through cloning comes as Bernard E. Rollin argues: "The moral concern here, of course, is the effect on the creature created or manipulated by the technology" (56). The moral concern is on the creatures affected by the use of technology. In the modern ear, people are not influenced by the moral concern and religion. Bernard E. Rollin, in this regard, asserts, ". . . we do not validate our ethics by appeal to religion in a secular society. On the other hand, religious traditions have indeed given much thought to how humans ought morally to live, and much of that thinking may be viable even outside of the theological tradition in which it is embedded" (57). The devoid of theological tradition enable humans to challenge the mysterious creations. Thus, the guardians give minimum knowledge and skills to clones.

The guardians expose piecemeal information about clones' status in the society. The narrator in this regard, observes, "Tommy thought it possible the guardians had, throughout all our years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told us, so that we were always just too young to understand properly thelatest piece of information" (81). The clones were told that they were too young to understand about their lives and purposes. The limited information which the narrator ponders, "I suppose that was all part of how we came to be told and not told" (82). The guardians employ the principle of telling and not telling the things at once to the clones. The clones know that they will not reproduce the babies. They are deprived of having babies. The narrator asserts, "Then there was the whole business about our not being able to have babies" (82). The clones are sad to know the lack of reproduction quality.

Kathy narrates about the guardian Miss Lucy. She perceives the ghostly expression of Miss Lucy, "I went on watching Miss Lucy through all this and I could see, just for a second, a ghostly expression come over her face as she watched the class in front of her" (77). When she watches the students, Kathy finds apparition of ghost in Miss Lucy. Kathy realizes that they are in danger condition of being exposed to guardians, "It's just as well the fences at Hailsham aren't electrified. You get terrible accidents sometimes" (77). The walls are visible to guardians even though they were not electrified. The guardians could watch them from the top of the hill, "The woods were at the top of the hill that rose behind Hailsham House" (50). False stories about woods were created to create fear in cloned students, "There were all kinds of horrible stories about the woods" (50). The horrible stories about woods were shared to the clones to control them. The narrator further intensifies his description of woods, "The woods played on our imaginations the most after dark, in our dorms as we were trying to fall asleep.You almost thought then you could hear the wind rustling the branches, and talking about it seemed to only make things worse" (50). Students were afraid of the woods due to the constructed truth about woods. The idyllic perception of 'school' turns out to be more sadistic and immoral institution with a strategy of telling and not telling. The students are told horror stories about the woods to hegemonize them. On the contrary, they are never taught about the world outside the Hailsham, their entrance to the other world is a mark of mockery and insult because they even do not have surviving knowledge in the unknown world outside. Going there with minimal knowledge is ironic as school teaches nothing about this. So, they trapped in prison-like school.

In the "knowing and not knowing" speech that Miss Lucy makes, the theme of morality resonates the cruelty and inhuman practice. Lucy's take on 'you've been told and not told' is a hegemonic

tool to induce the sense of being lesser in values in comparison to guardians themselves. This shows dark futures implying a level of immorality in Hailsham. Thus, clones become dissatisfied after knowing the truths, "We all know it. We're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from. We all know it,so why don't we say it" (164). The quote shares the sad truths about the origin of the clones.

The clones were similar to normal humans as they share emotions and feelings. Thus, the clones were told to paint art to reveal their soul. This proves that they have emotions and feelings like normal people. The narrator listens what the guardian tells, "You said it was because your art would reveal what you were like. What you were like inside. That's what you said, wasn't it? Well, you weren't far wrong about that. We   took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all*"* (255). The art production is not a sense of autonomy as perceived by clones, it is a proof for the guardians that these clones have human sensitivities and rationality, known with the metaphysical concept of souls.The guardians want to prove that the clones are intelligent and emotional, "Most importantly, we demonstrated to the world that if students were reared inhumane, cultivated environments, it was possible for them to grow to be as sensitive and intelligent as any ordinary human being. Before that, all clones—or *students,* as we preferred to call you—existed only to supply medical science" (256). With this, the guardians are expanding the monetary value of the clones. Thus, Madame, another guardian calls them "Poor creatures" (267). This is similar to Agamben's concept of bare life having no worth. The unethical side is exposed when the body organs of the clones are extracted, and they are commodified, in Dickenson's words, "Body has become an object—a thing—and why some commentators actually think there's nothing wrong with that"(1). The trade of body encompasses the trade of all the precious body organs, "Nor is this trade confined to kidneys, of which we're all born with a 'spare'. The 'capital' in prisoners' bodies extends to their hearts, lungs and livers. The only snag is that you can't live without those organs" (154). Hearts, lungs, livers are extracted from the clones indicating the unethical side of medical advancement. Humans are less sensitive to ethical sides as they are secular and devoid of religious back-grounding. In this regard, Bernard E. Rollin further argues that it is not job of humans to interfere the God's role. Rollin, thus, argues that humans should not seek to unravel the hidden mysteries in the creation. "Human beings should not probe the fundamental secrets or mysteries of life, which belong to God" (60). Rollin assures that it is God's job to create creatures which may need further evidences. Yet, his adherence to ethical side is good.

The clones in the novel could talk privately when they queue for lunch, "I suppose this might sound odd, but at Hailsham, the lunch queue was one of the better places to have a private talk. . . Quiet places were often the worst, because there was always someone likely to be passing within earshot. And as soon as you looked like you were trying to sneak off for a secret talk,the whole place seemed to sense it within minutes, and you'd have no chance" (22). However, they immediately sense that their private talk even in lunch queue is watched. They have no chance to share the private talks. They are denied of human agency and their existence is marked by their success to complete (die) after donations of their vital organs.

Regarding their existence and origin, Ruth, friend of Kathy shares that they are the outcome of trash; junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps, and convicts. She comments, "We all know it. We're modeled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos.

That's what we come from. We all know it, so why don't we say it? A woman like that? Come on. Yeah, right Tommy. A bit of fun. . . . Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from" (164). This bitter remark on the existence of clones like her, Ruth shows her anger and frustration. They do not own their body; neither have they realized they are good people. The clones are designed in a way that they cannot reproduce.

The production of clones is designed in such a way that they cannot reproduce. Kathy narrates, "Then there was the whole business about our not being able to have babies" (82). This asserts that they are denied of their agency to own their body. They acknowledge their status, "We have to respect rules" (82). They follow the rules and regulations. These cloned characters move from Halisham School to Cottages and to donation centers. In donation centers, they are operated to extract their body parts which they understand as donations. They feel comparatively free in Cottages. Kathy mentions, "We arrived at the cottages expecting a version of Hailsham for the older students, and I suppose that was the way we continued to see them for some times" (114). They enjoy their life in the Cottages with Keffers, the guardians. They wait for the time to donate passionately. The narrator mentions, "It happened about a week after the notice came for his fourth donation" (273). The fourth donation is important to them because some of them die or complete before the fourth donation. Thus, they often worry about the fourth donation, "You know why it is, Kath, why everyone worries so much about the fourth? It's because they are not sure they will really complete" (272). The clones want to donate in maximum level before they complete or die. The fourth donation is a mark of good news for them, "And then there is this odd tendency among donors to treat a fourth donation as something worthy of congratulations" (273). They celebrate the fourth donation. It is because they are heavily influenced by the Hailsham rules despite the fact that some of the clones already know that they are designed for donating purpose. When Miss Lucy tells about it, they know it, "Your lives are set out for you. You will become adults, then before you are old, before you are middle-aged, you will start to donate your vital organs" (80). They are to donate their vital organs. Though the sense of protest can be seen in their attempt to apply for deferrals, they acknowledge their fate, and happily accept the operation for the vital organs donation.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that cloned characters' devoid of human rights is the exposition of human cruelty. The cloned body's agency lies in the owners of Hailsham boarding school. The body serves the transplantation needs of humans. They are living a bare life in Agamben's terms and subjugated life in Foucalut's terms. Moreover, their bodies are on sale in Donna Dickenson's terms. The clones are created to serve the humanity. The creation of clones, a new form of clone creatures, is antithetical to nature because the clones are manufactured for organ donation purpose. These bodies are owned, watched and controlled by people at power at Hailsham School. People's desire to live long is fulfilled through clones who donate their organs to needy people. These clones possess the essence of human qualities. Their stimuli, emotions, creation of artworks, tantrums, resistance seen in deferral, and their search for possible show they are similar to humans, but they are operated in the name of donations. Though their pain, anguish, suffering, and trauma are less mentioned in the novel, they are the victims at the hand of humanity. They live a bare or empty life. They are subjected bodies with constant supervision. Their body is valued when it serves the purpose of dominant group. It is not a free body but a political body owned by others. This body is docile body that is subjected, used, transformed and improved to meet

the goal of transplantation purpose. They are political puppets at power. Their minimum freedom is seen in Cottages. They are in the enclosed, segmented space, and they are observed at every point. They are deprived of their agency because they are inserted in a fixed space making the slightest movements of supervision possible.

Thus, the paper's concluding remarks raise the ethical concern of clones' commodification in the novel. It is a lack of humanity's sympathy and empathy towards clones revolving dominantly around Kathy H, Tommy D and Ruth. They are in Hell-shame, rather than Hailsham in their initial position. They look outwardly happy due to their ignorance, and their position as satisfied students at a seemingly idyllic Hailsham school is the indication of bare life. Their happiness is gone when they are identified as clones. Their wish for extending romance through deferral shows that they have similar to humans. Their resistance to cloning is foregrounded highlighting the ethical side of humanity which is significantly lacking as the clones are ostracized and viewed as abnormal humans. Clones' meaningless life, in Agamben's term, is the bare life. Similarly, their supervision by guardians in Hailsham similar to the concept of panopticon in Foucault terms. It is observed that the clones' state of servitude and their position of donors expose the commodification of clones and the harsh inhumanity of humanity.

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Healing Trauma of Sexual Abuse and Rejecting Patriarchal Authority in Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*

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Abstract

Dealing with Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* the article aims to show that Maud's scrapbook and Beth's autobiography depict a family history of sexual violence and serve as main means of healing for both mother and daughter respectively. The article also aims to demonstrate that instead of becoming a vehicle for communication, the scrapbook detaches Beth from the female community of her mother and the spirit of her grandmother. The scrapbook thus represses its trauma and at the same time turns them into expression; it also encodes and hides a cycle of sexual abuse by male family members. The paper further aims to show that in the novel, both traumatic realism and magical realism converge in Beth's lightning arm as a technique of voicing and healing her trauma. The paper again emphasizes the role of Coyote figure behind Beth's rewriting her trauma, arguing that Beth's trauma of sexual abuse, which she cannot utter and which Maud refuses to listen to, is expressed through the Native Coyote figure where Coyote is associated with the dichotomy between female victims and male victimizers. Finally, the article connects the lesbian relationship of Beth and her Native friend, Nora, and the bodily grotesque of different female characters with female agency and independence.

Keywords: Trauma, healing, sexual abuse, Coyote, the grotesque, and female empowerment

Introduction

Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* is set in terms of Beth's personal experiences of sexual violence and of WWII. The narrative sheds light on a society undergoing changes regarding economy and gender relations caused by the war. The novel focuses on the gendered and racial conflict over religious and geographical region, and keeps raising troubling questions about the status of the settler-invader in Canada. It also evokes a landscape of mountain, forest, river and bush, and emphasises the geographical and historical isolation of the region. The novel deals with the trauma of sexual abuse of Beth and her mother, Maud. Here, trauma finds expression through the scrapbook of Maud, Beth's traumatic imagination, and animals, particularly the mythological Coyote figure. It seems that it is her scrapbook and communication with her dead mother in the face of trauma that provide

consolation to Maud. Again, Beth's lightning arm is supernaturally connected with her pain of sexual violence, resistance and protection, performing what the scrapbook has done for Maud—silent witness and a defense mechanism. Beth's healing can be considered an act of imagination where she creates her own world and takes refuge there. One of Beth's ways of rewriting her trauma is through many of the animals occupying the space in the novel. Animals are metamorphosed from being abused to the symbols of healing.

Dealing with *The Cure for Death by Lightning* by Gail Anderson-Dargatz, the paper aims to demonstrate how Beth's autobiography and Maud's scrapbook both highlight a familial history of sexual abuse and act as major sources of healing for the mother and daughter, respectively. The scrapbook distances Beth from her mother's female community and her grandmother's spirit rather than serving as a medium for communication. Thus, the scrapbook encodes and conceals a cycle of sexual abuse by male family members while simultaneously repressing its trauma and transforming it into expression. The study also seeks to demonstrate how, in the book, Beth uses her lightning arm as a means of expressing and overcoming her trauma, combining elements of magical realism with traumatic realism. The paper further highlights the part the Coyote figure plays in Beth's rewriting of her trauma. It argues that Beth's trauma of sexual abuse, which she is unable to articulate and which Maud will not listen to, is communicated through the Native Coyote figure, which is linked to the division between male victimisers and female victims. Finally, the article demonstrates how the lesbian relationship of Beth and her Native friend, Nora, and the bodily grotesque of different female characters enable them to gain female agency and independence.

Magical Realism in Canadian Literature

The term magical realism has quite regularly been used by critics to many Canadian works since mid-1970s, achieving a new emphasis through postcolonial and postmodern contexts in the late 1970s and 1980s. The mode gains a different dimension in the 1990s through its internationalisation and its association with Canadian social and literary landscapes. Unlike the US critical community that showed no interest in applying the genre to mainstream American literature, Canadian critics showed a clear interest in the presence and development of a national magical realist version. Geoff Hancock clarifies that the Latin American magical realism itself might inspire the Canadian writers who are trying to find their own, authentic way of writing (11). He claims that "Canada is an invisible country in the same way that Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Paraguay are invisible" (11). It is thus the role of magical realist authors to make the unseen reality visible, "to convince us that the marvellous is possible in a bland surface, and indeed inherent to the place" (10). Unlike in the US where magical realism might be labelled as 'ethnic', in Canada it's more like geographical. However, because of the shifting of focus from geographical context to ethnic components, magical realism as a term is now more regularly opposed mainly by members from minority communities. As Agnieszka Rzepa writes, "[M]arginalities explored in magic realist texts in Canada are now more often related to gender and sexuality, frequently in their intersection with ethnicity […] (30). Anderson-Dargatz's female-oriented magical realism is a means for women to fight patriarchal oppression and in case of Native women to resist both racial and patriarchal marginalisation.

Canadian magical realism can be characterised by its geographical location, its (post)colonial and postmodern status, and the presence of the gothic and the uncanny. The geographical immensity

along with the cultural variety and hybridity which are considered to constitute the magical realist conditions of a region or nation are also observed in Canada. Canadian magical realists have shown the tendency to connect Canadian magical realism with Canadian geography—a distinct feature for which notable Canadian critic Jeanne Delbaere-Garant suggests the term "mythic realism" (253). These active landscapes possess an intimate connection with characters and constitute the origin of the magic as a characteristic of mythic realism: a number of magical realist features of post-settler colonies "from which indigenous cultures have largely vanished, even though they remain hauntingly present in the place itself" (Delbaere-Garant 253). Magical realism has the potential to emphasise the obscure (post)colonial condition of the country. Canadian magical realist novels often share gothic location where the uncanny plays the vital role between the two. Novels such as Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* (1996), Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) and Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000) are clear examples of the junction between magical realism and the gothic. Connecting magical realism with postcolonialism, Stephen Slemon opines that Canadian magical realism would form a key example of postcolonial writing where Canadian magical realist texts would "recapitulate a postcolonial account of the social and historical relations of the culture in which they are set" (Slemon 409). Slemon thus highlights magical realism's potential to resist oppression and marginalisation (409). Scrapbook and Autobiography as Principal Method of Healing.

The novel opens with the scrapbook on the page which covers the cure for death by lightning, Beth's father's cake recipes and the broken-winged butterfly. Although the scrapbook is in general a female form of writing, it goes beyond the generic border where Beth's repressed family trauma of sexual abuse is metamorphosed, partly through the butterfly with broken wing. She later uses the scrapbook as evidence to write her own story and by doing so, she sheds light on the sexual abuses narrated in her story and her mother's awareness about them. Beth explains that the scrapbook was her mother's "way of setting down the days so they wouldn't be forgotten. This story is my way. No one can tell me these events didn't happen, or that it was all a girl's fantasy. The reminders are there, in that scrapbook, and I remember them all" (Anderson-Dargatz 14). Beth's mother Maud's awareness of her trauma, which is mentioned in the scrapbook, works as a passive spectator to Beth's suffering from a series of trauma. Instead of giving Beth an access to her scrapbook, Maud basically hides it from her and thus detaches Beth from her (Maud's) female community. For Maud, it is the scrapbook and the conversation with her deceased mother which provides her with some sort of consolation and guidance during her traumatic periods. Entering the house, Beth finds Maud "sitting at the kitchen table, writing on one of the pages of her scrapbook, mumbling to [Beth's] dead grandmother" (86). By failing to protect Beth from her father's sexual desire, which is her responsibility as a mother, Maud proves herself not less despicable than John, Beth's father.

Herself being the victim of an incestuous sexual abuse, Maud fails to cope with Beth's trauma of sexual violence and isolates herself in the realm of the scrapbook and the imaginary communion with her deceased mother. Beth sadly admits that her "mother was no help, no help at all. She sat in her rocking chair, rocking and rocking, hanging on to her scrapbook, staring off at nothing. [Her] mother sat in her chair all that time, rocking, muttering, and [her] father didn't say a word about it" (Anderson-Dargatz 184-185). It is a photo of Maud with her parents that gives Beth a clue about Maud's own trauma(tisation):

My mother wore a nurse's uniform and stood very tall over her own tiny mother. My grandmother was dressed in dark and lacy Victorian garb and looked very old and tired, but my grandfather, an engineer, looked quite dapper. He was smiling and had his hand around my mother's waist. Neither my grandmother nor my mother was smiling. … My mother became the woman of the house then, making the meals and tending her mother and looking after her two younger sisters. As my grandmother became increasingly bedridden, my mother also became her father's escort to plays and concerts. She became his favorite of the three daughters. *He bought her silk stockings*, boxes of candy, and called her dear. (26; my emphasis)

The photograph can be strong evidence of the family legacy of sexual violence, where the reference to the silk stockings is particularly significant which Maud ultimately includes in her scrapbook. Maud's father's buying stocking for her suggests that he does not see her as his daughter but rather from a sexual standpoint, considering the fact Maud's mother is bedridden and that she has to attend different events with her father. In other words, the act of buying stockings in a way sexualises the relationship between Maud and her father. Maud's scrapbook can be considered a text which hides trauma but at the same time transforms those traumatic events or memories into expression.

On the morning after her trauma of sexual abuse, Beth is awakened by Maud with a "butterfly kiss" (Anderson-Dargatz 86). Maud creates the butterfly as a gift for Beth: "It was made from petals of scarlet flax and my mother's fingers breathed life into it. This was a child's game; it made me angry" (86). Maud's sense of trauma and desire of healing is symbolised by the torn-winged butterfly that keeps flying in the scrapbook and in the gift. Although Maud shows her understanding of Beth's sexual abuse and attempts to comfort her with a child's game, she fails to save Beth from the lust of John, suffering from the helplessness of being a silence witness to it. However, it should be understood that nowhere in the text is there any clear mentioning of Maud witnessing the rape of her daughter; it just hints at the possibility of the presence of Maud, symbolising Beth's assumption that both of them must have known what has happened with her. Maud seems to speak about her trauma only when she mutters incomprehensibly to her dead mother who haunts her, and whose apparition seems to be addressed in the narrative. Beth says, "My dead grandmother had taken over the rocker; it went on rocking all through dinner" (200). Maud's ability to commune with her dead mother blurs the border between the dead and the living, and seems to suggest the comforting and guiding abilities of the dead. Again, the presence of the spectre of the grandmother suggests that Maud also suffered from sexual violence by her father. After her rape by her father, Beth leaves her room and sees the ghostly presence of her grandmother: "I followed my body, because I couldn't do otherwise, through the parlor and past my father, who slept in his chair by the gramophone as if he'd never entered my room. Over him, her face reflecting the dim light from my bedroom window, my grandmother watched him grimly" (166). The silent presence of the ghost refers to the family legacy of silence over sexual abuse.

To Maud, her scrapbook, apart from writing, is also a source of healing from trauma. The family saga of gendered violence is represented by nylons bought by John and later added by Maud to her scrapbook. Maud becomes enraged, knowing that her husband has purchased nylons for a "delighted and mortified" Beth since she never received any from him (Anderson-Dargatz 178). Being traumatised for some moments after learning about the nylons, Maud starts mumbling to her departed mother while rocking in her chair, "rocking and rocking, hanging on to her scrapbook, staring off at nothing" (184).

Beth's attempt to comfort her mother goes in vain as "[her mother] looked through [her], like a stubborn child punishing the parent that punished her" (185). The fact that it is Maud, and not Beth, who is traumatised, indicates that Maud has been re-traumatised by Beth's trauma to such a high level that she begins to reenact her past events. Through Maud's confession, "'My father gave me stockings too—silk stockings—while my mother went without'" (186), a shared experience of sexual abuse is expressed. The closeness between Beth's knowledge of the nylons and her privileges—the torn-winged butterfly and the lightning arm, representing metamorphosis and cure—implies that the narrative she is creating mainly focuses on her healing process, leaving her trauma on the scrapbook. Maud's scrapbook can be considered her "private place" which everybody needs in the time of distress: "Everybody needs a place to sort things out (fuck). You've got to know (shit) nobody's going to snoop around in it" (Anderson-Dargatz 196). Beth's novel and Maud's scrapbook externalise their traumatic experiences and thus possess therapeutic feature. However, the way the scrapbook reveals Maud's trauma, exactly the same way it separates Beth from the female community and hides her sexual abuse, giving her no chance to express it. She therefore needs another means to channel her trauma into expression for which Anderson-Dargatz provides her the magical means of lightning arm and the imaginary field of purple flax.

Beth's Lightning Arm and the Field of the Flax as Healing Mechanisms

Just like the way the butterfly in the scrapbook is associated with Maud's trauma and healing, the cure for death by lightning mirrors Beth's therapeutic journey: Beth's lightning arm is a magical weapon of voicing and curing trauma. Apart from being raped by her father, Beth is also sexually victimised by a group of her classmates who provoke her by naming her "Dirty Beth" and calling her mother a "witch" who "talks to the Devil" and her father crazy (Anderson-Dargatz 87). Her lightning arm goes dead, marking the escalation of her trauma. When Beth is finally let to go after being taken to a deserted house and stripped of her clothing, she has the weird feelings of being followed by someone: "The thing that had followed me that morning hopped up onto the road. I heard it first, scuffing behind me, and when I turned I saw its footprints, a man's footprints" (89). Beth takes shelter in her imagination:

> […] it seemed if I were to stay very still everything would stop. I lay down and held myself rigid on the bed and closed my eyes. After some time like that, the hand on my lightning arm began to expand, spread out like a balloon, take on proportions much too big for my arm, big enough to hit back. … I stared up at the blue forget-me-nots on the headboard of my bed and put myself there, in a stream full of them. (89)

As Beth does not have the physical strength to fight the boys who are bullying her, she imagines her lightning arm possesses the required strength to bounce back. In other words, Beth's imagination gives her some sort of strength which she unsuccessfully desires to have in her real life. Together with the calming blue flowers that give Beth comfort, her lightning arm extends imaginarily to save her from her attackers.

Not finding any comfortable environment at home, Beth runs into the velvet flax but her attempt to console herself is prevented by a storm, ultimately sending her back to home. Following Beth's failure to comfort herself through all real(istic) attempts, the story assumes a magical mood by changing the surroundings into violet flax:

> I pressed my face against the window and saw a rain begin to fall, so gently the raindrops seemed to float. Then I saw they weren't raindrops, they were flowers, violet flax, fluttering to the ground. In no time at all the rain covered the earth in flowers. I opened my window and crawled out onto the purple carpet, took my shoes off and paddled around in pools of flax. The fragrance was intoxicating. The clouds moved on, and still the violet flax drifted down from a blue sky. (Anderson-Dargatz 90)

Dropping of flowers from the sky instead of rain even when the cloud moves and the sky becomes blue is a magical realist phenomenon. The fact that Beth fails to get rid of her trauma through realistic means, and that she has to resort to magical means clearly emphasises the role of magical realist elements in giving comfort to people and healing their trauma by creating a magical world for them to take refuge. Anne Hegerfeldt argues that "literalization is behind much of magic realism's magic, for many of the apparently fantastic events are based on a making-real of figures of speech, mental concepts, or psychological mechanisms" (56). Michelle Coupal argues, "Here, Beth's psychological defense mechanism of dissociating into the flowers of her headboard and field of flax is literalized into a therapeutic imaginary of healing pools of flax in a transformed world of blue" (152). By transforming Beth's sordid material world into one that is comfortable, beautiful and way removed from the trauma of her abuse, the purple flax provides Beth with a magical relief. It is thus by creating a magical realist world through Beth's imagination that Anderson-Dargatz enables her to get rid of her trauma of asexual abuse by her classmates. As Beth asserts, "With blue flax in my cupped hands, blue flax on my hair, my face, my dress, I looked over a world that was blue and as strange as a dream. The shame of nakedness in front of the kids at school seemed so far from this blue world" (91). When Filthy Billy was assessing the damage of John's old car, Beth imagines that she can fly—a clear indication of her desire of freedom: "It occurred to me that if I ran down that hill, I could fly. I spread my arms and it felt like that: the air carried me" (92). Apart from the purple flax, animals that are victimised become symbols of transformation and healing. Beth describes the scene in which covered in blue, all the sheep turn blue: "They were a strange sight, sheep out of dreams. The blue flax had clung to their coats along with everything else. I sunk my hands into their blue wool and rubbed next to their skin, where the lanolin lay, to smooth away the dryness of my hands" (95).

One of Beth's primary ways of imaginative rewriting of her trauma of sexual abuse is through animals. The death of Sarah, who was apparently killed by a bear, is described in sexual terms by Beth's brother Dan that she was "pulled apart from the crotch up" and that her thighs and nipples were partially devoured (Anderson-Dargatz 33). Throughout the novel, animals are graphically and disturbingly linked to sex or sexual violence. The old cat lifting the kittens foreshadows Beth's trauma and future human acts of sexual violence. By attempting to hide the kittens from her father and the cat, Beth makes a connection between the sexually predacious cat and her father. The instance of traumatic detachment takes place when Beth fails to save the kittens and look at the dead bodies in the bucket: "Then I removed myself and watched my hands take up a shovel, make a hole in the manure pile, and empty the foul water and the bodies of the dead kittens into it. Their bodies slid from the bucket like fish. I covered them over with manure, then followed myself to the barn, like a child following her mother" (49). Here, Beth is clearly a traumatised subject who is following an invisible mother (read unsympathetic and uncaring). The entire traumatic scene which starts with the death of the kittens and reaches the climax with the rape of Beth is later repeated in other events, including the torture of Gertrude the cow, with the

increase of John's sexual appetite and depravity. Beth's forced involvement in John's brutal treatment of Gertrude, the cow, metaphorically displaces her own sexual abuse, highlighting the way sexual trauma is recurrently foretold by and fantasised through animals. John's act of performing the operation to remove Gertrude's ovaries becomes an act of sexual torture. John's remark to Beth after showing her the cow's ovaries—"You have these […]. This is what makes you female" (85)—suggests that Beth is featured in terms of her generative organs and that John can easily take from her the very thing that makes her female. The remark also strengthens the dehumanising and misogynistic side of sexual attack and suggests that Beth is more connected to animals than John is. The frequent sexualisation of animals together with the recurring violence on Beth disturbingly connects women with animals, representing Beth as some sort of meat to be consumed or an object to be sexually abused.

Whereas for Maud the scrapbook works as a silent mediator for her trauma, it is the coyotes which are Beth's ways to imagine and arbitrate her unvoiced trauma. However, in neither of the circumstances, trauma is articulated but is experienced or reconstructed metaphorically in the scrapbook. Beth therefore appositely emphasises healing through the script therapeutic act of turning her concealed experiences into narratives. Quite significantly, the construction of Beth's storyline is emphasised in the final pages where she finds the healing source(s). Although her book will differ from her mother's one—"It would be a book of words, my words" (Anderson-Dargatz 253)—it will be a secured place for her to unleash her emotion. She can now comprehend her mother's magical communication with her departed grandmother as a healing act: "It was craziness, talking to a dead woman, but she spoke the words, got them out of her mouth, and that was what mattered. As Billy said, if you could only get things out of yourself—speak them, or write them down, or paste bits of them into a scrapbook—then you could sort things out" (253). Beth is determined to write down her thoughts on paper in order to end the history of traumatic hauntings in her family. Beth's ability to put her thoughts in writing provides her with the sense of healing and some sort of agency, having the courage to face her abusive and sexually pervert father: "You never touch me again […]. Keep your goddamned hands off me. You're my father, for Christ's sake" (256).

The Role of Native Coyote Figure

The Cure for Death by Lightning represents traumatic imagination, in particular through the use of the Native Coyote figure. According to Michelle Coupal,

> Like the Native mythological figure of Coyote that the novel appropriates to displace Beth's sexual traumas, the text itself is a shape-shifter: specifically, in the switching between the subtle, scripto-therapeutic healing narrative (the autobiographical novel which Beth writes, as well as her mother's scrapbook) and the masculinised, grotesque, and traumatizing narrative of abuse (primarily represented through the Coyote figure). (155-156)

Beth's trauma of sexual abuse, which she cannot utter and which Maud refuses to listen to, finds written expression through Maud's scrapbook and the Native Coyote figure where Coyote is associated with the dichotomy between female victims and male victimisers. Fred Botting opines, "In keeping with Gothic conventions, Coyote's possession of the bush is initially aligned with the familiar binary opposition between helpless young women and male victimisers whose erotic and incestuous tendencies raise the spectre of complete social disintegration (5). When Beth is followed by a mysterious and threatening force, she states, "It could be anything: a man like the ones my mother's friend Mrs.

Bell warned of, who would catch a girl in the bush and do unspeakable things to her" (Anderson-Dargatz 16).

In the scenes that precede Beth's rape by John, both the real and the mystical are frequently mentioned. After being approached by a young man at a social gathering, Beth runs towards home for safety where she notices a dying sheep whose sex organs are devoured a coyote: "Coyotes go for the genitals and soft belly of a sick sheep" (Anderson-Dargatz 164). However, the real coyotes which have predicted the sexual violence of Beth by her father is metamorphosed into spectral coyotes: "Though my mother must have been awake, he came into my room, came to my bed as a black faceless thing, with only the form of a man" (166). In order to adjust with the brutality of the event, Beth gives full attention to the blue flowers on the headboard and attempts to take an imaginary sojourn there: "I removed myself into the forget-me-knots painted on the headboard of my bed, and watched from there, leaving all the fear and anger in my body" (166). Apart from taking the imaginary resort, Beth also retaliates with her lightning arm in order to defend her. In addition, Beth's experience of the shocking remembrance of the scene— "[…] coyotes put their claws over my mouth. They lifted my nightgown. They rubbed their wet tails between my legs and over my belly. … When they had their fill, the shadows sighed deeply, came together, and took the form of my father. He lifted his weight from my body and left the room" (233)—clearly shows her father's involvement in her being abused: coyotes thus metonymically symbolises John's sexual attack on Beth.

Magical realism emphasises multiple versions of reality and thus multiple ways of knowing the world and the novel *The Cure for Death by Lightning* is keen on presenting more than one version of every traumatic event that takes place. Whereas in the official version, it is the bear which is responsible for the death of Sarah, Bertha's daughter persistently offers a more magical and grotesque view that "'That was a man that done the killing. Coyote come and took him over'" (Anderson-Dargatz 73) or stresses on the mysterious Coyote figure whose "body flitted back and forth between man and coyote, then the coyote dropped on all fours and cowered away" (240). The unofficial version of traumatic events involves the reference to the Coyote myth; however, concerning the official version with coyote, Macpherson opines, "Coyote is both a shape-shifting spirit who controls damaged men's behaviour, and a real animal who kills the helpless and the vulnerable, animal and human alike" (94). In these multiple ways to know the reality or the world, magical realism thus functions to question reality. Just like magical realism, the discourse of trauma also disrupts the uncomplicated understanding of a uniform psychological experience or reality. Anderson-Dargatz uses coyote figure as the manifestation of traumatic imagination—a way of voicing the inexpressible trauma of sexual abuse which exceeds our imagination. As Hegerfeldt suggests, "In supernaturalizing cruel events, the texts express a stunned incredulity about the state of the world, implying that the idea of such things actually happening exceeds—or should exceed—the human imagination" (61). The novel thus exposes the inability of realist narrative to represent trauma in a graspable way and advocates the subversive and penetrative aspects of magical realist narrative to do so.

Magical Realism, Canadian Gothic and Female Strength

Anderson-Dargatz equates the challenges posed by Beth's lesbian friend Nora, a Native girl and the daughter of Bertha Moses, with the global threats to the Canadian nation-state. By constantly asking Beth to elope with her, Nora herself symbolises the possibility of women defying patriarchal

constraints and invokes the subversive power of lesbian relationship. As their relationship continues to develop, an interesting shift is observed in the threatening phantom-like force where the coyote is associated with Nora. Aligning Nora with coyotes turns her phantom-like probably because, as opined by Castle, "to love another woman is to lose one's solidity in the world, to evanesce, and fade into the spectral" (32). Castle seems to be saying that, a lesbian relationship might reduce the acceptance of women in the male-dominated society but it definitely provides them a magical bond by allowing them to go beyond the social restriction and poses a threat to the oppressors. In other words, a lesbian relationship provides women with agency and emancipation. The dual threat Nora poses to the patriarchy and the Canadian society is manifested through her uncommon eyes: "Each of her eyes was a different color, one blue and one green. She was a half-breed, then" (Anderson-Dargatz 24). Beth later says that Nora "was Indian enough to be an outcast in town and white enough to be an outcast on the reserve" (93). Apart from her split identity, a mixture of Native and white, Nora's two-coloured eyes also shows her potential homosexual tendency, referred by the Native North American as "two-spirit people" (72): "This close I could see that her eyes of two different colors, one green, one blue, were startling, the eyes of two women in one face" (72). Nora can be the embodiment of female empowerment because of possessing more than one woman in her and of blurring the dress differences between men and women. She is considered a threat to both Native and settler's community and thus is ridiculed and attacked by both communities.

The Cure for Death by Lightning draws an association between freakishness or the grotesque and female independence. Mary Russo considers the grotesque body as "the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the Classical body which is monumental, static, closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world" (62-63). Regarding the grotesque's potential to challenge the dominant authority or ideology, Abdullah says,

> The grotesque body resists containment, rather strives for and welcomes change; indeed, it cannot but change. […] in the grotesque, one finds an avenue to challenge the norm, to establish meaningful social change, whether that be women's rights, gay rights, or the rights of other marginalized groups. It is confronting the hegemonic with the existence of the marginalized, often through somewhat fantastical means —it is for this reason that the grotesque fits snuggly within the multivalent category of magical realism. (115)

Beth notices that apart from Nora with two-coloured eye, several other women in Bertha's household are characterised by bodily grotesque. During the reader's first meeting with Bertha, Beth states that "Bertha had no husband and no son. Her house was a house of women" (Anderson-Dargatz 20). By demonstrating the female dominance in Bertha's house, the narrative poses a threat to the patriarchal notion of a family ruled by a man, providing agency to the Native women. Beth goes on observing that "One of the daughters' daughter was pregnant, another had webbed fingers" (20) and that Nora' mother possesses "a man's voice" (109) and "an extra finger on her right hand" (109). The bodily grotesque of Bertha's female family members alienates them from other people, causes some sort of fear in those people, assists them to assert female rights and ultimately results in female empowerment.

Both magical realism and the gothic can converge and form a unique world. Both modes challenge the rational approach to the reality presented in novels, contest a singular version of reality

and a linear narrative progression, and advocate multiple versions of truth or reality. Lucy Armitt argues over the cooperation between the gothic and magical realism, stressing on the way magical realist novels, particularly Canadian ones, quite regularly share gothic settings—haunted houses and natural scenarios— and quite often combine traditionally extensive and invasive landscapes with "inevitably claustrophobic" gothic landscapes (308). Armitt's one of the keys to the association between the gothic and magical realism is the uncanny as she opines that the both modes show "a surprising narrative similarity" in terms of the travel into the mysterious and unconscious (308). Armitt's another key is the idea of transgenerational trauma or haunting (315). She argues that when the gothic and magical realism combines with each other, "we find a perfect territory for cryptonymy, magic realism reminding us of the omnipresence of transgenerational haunting by giving it a shared cultural, political and mimetic sanction, while the Gothic continues to endow that presence with the sinister particularity of the nuclear family unit" (315). Armitt thus emphasises the political side of magical realism that, in association with the gothic, politicises "the unconscious through transgenerational haunting" (307). In *The Cure for Death by Lightning*, both Maud and Beth's experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of their own fathers shed light on a shared culture of incest in a male-dominated society. This issue clearly aligns with the transgenerational haunting, combining magical realism with gothic elements.

Conforming to Gothic tradition, the dystopian, patriarchal family structure makes Beth feel suffocated at her home: "'It's so dark in here, I feel like I'm suffocating'" (Anderson-Dargatz 116). On the other hand, the utopian potential of Beth and Nora's friendship is evident in their finding a hideout in the forest which was once owned by Bertha Moses as Nora explains, "This is Granny's old house [...]. A winter house" (105). By clarifying that before belonging to her grandmother, the house was her "great-granny's house" (105), Nora indicates that the house has been owned by the family for generations. Again, by demonstrating that the house has belonged to many of her female ancestors, Noria sheds light on female possession of property and to some extent shows their empowerment. With its "opening into darkness at the center of [a] mound of dirt and weeds" (105), the layout of the house resembles female sex organ, emphasising female possession and control over their properties: house and genitalia. By telling Bertha that her mother "used to say the winter houses were safe like a mother's hug" (108), Nora makes a significant association between the house and the female body. Nora's act of discovering the Native house provides her the opportunity to escape and restructure the patriarchal society. The fact that the winter house is passing through the maternal lines and that it now belongs to Nora is a strong blow against patriarchy.

Conclusion

It is the combination of magical realism, the grotesque, Canadian gothic and the uncanny that allows Anderson-Dargatz to give her female characters the necessary strength to fight their gendered violence and, to some extent, ethnic marginalisation. Beth's lightning arm and the field of the flax provide her with imaginary healing. Again, it is through different animals, particularly female ones, that Beth comes up with an imaginative rewriting of her trauma of sexual abuse. Magical realism in the novel also provides the author the required scope to come up with alternative versions of events which starkly contrast the official, patriarchal version. Anderson-Dargatz also emphasises the bodily deformity of some female members of a Native family and the lesbian tendency of a Native girl, Nora, connects both phenomena with female independence, and advocates a female-oriented family and society, providing a

strong blow against a patriarchal and racist society. Last but not the least, the novel emphasises the role of deceased family members in healing female trauma of sexual violence which is evident from the communication between Maud and her dead mother.

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Eco-tourism and Associate Lives across Tharu-inhabited Region of India-Nepal Border

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential for developing the Tharu-inhabited region along the India-Nepal border, specifically focusing on the Far western region of Nepal and the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand regions of India. The areas of Kailali, Kanchanpur, Bardia, and Banke in the Far-Western and Lumbini States are connected to India through various wildlife reserves, including the Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, and Katerniyaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. The Tharu communities residing in these border areas share many similarities in terms of language, dress, food, houses, and cultural practices. Despite being separated by rivers and jungles rather than concrete boundaries, these shared cultural aspects make the Tharu-populated border region an ideal location for the development of a biological corridor and international eco-tourism hub. However, despite some local efforts to develop the villages into homestays and promote cultural exchange between the two countries, there is a lack of support and promotion from both social organizations and the government. Additionally, it has been observed that the Tharus in Nepal often receive fewer government allowances, development schemes, and programs for upliftment compared to their counterparts across the border. As a result, many Tharus from Nepal migrate to India in search of employment, career opportunities, and better education policies. Despite occasional political tensions between the two countries, the Tharu communities on both sides of the border have maintained a harmonious relationship and have provided each other with support and brotherly sentiments. Given the immense potential for eco-tourism in this region, it is crucial for the government and social organizations to provide the necessary assistance and support to facilitate its development.

Keywords: Tharu, borderland, ecology, performance and agency

Introduction

The western Nepal's Tarai districts: Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, and Kanchanpur make borders with the Indian states Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand. Across the borderland of these districts Tharus and non-Tharus abode from the ancient time. The Tharus and Rana Tharus both have been the natives across the borderland of two nations exchanging their socio-cultural rituals and economic activities. Moreover, the borderland culture also holds the huge scope for borderland tourism as India

Nepal's important and huge tiger sanctuaries and national parks are located here. Nepal's side Banke National Park, Bardiya National Park and Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve are not only the abode of different rare and ecologically vital wildlife species but also on properly managed and advertised have potentiality to lure tourists from foreign states as well. Moreover, from India's side Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Pilibhit Tiger Reserve equally are the nature's best ecological destination for the national and international tourists. However, the major factor that these places should be groomed and visited as the ecological destination is the habitat of the tribes: Tharus and Ranatharus of this place. These tribes are the natives of this place. Their livelihood has close connection with the nature around them. It has greatly shaped and molded their socio-cultural and economic lifestyle. The initiation of homestays and local tourism can flourish in a great scale here. Such initiatives will not only provide ex factor to the tourists, moreover they will also boost the tribes' economy, will help to sustain their livelihood and cement the sustainable development of the borderland.

The borderland area of Nepal is occupied primarily by Tharus, Ranatharus and Kathariya Tharus along with other immigrants from hilly regions. However, the Tharu tribe being the oldest and native of this region has its own ritual, culture and distinct way of life. Their life is based on agrarian mode and has their rituals as the epitome of ecological tribe. Tharus have been residing at this border keeping harmony with wilderness, nature and sometimes, border conflict as well. Their cultural performances, folk rituals all include the reflection of nature and deeply associate themselves with the caretaker of nature. They hardly exclude themselves from the primary nature lover and its caretaker. Similarly, Tharus residing at Indian borderside living in the villlages: Paliya, Suda, Najahuta, Singhada, Chandan Chowki, Maghauta, Nighasan, Sampurna Nagar live in close association to Dudhwa and Pilibhit Tiger Reserves. Their agrarian lives, food resources, cultural and economic dependence to these wildlife preserves have developed as the part of them. The Mohana and Sharada River dividing the Kailai and Kanchanpur district have naturally located the geographically divided same tribes.

The availability of roads, local markets have geographically connected the two states. However, the absence of central universities, colleges, major railways stations, international airports and trade centers negatively affected the tribes of the both states. Due to the absence of national universities, hospitals, trade centers, and good lodging facilities Tharus of this area often suffer from the educational and economic growth. Thus, by establishing these borderlands as the site of the major tourist destinations as the ecological park for research and amusement, the socio-economic and education status of the tribe can be uplifted.

Methodology

The study explores the relationship between borderland tribes, their literature, socioeconomic lifestyle and the development of ecotourism. The study aims to understand the comprehensive development of borderland Tharu community. It critically analyzes how their agrarian lifestyle promotes ecotourism initiatives and contributes to sustainable development. The study applies qualitative approach to interpret the library findings on the borderland and ecotourism literature. The study incorporates literary analysis, cultural studies, and tourism development theories. The study has discussed literary works that focus on borderland regions. The study discusses the lifestyle of Tharu community considering them as the biological being crucial for preserving nature and associate border lives. It interprets the lifestyle of the Tharu community with their ecological and cultural practices observed during fieldwork.

The study maintains the research ethics respecting the cultural sensitivity of the borderland Tharu community.

Literature Review

Tharu inhabited borderland of India and Nepal incorporates huge potentiality to attract tourists and grow itself as the sustainable regions for the both nations. Development of borderlands will significantly strengthen the socio cultural connectedness. According to Simon J. Bronner, phrases like "national, ethnic, religious, folk, cultural, family, and local" paces a feeling of social connectedness, a collective memory in an identifiable niche with mass society (69). Such connectedness and social activities are necessary for fostering a sense of national unity and a multicultural community.

For the development of Tharu inhabited borderlands, their representation at policy and decision making level should be guaranteed. Their representation at policy making level will help them to draft policies that will promote the ecotourism, cultural exhibits and economic trades. Similarly, such ecotourism also helps to keep the society updated, connected and regulated. According to Gunes Murat Tezcur and Mehmet Gurses, a number of newly formed nation-states create national ideology based on the cultural traits and values of the majority ethnic group and disproportionately appoint people of that community to positions of governmental authority (215). Such practices hinder the socio economic development of the marginalized group keeping their motivation low and politically undifferentiated. However, nation building should move in harmonious course of action. It must include the marginalized, borderland group with the dominant group. Therefore, nation building can only be effective and have a consensual quality when the state elite's country building effort combines with minority ethnic people's repositioning tactics by integrating into dominant ethnic groupings.

It is important to compare and evaluate Tharus' movement from the Dang inner valley to the borders in light of other ethnic groups' large migrations and displacements around the globe. This method aids in comprehending the fundamental cause of all of the ethnic conflict and forced migration. Comparative thinking, according to Ilaria Giglioli, is essential to migrant rights activism because it fosters relationships of cooperation and solidarity between individuals impacted by border violence around the globe as well as between those affected and their allies (para 2). Giglioli makes this argument in her discussion of tearing down borders and fostering solidarity.

Deborah Bird Rose makes a similar argument, contending that an ecological self is both constitutive of the cosmos and materially entrenched in particular locations (312). The ecologically positioned person is porous; the body melts into its environment and the environment melts into the body. The majority of Ranatharus continue their connection by getting married across the border, while discussing the borderland connectedness and acculturation of the Tharu tribe. Researchers Gamkrelidze and Ivanov from Russia concluded that marriage and kinship were the foundations of peoples' social structures.

Disparities are created and mixed by boundaries. Although Tharus living on opposite sides of the border are geographically separated, their shared agricultural way of life and sociocultural customs bind them together. According to Rose Deborah, the original idea of a border for exclusion serves to encourage self-sufficiency. The second example, common to Aboriginal and other kin-based civilizations, shows that boundaries are necessary to bridge differences and promote interdependence (314). The first

creates boundaries as means of resolving differences, whereas the second, dialogical mode, maintains relationships and differences while being always in progress.

But borders frequently lead to differences, and those differences frequently result in structural differences that negate one another. It is also possible for Tharus of Nepal to place Tharus of India in a lower social status, and vice versa. A framework of difference, otherness, negation, and exclusion, the dualistic understanding of difference is founded on hierarchical oppositions, as Val Plumwood observes (117). The challenge of creating borders remains as the threat as it leads to the hierarchy build up between same group and community. But there is also a non-hierarchical way to conceptualize difference; this way, it produces the idea of another that may be described independently of itself. It is different without being demeaning (Plumwood 132). It is other but not lacking.

The social exchange of the Tharus of both countries is necessary for acculturation. The Tharu tribe's cross-border activities are a legitimate means of fostering intercultural understanding. Something sweet or fragrant might be used to identify a person's distinct essence. For instance, in customs wherein natives welcome guests into their land, they must mix their perspiration with that of the visitor and wash it in with water (Deborah 320). In the earthly reciprocates of being, becoming, and dying, we and other living things share a role. Deborah contends that a dialogical interpretation implies that we are physically and intimately attached to our violent pasts, rather than being removed from them (322). A tribe's embeddedness inside another is justified by its connections to other earthly species and beings, in addition to other tribes.

The Tharus inhabit not only the geographical but also the ethnic borderlands, where their identity serves as a rainbow's solitary tint next to that of the Ranatharus, Kathariaytharus, and other non-Tharu ethnic groups. Ethnic borderlands, according to Fadda-Conrey Carol, are beneficial areas where interethnic relationships may be formed and preserved both inside and between various groups (187). Creating a multi-ethnic refuge like the multicultural borderland eliminates the possibility of interethnic violence. According to Gloria Anzaldua (19), borderlands are physically present anywhere two or more cultures meet, where people from diverse cultural backgrounds inhabit the same space, where members of the poor, middle, and higher classes come into contact, and where the distance between people gets less as they go closer. The borderland is described as the multicultural zone in Anzaldua's concept.

Borders, according to Newman and Paasi, define a territory's internal and exterior identities (qtd.in Ullah and Kumpon 4). The internal identities of Tharus residing in the borderland are formed by the marginalized group that has suffered from the state's absence from the decision-making process. On the other hand, Tharus are regarded as one of the dominating tribes in India and are given several government subsidies and affiliates. States and boundaries should complement one another, according to Friedrich and Julian Minghi (qtd. in Ullah and Kumpon 2). The best course of action could be for the governments of the two states to work together to establish policies that will help the common group's socioeconomic lifestyle and position the region as the top ecotourism destination.

Spolare and Wacziarg, however, advocate for the abolition of national boundaries in a different manner, arguing that doing so will enhance economic growth and enable the creation of a bigger economic zone (qtd. in Ullah and Kumpon 3). Removing national boundaries might lead to economic growth since they prevent some countries from expanding as slowly as their neighbors. There are parallels between India and Nepal, where company owners in Nepal have faced challenges due to Nepal's border procedures and economic expansion. Mauss claims that the concepts, customs, and goods that are more

or less shared by several particular cultures add up to the shape of a civilization (Ullah and Kumpon 63). Their common cultural practice of performing is the foundation of Tharu culture, along with their agrarian lifestyle. Through customs, festivals, spirit plays, and finally written books, civilization transmits values.

Likewise, borders, for Kikhi and Lanamai should not be interpreted as simply marking the boundaries between one civilization or state and another; rather, borders should be seen as a reflection of the processes by which societies are formed and organized (1). In terms of mutual respect and culture, the boundary between India and Nepal is formed by two ethnic groups that are similar to each other. Nonetheless, there is a risk that the ultra-ethnic identity movement may transform identity politics into separatist movement. According to Heredia, the process by which an ethnic group transforms into an ethnic community, which then grows into an ethnic country and wants its own nation state (5). The possibility that identification movements may evolve into separatist movements so exists.

Result and Discussion

Creating an ecotourism hub in the Tharu Borderland might be one way to enhance the area. For social scientists and anthropologists, it might be developed as a research location. In the same way, an exotic recreation area may be established there as well. Martha Honey in *Who Own Paradise* defines ecotourism as:

> A way to fund conservation and scientific research, protect fragile and pristine ecosystems, benefit rural communities, promote development in poor countries, enhance ecological and cultural sensitivity, instill environmental awareness and a social conscience in the travel industry, satisfy and educate the discriminating tourist, and build world peace. (4)

Research and the promotion of peace can both benefit from the development of the Tharu-inhabited area as a global tourism destination. Such programs support the spread of environmental consciousness in addition to aiding in the preservation of natural resources. Comparably, the first ecotourism organization in the world, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), defined ecotourism as "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (qtd. in Honey 5) in 1990. The purpose of visiting the Tharu-inhabited area should be to gain an insight of their way of life, culture, and socioeconomic struggles. In order to incorporate the Tharu tribe into the decision-making process, effective policies and measures must be produced by the research on them.

Similarly, Kurt Kutay argues:

> Real Ecotourism includes minimization of environmental and cultural consequences, contributions to conservation and community projects in developing countries, and environmental education and political consciousness-raising, such as the establishment of codes of conduct for travelers as well as wide variety of certification programs for components of the travel industry. (qtd. in Honey 12).

Everyone involved in ecotourism should adhere to the values of low-impact, instructive, and culturally and ecologically sensitive travel that enhances the host nation and local populations. To govern their cultural identity, Tharus employ folklore. The songs and performance encapsulate their history,

culture, and rituals to make them seem like a cohesive, culturally diverse community. *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Cultures* by anthropologist Clifford Geertz contends that culture is a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms that men use to communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (qtd. in Matteoni 89). Culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols.

Tharus as the underprivileged have frequently been disregarded in the mainstream political, economic, and policy-making arenas. They have, meanwhile, consistently resisted being incorporated in state affairs. As per the cultural historian Peter Burke, the conventional interpretation of "people" in Western culture stems from diametrically opposite categories: the impoverished for the wealthy, the clergy for the laity, the commoners for the nobles, and the ignorant for the educated (5–13). For the privileged segment of the state, Tharus frequently appear as the impoverished and ignorant.

Environmental factors shape the subjectivity of Tharu. They draw great inspiration from nature and ecology for their clothing, food, housing, and cultural practices. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1968), the body is never fully isolated from its surroundings; rather, it is always impacted by other bodies and outside factors, sometimes even reflecting or translating into them (349). Thus, it would be easy to monitor the border commerce and biological channels by looking at the Tharus that live along the border between India and Nepal. The local ecosystem has influenced their performance, which is closely linked to their way of life.

For the residents in the tribal territory, ecotourism frequently generates material benefits. Such a business strategy might address health issues, poverty, and low living standards. In similar case, Davidov Veronica in "Ecotourism and Cultural Production 2013" argues:

> Ecotourism profits marginalized from their cultural location with subjects whose very poverty and exclusion from global economic flows has become a valuable commodity, because it signifies the coveted alterity, and with the locals for whom ecotourism is inherently a political enterprise, even as their visitors fail to grasp that dimension of it. (47)

Ecotourism should thus be encouraged on tribal grounds in order to improve their poor quality of living, promote sustainable development, and provide education. Authentic indigenous cultural forms are viewed as an organic part of the environment, and ecotourism is the consumption of local nature and culture.

Duffy, though, refers to ecotourism as the extractive sector (Veronica 49). The local areas are effectively disembodied and fragmented from their ecology and social structure. Therefore, ecotourism may occasionally be seen as a sector that undermines the traditional values and tastes of the tribal community, culture, and social structure. These kinds of projects might lead to a narrative that views the tribal people, who are rich in culture, as being powerless and excluded from society at large. Such views therefore have the potential to denigrate the tribal group's autonomy. Duffy argues that preserving nature implies that the indigenous people have restricted and constrained agency (Veronica 49). Therefore, it is important to constantly assess the possibility of eradicating local culture and traditional values while implementing ecotourism on tribal grounds.

According to Viranco, "environmental discourse has permitted the authority of indigenous knowledge and practices through green primitivism" (qtd. in Veronica 58). Therefore, autonomy over their ancestral land is necessary to enable tribal groups to use it in a sustainable manner. The creation of

laws and regulations pertaining to national parks, wildlife reserves, and conservation zones should take Tharus into consideration. Similarly, the state should never treat the indigenous people unfairly even while designating their ancestral territory as a reserve or park and as a tourist destination. They are typically forced to live as bondage laborers on their property after having their holdings taken from them. During the Rana era, this similar procedure changed the Tharus into Kamaiya.

According to Viranco, indigenous groups oppose top-down eco-conservation projects mostly because they are disenfranchised or marginalized during the process, resulting in an unjustifiable loss of agricultural land that has been declared protected (Veronica 59). This resistance validates the necessity of local institutional governance. In *Eco-toruism and Environmental Sustainability*, Tim Gale and Jennifer Hill provide a novel strategy for preserving the natural world. They talk of banking its parks and natural reserves to foreign organizations that support the development of developing countries. They argue:

> "Debt-for-nature Swaps" are one strategy to help poor nations conserve their natural resources. This strategy is based on the idea that a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to conservation will purchase a portion of a nation's national debt in exchange for promises that the debtor nation will oversee and assist the preservation of a specified region, such a national park. (23)

As a subsystem of society, tourism will also change to take new environmental concerns, ethical standards, and priorities into account. Gale and Hill debate whether the goal of a safari should be to kill animals or just to observe them (24). Therefore, moral ethics should be taken into account when determining what percentage of nature should be designated as protected territory and how it should be exploited.

In nature, everything is related. Nature and its constituent parts are intimately linked to human existence. In *The Ecological Self*, Freya Mathews discusses Newtonian atomism and makes the case that metaphysics and ethics are related since everything is interrelated (44). According to her, God initially created matter as immobile, solid, hard, and impenetrable particles of all sizes and shapes. Every alteration in the natural world should be understood as the separations, affiliations, and movements of these eternal atoms.

Collective Remembrance in the Historiography of Tharu Memory

The emotional outcomes of collective remembering, according to Beristain et al., include social sharing and funeral customs. Memories were especially significant for people who had been victims of mass killings (118). These groups rarely made an attempt to oppose it. Silence was a useful coping mechanism for the most of the time. But when modernity increased and had an effect on their awareness, they gained agency and rebelled against all kinds of repression.

According to Pennebaker, social sharing and disinhibition aid in overcoming emotional and painful occurrences. This also applies to culture, silence, and social sharing of emotions (qtd. in Beristain at al. 118). Furthermore, over the medium and long term, social sharing is linked to gains in subjective well-being and health. Affected individuals can also define, express, and cope with the traumatic event in ways that are culturally acceptable through social sharing. The foundations of collective memory are feelings and trauma experienced by the group. The sorrow of exile, injustice, and Kamaiya practice is

evident in Tharu songs. Both dread and despair are present in their performances. According to Beristain et al. (p. 118), the predominant emotion of mourning, sadness, promotes social cohesiveness and collective survival by fortifying social relationships.

Additionally, sadness is meant to help with reality-checking, loss acceptance, and making plans for future performance that will be even greater. According to Beristain et al. (119), fear is a prevalent feeling among victims of violence that drives them to run away. It also serves as a guide for self-defense activity by drawing attention to the threat. The unfairness of the repressive dictatorship is also shown in their performances, along with rage. While they may not always lead to violence, anger and a sense of injustice can inspire and maintain goal-directed behavior. Beristain et al. quote authors like Oberschall who argue that social insurrection stems psychologically from feelings of wrath and injustice (120). Tharu resistance and hardship during the Kamaiya practice are reflected in most of their songs.

Snyder Greta Fowler in her discussion of identity politics fluidity advocates for the multivalent recognition movement as a superior means of establishing excluded identity. Because of her, multivalent recognition subverts the predominance of prevailing identity groups, lessens internal suppression, and deters marginalization (250). Social devaluation leads to dominance. It disperses the dominating group. Social devaluation causes material misery because it limits the oppressed groups through the proliferation of negative or constricting group stereotypes (Fowler 251). Regaining lost agency and a distinct identity, however, is the purpose of the recognition movement. Through institutional, legal, and cultural-political techniques, recognition movements, as stated by Fowler (249), revalue previously marginalized collective identities. In their pursuit of multivalent recognition, actors and leaders ought to contribute to the evolving collective identity.

Via the disruption of the symbolic framework that serves the hegemonic group, actors participating in the multivalent recognition movement should constructively revalue a communal identity (Fowler 254). Thus, the only way forward for her is through coalition work. A multicultural society should liberate identity politics from monovalent recognition. Differentiated tribes must be represented in a multicultural society. Recognizing one group diminishes social cohesion and stifles the existence of other groups. Accordingly, a politics of multivalent recognition can help cultivate the cross-identity alliances required to provoke dramatic shifts in an identity field (257). Intersectionality, diverse identities, and multicultural society are all brought together by such an approach.

Tharu lifestyle has been impacted by modernity. They haven't really had the progressive growth, agency, and change they were hoping for. According to Marshall Berman, modernity is "being in a setting that offers us adventure, power, joy, growth, and transformation of the world and ourselves" (qtd. in Bush 15). The community's current struggle is to accept the change that fosters their agency and economic development. David Harvey discovers that many oppressed groups have adopted a scientific worldview due to the logical supremacy of science. He contends that science allowed modernity to rule nature and create a logical social structure (qtd. in Bush 12). Modernity instilled reason into their prehistoric way of thinking. According to Paul G. Hiebert, modernity appeals to the idea of rationality embedded in the machine. A large portion of life became commodified and commercialized as a result of rational order, control, efficiency, production, and profit being major values (qtd. in Bush 15). The main disadvantage for the indigenous communities was that they were compelled to commercialize their lives.

Conclusion

The Tharu population of Nepal and India, which is split by the border between the two countries yet bound together by a shared culture and destiny, is the subject of this paper's critical observation. Similar sociocultural experiences are shared by the Tharus residing across the borderland, who are frequently sidelined in their representation while mainstream policies and strategies are being drafted. In order to strengthen the local economy, the conclusion of this paper makes the case that both countries' governments ought to work together on the common tribal area development initiatives. The region and its abundant forest resources may be developed and promoted in order to turn them into genuine ecological parks and popular tourist attractions. Engaging in such endeavors will contribute to the advancement of the community's economic and educational standards, in addition to safeguarding the ecology and purity of nature.

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John Boyne's *The Boy in Stripped Pyjamas*: A Critique of Bare Life

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Abstract

Nailed to the starve and immolate policy hailed by the Nazi in the concentration camps, John Boyne's novel, The Boy in Stripped Pyajamas rethinks the immured detainees' bare lives that have lost socio-political entitlements. The study assesses precarious life of the indentured detainees which ironically implies their inclusion in the holocaust politics. The encamped Jews have lost their biȯs, qualified life which means they are consigned to hold zoė, a mere biological life that every living species shares. In addition, it examines their subjectification to killable body. Informed by Giorgio Agamben's extension of Michel Foucault's biopolitics especially the notion of homo sacer who is destined to hold the bare life after stripping down of his biȯs, the study probes into Jewish ripped off life in concentration camp surfaced in Boyne's narrative. Agamben's notion of biopolitics contours a critical insight to interrogate the politically hacked lives of the immured Jews in a normalized regime of Hitler in Boyne's narrative. The study critically reads the abject bare life of the holocaust detainees focusing on their outlawed lives. It concludes that Boyne's narrative constitutes a literary discourse to brood over how Nazi regime rips off detainees' human position that helps to advocate the human rights of ordinary people.

Keywords: Biȯs, concentration camp, bare life, outlaw, pogrom, and Jews detainee.

Introduction

John Boyne, an Irish novelist whose *The Boy in Stripped Pyjamas* sheds light on the indentured life of Jewish people in the concentration camps of Nazi during the regime of Hitler. It surfaces their abjection to dehumanization and their fortitude of the severe punishment before their genocide. Looked into their lives unguarded by legal protection in the camps, John Boyne critiques the historicity of *pogrom*[1] aka life purging Nazi policy that marks the killable lives of Jewish detainees without incurring homicide. The novel opens with a nine-year naïve German protagonist, Bruno, son of Gestapo commander who incidentally observes and witnesses the reduction of Jews to the bare life

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[1] The word pogrom derived from Russian language refers to Jews massacre infamously known as anti- Semitism in Germany during WW Second. Boyne appropriates it as the crematorium set by Nazi in the novel that functions as the Nazi's necropolitics.

which is graphically staged through their starved and indentured lives in the concentration camps. The detainees' carceral lives index their relegation to the mere biological body, *zoě* that illustrates the loss of their human dignity in the community. Thenovel further unbuttons human complicity and their cog-like state of machineries to mitigate the dire violation of human rights upon observing the story from Bruno's father, Nazi commanding officer.

This research engages in Giorgio Agamben's concept of the sovereign ban[2] and elongated state of exception to study the Jewish bare life: life beyond any legal protection inscribed on the innocent Jews in Boyne's novel. Bare life further refers to the loss of human dignity and sheer fact of survival that does not guarantee the quality of life and social entitlements. Above all, because of the ban, the Jews are rampantly detained and indentured and passed through the genocide in the crematorium which the Nazis names as a camp. This study argues that Nazi's exertion of sovereign ban emerged from the declaration of the state of exception that produces the Jews' biopolitical body which means bare life stripped of citizenry rights whom anybody can harm and kill without incurring homicide. Indeed, the regime's in Boyne's imaginary aims at producing the biopolitical body to safeguard the sovereign. The genocidal killing of Jews in which Bruno accidently turns out to be a victim along with other detainees further brings Agamben's notion of *homo sacer*[3] and *Muselmann*[4], camp survivor to light. These encamped inmates critique the outlawed life and the normalized and elongated the state of exception. In this context, their bodies also appeal to the reduction to *zoé*, biological life into non-political body from which labour is extracted before their purge in the Nazi *pogrom*. Aiming to investigate the political and social death of the Jews *muselmanners* in the Nazi camps as the prime objective, this study figures out Nazi regime's political plan of constructing the camps and producing the biologically and politically denuded bare life of the encamped Jews. Further, this study assesses Nazi's normalized state of exception and its constitution of the Jewish bare life which is the politicized form of *zoé* that also navigates the socio-political death of Jews before their inclusive exclusion and immolation in the camps.

Fed up by the suffocating military environment of the family and driven by his ardent curiosity Bruno explores the fence of the camp. Thereby he encounters with a captive Jewish boy, Shmuel. When he finds gloomy Shmuel of his age inside the camp in muddy and stripped pajamas, it astonishes Bruno because his serviceman (one time professional doctor from Hungary, who nursed his wound) has the same stripped clothes. Upon their meeting Bruno knows the state-led disappearance of Shmuel's father which signifies his *muselmann* state of life that also refers to his bare life that features Agamben's notion of the state of exception that the regime holds the authority to launch. Unaware of Nazi's political complicity to exercise the *pogrom,* he enters the

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2   Agamben's biopolitics sovereign ban means the state of ripping off the civil right of the people under the state of exception (martial law or emergency declaration) which the regime extends and attempts to normalize.

3   By homo sacer Agamben refers to an archaic Roman figure excluded from society whom anybody may harm beyond law. In him Agamben traces the juxtaposition of bare life and sovereignty. The study deems the Jews detainees akin to this figure because of their indentured life and victimization in Nazi's pogrom.

4   Borrowing Primo Levi's Muselmann concept, Agamben refers to the survivors of Nazi camp who witness the non-human treatment there. The Jews of Boyne's text also replicate this notion. The muselmanner is the indistinct figure between living and non-living because of his insensitiveness to the environment after his repealing of human qualifications.

camp (crematorium) where he along with other captive Jews, is possibly exterminated. This episode justifies the normalization of the sovereign ban that harms the Jewish captives.

This study probes into the bare life of Shmuel and Pavel who are the passive recipientencamped Jews. Drawn by the coercive measures; encampment, starving and crematorium as the normal strategies in Third Reich that not only subjugates the non-Aryans but also sabotages them in Boyne's opus, it deciphers the state led violation in *The Boy in Stripped Pyjammas*. The Nazi camp, moreover, indexes the liquidation of Jews which Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitical racism outlined in *Society Must Be Defended* attributes as expulsion, ostracism, sabotage, and hierarchization. I argue that the captive Jews, passivized Pavel and Shmuel among others conform Agamben's concept of *homo sacer* whose socio-political status has been revoked. And yet, the deployment of these indentured and starved Jews for menial job before genocide shows their relegation to bestial life, zoë. This study focuses on the power of Nazi that subjects the Jews to torture and immolation. Taking recourse to Foucault's insights of biopolitics extended by Agamben in *Homo Sacer* series, this article postulates that Nazi's power subjugates the Jews to the state of bestial life. This Nazi governmentality ultimately offers them the bare life. To put it differently, the Jews adopts the creaturely life (life without *biós*, or a socio-political life) that can be killed with impunity. It also informs about the politics over the life of indentured Jews while invoking their genocide during the Holocaust.

Literature Review

Foucault in *History of Sexuality* entails that biopolitics as a symbiosis of politics with life in order to propagate the capacity of the latter. To escalate life's productivity, it wieldstwo different measures; 'anatomo-politics and biopolitics.' The first regards human body as machine and can be controlled and smartened by means of exercises and disciplinary measures whereas the second assumes human as species and his/her life processes from natality to death can be regulated. He also observes the mutation of biopolitics (politics that nurtures life) into thanatopolitics (life depriving politics) in Nazi racism when he analyses the intertwined relation between life and politics. Contrary to his notion of life escalating biopolitics, he argues that life seizing thanatopolitics is to safeguard the regime from the biotic foe that "allows someone to be killed and destroy the enemy" (*Society* 256). Yet he explains that this killing is on the ground of saving life which Agamben, Esposito, and Mbembe regards as the spillover effect of biopolitics. His racial killing also justifies the death function in the economy of biopower/biopolitics (258). He further enumerates racism as "political death, expulsion,rejection, and hiearchization of superior and inferior category of people" (256) that race incorporates to efface the enemy by means of hierarchization of life that values the worth of life, i.e., what life matters and what does not (256), who is to live and who is to die.

Critiquing Foucault's state racism that replicates *pogrom* as the tools of safeguarding the Nazi which Roberto Esposito explains as their rationality exposed through the logic of immunity whereby the regime deploys it upon itself to protect life against its own constituent negativity that places it in danger (Prozorov 803). Building idea on Esposito's notion of immunization, Prozorov remaps Foucauldian racism as the inversion of immunizing power or thanatopolitics which Agamben appropriates in his *homo sacer* thesis, whereby the state purposefully rips off all the citizenry rights and turns the denizens into disposable bodies. ToMagnus Fiskesjö, Agamben's revisits *homo sacer*, an

ancient Roman outlawed figure with bare life (*vita nuda*) embodiment, chiefly for assessing the civic outlawry, social exclusion,and the scam of rule of law in the Western democracy (1).

Boyne's novel has been analyzed by Ned Curthoys as the historical lies and the projection of Bruno as the victim of genocide. He signals it as an attempt of "dismissing the victimization of the Jews to advance the victimization of others" (262). Curthoys assumesthat deeming Bruno, son of the Nazi commander who is a perpetrator, a victim of camp is to disregard the victims WWII; Jews, Gypsies, and Romani people coercively kept in theconcentration camp. Thus, he dismantles the distortion of historical fact. Similarly, Anita Gnanamuttu and Bathru Nisa also link Boyne's novel with the historicity of WWII:

> According to the historical context, Germany annexed Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland. During World War II, Jews were detained and killed there. Between 1942 and 1945, the German Nazi Party, which was based on anti-Semitic ideology, utilized these concentration camps to kill six million Jews as well as about five million non-Jewish persons, such as homosexuals, Romani people, and the mentally sick. (127)

Gnanamuttu and Bathru highlight the historicity of genocide and the ideology of anti semiticism, sabotaging the non- Aryans, that invokes Achile Mbembe's thesis on necropolitics wherein he focuses on the anti-Semitism of Nazi that provokes them to build concentration camps and for killing more than eleven million people during WWII. The dehumanizing policy of the Third Reich had imprisoned millions of non-Aryans and killed them arbitrarily which is the backdrop of Boyne's narrative which critiques the bare life of the Jews.

Exploring Boyne's novel, Susan Scheps also juxtaposes the novel with the historical allegory that informs real events of controlling the biological. She opines it to be a "sort of historical allegory because of the juxtaposition of the tale, which makes it allegorical rather than realistic. Many incidents in the story, although fictional, exhibit historical accuracy…thebook, read as historical allegory or fable, clearly presents the atmosphere in Nazi Germany, hinting at violence, blind hatred, deplorable conditions, bullying, and fearfulness" (qtd. in Tyagi and Kalloli 195). Scheps's excavation of Nazi led holocaust, harvesting the racial vengeance, driving Jews hungry and their bestialization in the camps distills the real historical events which seems akin to thanatopolitics, the shortcoming of life caring biopolitics. Though the novel remaps the historicity of Holocaust, its narrative looks like an allegory of engineering the life of the Jews which is the biopolitics that not only promotes life but also controls in Foucauldian euphemism for extermination.

 To mention to the WWII and holocaust Saul Friedlander observes, "the extermination of the Jews of Europe is as accessible to both representation and interpretation as any other historical event" (qtd. in Michael Gray 110). What Friedlander points out is the necropolitical   pactices in Europe during WWII and prior to it along with the advent of European colonialism that aims at sabotaging the populace to safeguard the sovereign. Holocaust primarily turns out to be an anchoring event to read the atrocity over humanity. In "Excessive Ambition in John Boyne's "The Boy in Striped Pajamas" Nelda Hayati and Muhd. Al- Hafizh unpack how Ralf's unbridled ambition for the post of Nazi Commandant provokes him to be the faithful army to launch genocide program which neither Bruno nor his mother loves at all. Their dislike is on ground of bare life of the innocent Jews and other.

The critiques above show the extermination and incarceration of Jews or broadly speaking about the repercussion of anti-Semitism over their life to control the biological aspects of Jews to promote

the Germans' eugenics. However, while informing the readers about holocaust and its dehumanizing policy, my contention remains to explore the bare life of the Jews produced by Nazi policy and the justification of their rituals of truth, veridiction (truth of the ruler inculcated among the denizens) over them let alone the women in Boyne's narrative.

Methodology

Foucauldian biopolitics along with its extended version by Agamben in *Homo Sacer* functions as the tool of descriptive and critical analysis of the textual evidences in Boyne's novel. In respect with the Jews' starved and indentured life deprived of human rights in his opus that complies with the sovereign ban witnessed by Shmuel, a Jew *homo sacer*: a legally abandoned figure. Therefore, this article draws on the biopolitical theoretical model to look into the outlawry and sovereign ban of the Jews in the novel. Because the Jews' victimhood before their genocide in Nazi camps suggests and invokes Foucault's biopolitical racism and Agamben's bare life inbuilt with *homo sacer,* writ large. Because their biopolitical theories significantly focus on the embeddedness of state politics with human life and also inform about its repercussion over human life.

Foucault in *History of Sexuality* suggests ways to look into the life. Particularly his biopolitical concern of managing the body and administrating life (140) has been inverted in Boyne's novel because this "politicization of life" (120), in Agamben's term, constitutes the *homo sacer* tan outcast kept away from the protection of law. To Foucault biopolitics targets on human body to smarten via education and training to contribute in economy which is 'anatomo-politics'. Additionally, it also regulates the vital aspects of life like birth, hygiene, longevity and death aka biopolitics. He also analyses the thanapolitical swings of biopolitics when he talks of biopolitical racism in Nazi rule but claims that racism is at the cost of saving life. However, he never explains in his state racism to answer whose life matters more. Racism, in biopolitical terms, is the division of groups to determine higher and lower "races;" the higher race being the protected and privileged population (10), explicates Kowalski. Racism, indeed, is the inverted transformation of biopolitics into thanatopolitics whereby the state justifies its murder of its populace.

Taking the recourse to Hannah Arendt's totalitarian regime that aims at biological life which occupies political domain in modern time and the Foucault's carceral discussion as well as biopower, Agamben fills in the lacuna of their concepts in *Homo Sacer* series. More precisely, to Michael A. Peters, Agamben evaluates Foucauldian technology of self (subjectification) and political techniques of the state (subjection of body) to produce bare life. Agamben posits himself to look into the age long nexus of biopolitical modes of power and sovereign (juridico-political) power. *Homo Sacer* and *The State of Exception* by Agamben inform the logic of sovereignty for the declaration of ban to distill *homo sacer,* bare life as the nucleus activity of sovereign. He shows the interface between bare life and sovereign power and situates that camp not *polis* (city) as the biopolitical paradigm of modern regime (Peters 330). Agamben further probes into how the sovereign declares the state of exception and prolongs it by developing the discourse of normalization**.** In sum his biopolitics, "production of *homo sacer,*" an archaic Roman figure whose citizenry rights are ripped off and whom anybody may harm with impunity. Thereby, the state includes populations within the realm of sovereign power to exclude them from the socio-political status which never allows them to claim protection from the violence of the law and gets suspended in the paradigm of inclusive exclusion (Dietrich 4). While

building idea onFoucault's biopolitics, power's hold over life, or, political techniques of the state aka subjection of body to technologies of the self aka subjectification of the denizens, Agamben largely contends that the exertion of power for the sovereign ban that undeniably creates the*homo sacer* whom bare life is inbuilt since antiquity. The distinction of biological existence, *zoé* that Aristotle calls 'the nutritive life,' self-preserving life confined in domestic affair, *oikos* and politically equipped life,*biós* in Greek era was apparent but now, as Agamben postulates, it has been blurred because human life has been affiliated with the politicaleconomy: production and labour required for the state. Therefore, ordinary human life alsoturns out to be a political site in which work, production and family are in a web.

More precisely, the production of biopolitical body i.e. *homo sacer* who embodies *zoé*, is the nucleus activity of modern sovereign. Because this form of life is expected tocontribute to re/produce, or, labour so that it is purposefully included in the politics in orderto be excluded. This inclusive exclusion of life is manifested, as per Agamben, in*Homo Sacer*as the Roman figure, *homo sacer*, a human being without social security or*biós*whom anybody can harm with impunity. Hence, this unqualified figure is assigned bare life. Perceived by pervasive exclusion, the indistinction between*zoé*and*biós*is visible in *homo sacer* whose social extraction of *biós*forms the bare life, "the bearer of the link betweenviolence and law" (Agamben 65). Seeing the vulnerable life under the violence constituted bylaw Agamben generalizes the fact that "we all are *homines sacri"* (Agamben 115). His allusion of bare life assigned to the *homo sacer* whose killing also does not fall under the commission of perpetrator's homicide.

The declaration of state of emergency or exertion of martial law by the sovereign, onewho holds power, forms the original political element, i.e. bare life. The suspension of law bythe sovereign per se no more safeguards the life: bare life which neither belongs to human norinhuman. To discuss this form of life Agamben cites "werewolf" (Agamben 107), a banditbearing social exclusion and legal violence marks the zone of indistinction between *biós* and *zoé*. This bare life is reiterated in *Remnants of Auschwitz* as a *Muselmann*, Jews inmates of concentration camp whose rights have been totally ripped off. To Jean Améry a *Muselmann* is s/he who is "a staggering corpse bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions"(*Remnants*41) similar to "a neomort, overcomatose person suspended between life and death" (*Homo Sacer*164). From the examples above bare life seems to be a form of life striped of social security, a disponible object: neither human nor animal, neither *zoé* nor *biós* which can be liquidated at any time like the disposable Jews retained by The Third Reich in camps as described in Boyne's novel.

Textual Discussion: Encamped Jews's subjection to homo sacer

Upon the inquiry of Bruno regarding the docile and deplorable inmates inside fence wearing striped pajamas, Ralf, a Nazi commander answers to Bruno that "they are not people at all"(55). Ralf significantly refers the social death by belittling the Jews, vulnerable otherconfined in the camp,*oikos* because their citizenry right has been rescinded and are awaiting untimely death. Their politically engineered predicament invokes Agamben's notion of *homo sacer, a*social outcast whom anybody can inflict harm without committing homicide. The camp detainees, Jews, Gypsies, disabled and children below 16 years are allegedly designatedto the*homo sacer*manufactured by the racist Nazi regime because in the camp their socio- political status has been revoked. The camp is, not the Greek *polis,*the

site of modern regime whereby the revocation of the *biós*, politically well off life that renders people fall into *zoé*. Focusing on the deadening ambience and the harvest of corpses in the concentration camps, Boyne's worthy tome, *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas* explores the thanatopolitics in the form of the Jew's extermination as observed by Bruno, son of Nazi commander.

Focused on the *pogrom* of the Jews in "Out-With" (222) Boyne's novel inboxes the Jews' reduction to being the subject to Nazi power. When Bruno sees starving but laboring children and people in the camp through his window, he informs his sister, Gretel, who immediately dismisses the rampant social injustice by asserting that they are inferior filthy beings and do not take regular bath either (39). Her individualization of this racist ideology seems to be indoctrinated by Ralf, her father and the history teacher who impart the Nazi veridiction (state composed truth) German race as superior being. Later Bruno also reiterates "Germans are superior to other" (86) while talking to Shmuel by the camp fence. Thereby Shmuel does not rebut because he has already been engrained, although a junior, with the injustice *pogrom*, aka anti-semitism. His lack of rebuttal appeals Louis Althusser's interpellation of ideology and its internalization by the subjects. Along with it, his endorsement of Bruno's German racism stands on the ground of inculcating and disseminating the veridiction (truth constructed for anti-Semitism in the camp) because of his *Muselmann* state which as per Agamben enacts as the ugliest form of bare life produced by the Nazi in their concentration camps.

By the same token, the repressive state agencies and the inculcation of veridiction of coercive ideology not only unpersons the Jews, Bruno and his mother but also turns them into the *Muselmann*, the docile witness of the Nazi injustice in the camp whose instinct and rationality or independent conscience has been crushed so that they become as docile as the animal, or, they resemble the neomort, overcomatose body whose organ (here labor in the camp) can be exploited. Hunger stricken Shmuel is beaten and has got a bruised eye (172) so is with Pavel, the doctor whose professional proficiency has been dismissed because of their gene. They represent the afflicted Jews of the Nazi camp whose *zoé,* mere life has been confined in the *oikos* (here, euphemism for concentration camp and the kitchen of Ralf in Auschwitz) are the epitomes of *homo sacer* endowed with bare life, an outlawed life. The Nazi governmental rationality which indeed is not the exception but a well-designed rule exerts power to produce the biopolitical body, bare life of Shmuel whose caring family (mother teaches, father has a watch store, and Josef, Samuel's sibling who with he used to go to school) after breakfast (129). And Pavel, a Hungarian doctor ripped off his profession when turns out to be the camp prisoner with striped pajamas (85). Because their *biós,* social life and identity has been snatched away pressing them to adopt with *zoé*, bare life before their extermination in the gas chamber Out-With (131) young Bruno pronounces for Auschwitz.

On the other hand, the hegemonic masculinity of Ralf, Bruno's father also promotes in producing the bare life of his mother and the Jews inmates of Camp. Because Ralf's ardent faith in anti-Semitism enables him to get promotion as Nazi Commandant in Auschwitz. Fed up his hegemony in the family Bruno's mother unbosoms her pang as, "We do not have luxury of thinking …. Some people make all the decisions for us" (15). Her plight shows that how she is succumbed to power which reduces her to a mere living species, bare life whose life stripped down to its mere biological survival. Her verbal protest invokes the bare life of female who does not have the agency nor any social position. The difference between the captive Jews and her is that she is secluded at home, *oikos* and they are immured in the cell. Incorporating it, Tyagi and Kaloli state "The female figures' … reflect their dissatisfaction

and want of autonomy in a situationorchestrated, once again, by figures of male dominance" (197). It allegedly illustrates the zoeification (creaturely life) of Bruno's mother who also has a bare life because her demandsare frequently unheard of. Literally, bare life attributed to *homo sacer* who metaphorically stands for all the victims in Boyne's novel.

Additionally, Ralf's deep interest in exercising Nazi ideology does not care hisdaughter and son. Nelda Hayati and Muhd. Al- Hafizh seize his ambition for promotion thatmatters higher than their education under the hegemony of Nazism that indoctrinates themparochial German racism: "About the great wrongs that has been done to you" (Boyne101)which fills revenge in their mind against the Jews. This indoctrination serves as the largely toconstitute the desired subjects. To retain the kids away from their right to education signalstheir looted *biós*, i.e. they are *homo sacer* whom anybody harm can be done and it is beyond any legal matter.

While examining the outlawed life of Pavel and Shmuel it can be deduced that theiroutlawry is the corollary of the state of emergency declared by Nazi sovereign. On the onehand, their *biós*, public life has been stripped off and the other they are confined for their labour which is the unavoidable part of *zoé* the regime expects to be functional. "The wheelbarrow" (40) of Shmuel though he is a minor and Pavel as the page despite hiscompetency in medical field shed light on their inclusive exclusion from public freedom. Thestate of exception constitutes a "point of imbalance between public law and political fact"(qtd. in Agamben1) because it follows the ancient maxim "necessity has no law." To put itdifferently, the declaration of emergency does not follow the normal course of law so it isamorphous, in the sense it covers the legal and illegal state both in order to impart the barelife to them whose social position is politically vulnerable. The Jews, women, children, Armenian, and the Gypsies belong to this category in Boyne's narrative.

Moreover, restriction over Bruno to explore the camp area where he makes arendezvous with Shmuel, who is possibly killed in the *pogrom* in camp. Pavel's dismissal from doctoral rank and conversion into the page, and Shmuel's forced labor camp afteralienating him from his parents solidify the state of emergency and its corollary of begettingtheir bare life who in reality are turned into *persona non-grata,* person who is relegated to animal state, not acknowledged and safeguarded by the law.

Conclusion: Deadly Bare Life of Jewish Detainees

Digging out the historical fact of the Nazi camps and their inhumane pogroms,Boyne's novel projects the state of exception that begets the state racism which onlysafeguards Third Reich and boycotts the other. Moreover, the outlawed group suffers from thesocial injustice and is deprived of human rights (*biós*). Obviously, the inversion of *biós* is *zoé* that is attributed with bare life. Building idea on Foucault's thanatopolitical swing ofbiopolitics: racism, Agamben forwards the thesis of bare life attributed to a socially outlawed*homo sacer* who the Jews replicate in the novel. Bruno in Boyne's narrative though the son of Nazi commandant is kept away from his educational right and finally pushed into the gas chamber: "In fact it felt completely airtight" (219) that epitomizes his neomort like figurewhose capability has been suspended.

Similarly, Bruno's mother cannot freely think of her children due to her hegemonicspouse and the *pogrom* exerted by Nazi. Her angst against Ralf turns void when she is unheard of. Thus, she succumbs to power which equates with the bare life, life with brokenvoice that Agamben explicates

in *State of Exception*. Likewise, Pavel and Shmuel, detainees of the camp are the victim of genocide who faces the political death before they are killed.Mentioned events and the characters of the novel illustrate that they have outlawed bare lifewhich is the centrality of modern regime despite its different political orientations.

In sum, their encamped life reveals not only the somatic control and its decapitationbut also their psychological engineering so that they fail to protest. In this way, Boyne'snovel critiques the relegated bare life mostly consigned to Shmuel and Pavel under the Nazi'spogrom. The Jews' docile indentured life which they embody in the camp that transcends theoikos and *zoé* epitomizing the anti-Semitist politics over their bare life. This is how they are engineered to be the *homo sacer*. Overall, Boyne's novel surfaces the thanatopolitical world of Jews wherein they are traumatized, silenced and subdued before they are exterminated.Indeed, it is the shortcoming of Foucauldian biopolitical racism that prefers sabotaging other. Obviously, the social inequality and hardship of the underdogs have been a globalphenomenon that induces bare life of minority, refugee, detainee, children, women toname but a few which Boyne critiques by entailing the ordeals of anonymous, faceless and non-human Jews. Finally, he suggests that the violation of human right in Boyne's novel epitomizes the state of exception sanctified by the regime that constitutes the vulnerable bare life of the encamped Jews.

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Sensuality and Salvation in Keith Kachtick's *Hungry Ghost*

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Abstract

This study paper rummages into Keith Kachtick's novel, Hungry Ghost (2003), which intricately intertwines themes of sensuality and salvation within the philosophical framework of Buddhism. It scrutinizes the transformative odyssey of Carter Cox, a 39-year-old libertine photographer unexpectedly forming a profound connection with a Buddhist mentor. Through the lens of Sallie B. King's Buddha Nature (1991) and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's The Bodhisattva Vow (1991), it dissects the intricate conflict between sensuality and the pursuit of spiritual redemption. Kachtick employs a distinctive second-person narrative style, consistently addressing Carter as "you", a deliberate technique to channel Carter's Buddha nature. This manifestation of inner enlightenment grants Carter prescience, enabling glimpses into the future and insights into the minds of other characters, endowing the narrative with a quasi-third-person omniscience. This intentional narrative choice acts as a prism through which readers witness the potential repercussions of Carter's surrender to primal desires versus his embrace of his Buddha nature. The exploration reveals that, by contrasting these divergent paths, the narrative transcends traditional explorations of interpersonal conflict. It beckons contemplation on the profound implications of embracing higher consciousness among the alluring pull of sensual desires. Consequently, the novel emerges not merely as a tale of personal struggle but as a canvas showcasing the intricate interplay between individual choices, spiritual dilemmas and the transformative potential inherent within Buddhist philosophy.

Keywords: *Transformative journey, spiritual exploration, instinctual desires, moral dilemmas, dharma, and editation*

Introduction

In Kachtick's *Hungry Ghost* (2003), the connecting themes of sensuality and salvation form a captivating narrative tapestry. The author skillfully navigates the complex terrain of human desire, using sensuality as a lens through which characters grapple with their inner demons. As the protagonist embarks on a journey of self-discovery, Kachtick illuminates the transformative power of sensuality in the quest for redemption. Through rich and evocative prose, *Hungry Ghost* invites readers to explore the intimate spaces where desire and salvation intersect, challenging conventional notions of spirituality and urging us to embrace the visceral aspects of the human experience.

The novel immerses readers in a world where human desires and the quest for spiritual redemption entwine in intricate ways, posing a fundamental question about the compatibility of sensuality and salvation. The characters grapple with the complexities of their inner worlds, navigating the tumultuous waters of desire while simultaneously seeking a path toward salvation. This juxtaposition raises significant issues regarding societal norms, religious expectations and personal identity. Harvey argues that Buddhism does not reject sensuality outright but instead views it as a challenge to ethical living, a struggle vividly portrayed in Carter's character (155). The novel prompts an examination of how sensuality, often perceived as antithetical to spiritual growth, can be a catalyst for personal transformation and salvation. Addressing this central problem not only engages with the characters' struggles in *Hungry Ghost* but also invites a broader reflection on the intricate interplay between the physical and metaphysical dimensions of the human experience.

The exploration of sensuality and salvation raises essential questions about the interplay between desire, spirituality, and personal transformation in the narrative. How do the characters negotiate the tension between societal expectations, religious doctrines, and their desires, particularly in relation to salvation? In what ways does sensuality influence their journeys toward self-discovery and redemption, and how does it challenge or align with traditional views of spiritual growth? These questions are key to analyzing the evolving relationship between sensuality and salvation within the novel's themes.

In exploring the themes of sensuality and salvation in *Hungry Ghost*, the hypothesis posits that the novel operates as a transformative narrative where sensuality serves as a catalyst for personal growth and spiritual redemption rather than an impediment. Through the characters' encounters with sensuality, it is expected that the novel offers a reimagining of salvation, breaking free from traditional paradigms and encouraging readers to reconsider the intricate relationship between desire and spiritual fulfillment in the broader context of the human condition. The study holds significant implications for literary scholarship, cultural discourse and our understanding of the complex interplay between desire and spiritual redemption. This research contributes to discussions on spirituality and the human experience. By examining how sensuality is portrayed as a potential avenue for salvation, it challenges preconceived notions and prompts a reevaluation of the relationship between the physical and metaphysical dimensions of life.

This study rummages into *Hungry Ghost*, which intricately intertwines themes of sensuality and salvation within the philosophical framework of Buddhism. It scrutinizes the transformative odyssey of Carter Cox, a 39-year-old libertine photographer unexpectedly forming a profound connection with a Buddhist mentor. Through the lens of Buddhist principles, it dissects the intricate conflict between sensuality and the pursuit of spiritual redemption. Kachtick employs a distinctive second-person narrative style, consistently addressing Carter as "you," a deliberate technique to channel Carter's Buddha nature. This manifestation of inner enlightenment grants Carter prescience, enabling glimpses into the future and insights into the minds of other characters, endowing the narrative with a quasi-third-person omniscience. This intentional narrative choice acts as a prism through which readers witness the potential repercussions of Carter's surrender to primal desires versus his embrace of his Buddha nature.

The exploration reveals that, by contrasting these divergent paths, the narrative transcends traditional explorations of interpersonal conflict. Zürcher examines how Buddhist narratives often include dual endings to illustrate the consequences of divergent paths, much like Kachtick's approach in his novel (212). It beckons contemplation on the profound implications of embracing higher consciousness

among the alluring pull of sensual desires. McClure explores how postsecular fiction incorporates spiritual dilemmas into urban settings, a narrative strategy Kachtick employs effectively in *Hungry Ghost* (89). The novel emerges not merely as a tale of personal struggle but as a canvas showcasing the intricate interplay between individual choices, spiritual dilemmas and the transformative potential inherent within Buddhist philosophy.

Buddha Nature

Gethin describes Buddha nature as the foundation of Mahayana Buddhism, emphasizing its role as a latent potential within all sentient beings (239). In *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, Williams discusses how the Mahayana path balances physical desires and spiritual goals, mirroring Carter's attempts to reconcile his impulses (67). The notion of Buddha nature stands as a pivotal concept in East Asian Buddhism. The theory unequivocally asserts that every sentient being inherently possesses the Buddha nature, ensuring their eventual attainment of Buddhahood. This assurance extends not only to humans but encompasses all beings traversing the six destinies—be they hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, fighting demons, humans or gods—they are all destined for Buddhahood.

The possession of Buddha nature implies that we are inherently Buddhalike, embodying the essential attributes of a Buddha, namely wisdom and compassion. In essence, we are not just future Buddhas; we are Buddhas in the present. Buddha nature represents both the potential for realizing Buddhahood inherent in all beings and the immediate, complete Buddhahood that is already within our grasp. However, our awareness of this innate Buddha nature is obscured by "adventitious defilements," such as ignorance, hatred, fear and desire—commonly recognized as Buddhist vices. For Buddha nature theory, these defilements are considered adventitious or accidental, serving as temporary veils that conceal our intrinsic Buddhahood.

Liberating oneself from past karma and breaking free from the influence that defilements wield in shaping our reality is indeed achievable. As Rahula explains, the law of karma is impartial and operates independently of divine intervention, mirroring Carter's realization that actions lead to inevitable consequences (32). Once we rid ourselves of these defilements, our Buddha nature becomes accessible through direct experience. Unlike the transient nature of defilements, our Buddha nature is an inherent aspect of the human condition, a constant presence irrespective of whether we are actively aware of it. The ability of defilements to obscure our Buddha nature is contingent upon our willingness to let past karma dictate our lives. Through the practice of meditation and the performance of meritorious deeds, we can emancipate ourselves from the shackles of our karma and actualize our Buddhahood. In fact, our Buddha nature represents our authentic and intrinsic nature, constituting our true identity.

The theory of Buddha nature asserts that every individual possesses the inherent capacity to experientially realize their enlightened nature, a birthright inherent in all sentient beings. To rummage into the concept of Buddha nature, it is imperative to first explore the term "tathagatagarbha," with which it shares a close connection. The Sanskrit term *tathagatagarbha* is a compound of two words: *tathagata* and *garbha*. The term *tathagata* itself can be interpreted in two ways—either as *tatha + agata*, meaning "thus come," or as *tatha + gata*, meaning "thus gone". It serves as an epithet for a Buddha, signifying that the Buddha is both "thus gone" in realization from the cycle of samsara to nirvana and "thus come" from nirvana to samsara to work for the salvation of all beings. Collins highlights that nirvana is not an

annihilation of self but a transcendence of attachment, resonating with Carter and Mia's discussion about divine bliss (114). Thurman compares the Buddhist nirvana to other cultural visions of divine states, suggesting that both involve absolute freedom from suffering (99).

The term *garbha* carries dual meanings, referring to both "embryo" and "womb". For the same, *tathagatagarbha* can be understood either as the "embryonic *Tathagata*" denoting the nascent Buddha or as the "womb of the *Tathagata*", signifying that which possesses the essential attributes of the *Tathagata* in their fully developed form. The former meaning is often discussed as the "cause" of the *Tathagata*, while the latter is considered the "fruit" of the *Tathagata*. As the "fruit," it represents the culmination of the Buddha Path and is interconnected with terms such as *dharmakaya*, *nirvana*, perfect wisdom and realization.

Mahāyāna Buddhism: Bodhisattva

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, in his book *The Bodhisattva Vow* (1991) incorporates concept of Bodhisattva and the process of attainment of Buddhahood and Bodhisattva: the Sanskrit term 'Bodhisattva' is the name given to anyone who, motivated by great compassion, has generated bodhichitta, which is a spontaneous wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings (1). The Sanskrit term "Bodhisattva" encapsulates the identity of individuals motivated by profound compassion and who have generated "bodhichitta". This term represents a spontaneous and altruistic wish to attain Buddhahood, not for personal liberation alone, but with the primary intention of benefiting all living beings.

The concept of Bodhisattva is deeply rooted in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which emphasizes the path of compassion and the aspiration to become a Buddha for the welfare of others. A Bodhisattva, driven by great compassion, is someone who dedicates himself or herself to the well-being and enlightenment of all sentient beings. The key element of a Bodhisattva's motivation is the cultivation of bodhichitta. "Bodhichitta" can be understood as the awakened mind or the mind of enlightenment. It is characterized by the genuine and selfless wish to attain Buddhahood, the state of perfect enlightenment, in order to lead all beings out of suffering and into the ultimate state of liberation.

The Bodhisattva path involves the practice of compassion, ethical conduct, patience, perseverance and the development of wisdom. Bodhisattvas engage in both mundane and transcendent activities to alleviate the suffering of others and guide them on the path to enlightenment. Every person can be enlightened and become a Bodhisattva, "since everyone has within their mental continuum the seeds of great compassion and bodhichitta, ……..it is possible for everyone to become a Bodhisattva" (1). Within the mental continuum of every individual, there exist latent potentials or seeds of great compassion and bodhichitta—the altruistic aspiration for enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Every individual can be awaken and can cultivate the qualities of a Bodhisattva. It asserts that the potential for awakening and becoming a Bodhisattva is present within everyone, that requires higher moral discipline,

> The Bodhisattva's moral discipline is a higher moral discipline and it is the main path that leads to the ultimate happiness of great enlightenment. In general, moral discipline is a virtuous determination to abandon any non-virtuous action. For example, if by seeing the disadvantages of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct we make a firm decision to refrain from such actions,

this is moral discipline. Similarly, the determination to refrain from lying, divisive speech, hurtful speech, idle gossip, covetousness, malice, and holding wrong views is also moral discipline. (1)

Significance of the Bodhisattva's moral discipline stands as a superior form of ethical conduct, positioning it as the primary path leading to the ultimate happiness of great enlightenment. It further provides a general understanding of moral discipline, describing it as a virtuous commitment to abstain from non-virtuous actions. The examples given illustrate the application of moral discipline in refraining from harmful behaviors and cultivating positive qualities. The moral discipline of a Bodhisattva is considered elevated and superior. This moral conduct goes beyond personal ethical standards and is oriented toward the altruistic goal of attaining enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. It involves a selfless commitment to ethical principles that contribute to the well-being of others.

Bodhisattva's moral discipline is not merely a set of rules but a transformative path leading to the ultimate state of happiness, which is enlightenment. By engaging in virtuous actions and refraining from non-virtuous ones, the Bodhisattva paves the way for spiritual progress and the realization of great enlightenment. The general definition of moral discipline is provided as a virtuous determination to abandon non-virtuous actions. Non-virtuous actions are those that cause harm, disrupt harmony and hinder spiritual progress. Moral discipline involves making a firm decision to refrain from such actions.

Specific examples of moral discipline are given, highlighting the commitment to abstain from actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, hurtful speech, idle gossip, covetousness, malice, and holding wrong views. Each of these examples represents a category of harmful behavior that a practitioner commits to avoiding. It defines moral discipline as a commitment to abstain from harmful actions and provides examples to illustrate the breadth of ethical considerations involved in this practice. The ultimate goal is framed as the attainment of great enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Hungry Ghosts: All destined for Buddhahood

Carter Cox, a dissolute freelance photographer residing in New York's East Village with his melancholic dog and a repertoire of vices, finds himself yearning for a more meaningful artistic pursuit and a reformation of his womanizing and substance-abusing lifestyle. Despite his journeys to exotic locales capturing images of models and celebrities, Carter endeavors to align his actions with the teachings he learns from his Buddhist influences. Carrying with him a "seduction kit" comprising a chessboard, cigarettes, a deck of cards, and a Cormac McCarthy novel, along with a plethora of rationalizations for his ungentlemanly behavior, Carter's internal conflict unfolds. At a Buddhist retreat in upstate New York, he encounters Mia Malone, a twenty-six-year-old woman of beauty, intelligence and seriousness. A devout Catholic with an interest in other religions, Mia is resolute about preserving her virginity until marriage.

Carter is deeply captivated by Mia, drawn to her commitment to Catholicism, her appreciation for his struggle with Buddhism and her keen interest in the world. Despite her reservations, Mia tentatively agrees to accompany Carter on a five-night beachfront photo shoot in Morocco. As their souls teeter on the edge, their escapade swiftly transforms from the ocean into turbulent waters. In a romantic standoff, they find themselves in a series of mishaps, including a car crash, arrest, encounters with a

sadistic gendarme and an attempted escape from the country. This adventurous journey leads to the revelation that karma and the human heart operate in mysterious ways. *Hungry Ghost*, with its assured pace and narrative twists, emerges as a profound and sensual novel exploring themes of chastity and salvation. It promises to satisfy readers' cravings for both entertainment and literary excellence.

Carter Cox establishes a connection with a Buddhist mentor, Wolf, who guides him to a retreat where he encounters Mia Malone, a Catholic with an inclination towards exploring various religions. However, Mia's defining trait is her commitment to maintaining her virginity until marriage. The plot takes a twist when Carter, grappling with internal conflicts between his desires and conscience, invites Mia to accompany him on a North African photo shoot as his assistant. The central question becomes whether Carter will succumb to his impulses or adhere to his principles, creating a tension not just between the characters but within Carter himself.

Yet, the novel's standout feature lies not solely in its plot but in its execution. The narrative unfolds in the second person, addressing Carter as "you" throughout. In an interview post-release, Kachtick revealed his intention for Carter to be addressed by his Buddha nature. This Buddha nature, possessing foresight into the future and insight into other characters, bestows the narrator with traits reminiscent of a third-person omniscient perspective. Another distinctive aspect is the inclusion of two endings, aiming to provide readers a glimpse into potential outcomes based on whether Carter follows his "lower nature" or adheres to his Buddha nature (Beal).

In Buddhism, the concept of sensual pleasure is often associated with attachment and craving, which are considered sources of suffering. Buddhist teachings emphasize the idea that all things in the material world are impermanent (anicca), unsatisfactory (dukkha) and devoid of a permanent self (anatta). Sensual pleasures are seen as fleeting and ultimately unable to bring lasting happiness or fulfillment. The pursuit of sensual pleasure can lead to attachment, desire and craving, which are considered obstacles on the path to enlightenment. In Buddhist philosophy, the goal is to attain Nirvana, a state of liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (samsara). To achieve this, practitioners follow the Noble Eightfold Path, which includes ethical and mental guidelines to cultivate wisdom, ethical conduct and mental discipline.

By overcoming attachment to sensual pleasures and understanding their impermanence, Buddhists believe one can break free from the cycle of suffering and attain a state of peace and liberation. One must know that he/she has to pay for his/her karma,-…..dutifully remind yourself about the cause-and-effect reality of karma, and the Buddha's maxim that sensual pleasure is like saltwater: the more you indulge, the more the thirst increases (4). Every individual engages in a mental exercise, reminding himself/herself about the cause-and-effect reality of karma. As Gethin explains, the karmic cycle is both a burden and an opportunity for enlightenment, a duality that underscores Carter's struggle to reconcile his indulgent past with his pursuit of spiritual redemption (101). This reflects the understanding that actions have consequences, reinforcing the importance of mindfulness and ethical conduct.

The reference is to the Buddha's maxim that sensual pleasure is like saltwater: the more one indulges, the more the thirst increases. This metaphor encapsulates the ephemeral and unsatisfying nature of sensory desires, emphasizing the wisdom of restraint. The passage illustrates the ongoing struggle to reconcile spiritual ideals with the challenges presented by worldly desires. In Buddhism, the relationship between the mind and the concept of self is an implied and complex topic, and it varies across different

Buddhist traditions. Generally, Buddhism teaches the doctrine of anatta, which means "non-self" or "no-soul." This doctrine asserts that there is no permanent, unchanging and independent self or soul.

From a Buddhist perspective, the conventional sense of self that we often cling to is considered an illusion. Instead of a fixed and unchanging self, Buddhism describes the mind as a continuum of ever-changing mental processes. These mental processes, including thoughts, feelings, perceptions and consciousness, are impermanent and interdependent. The absence of a permanent and independent self is a crucial aspect of the Buddhist understanding of reality.

Regarding the concept of Buddhist nature, especially in Mahayana Buddhism, there is the idea of Buddha Nature. Mia's rejection of the Buddhist disdain for materiality aligns with Mitchell and Jacoby's analysis that Mahayana Buddhism allows for a middle way between spiritual detachment and worldly engagement (198). Jackson and Makransky argue that contemporary Buddhist scholars emphasize inclusivity, a perspective mirrored in Mia's belief that God is 'quite literally, love' (46). Buddha Nature is considered the inherent potential for enlightenment within all sentient beings. It is described as a pure and awakened quality that is not tarnished by defilements. In this context, the mind is seen as having the potential to recognize and embody this Buddha Nature through spiritual practice and awakening.

While Buddhism negates the existence of a fixed, permanent self, it does acknowledge the dynamic nature of the mind and emphasizes the transformative potential inherent in all beings through the realization of their Buddha Nature. The relationship between the mind, self and Buddhist nature is deeply intertwined in the philosophical and contemplative aspects of Buddhist teachings. Wolf had explained that "to be mindful is to be full of Mind—Buddha Nature—your higher, omniscient Self. The nature of Mind is like pond water, …..unstirred, it remains clear" (4). Carter is often confused between his mind and desire, and blends them wrongly,

> For several tense moments you listened to each other breathing, your indecision palpable. "Do I want to be a bodhisattva or nibble on those Saxon breasts?" you asked yourself. "Couldn't we fuck mindfully?" Despite your bristly tumescence you refrained from touching her, and when she moved closer to the bed you took a protective step backwards. (7)

The quoted lines describe a moment of internal conflict and tension between the desire for sensual pleasure and the contemplation of a higher spiritual path, possibly that of a bodhisattva. The tone suggests a struggle between conflicting impulses, portraying an implied and internal dialogue within Carter. In this extract, the emphasis is on breathing that suggests a focus on mindfulness, perhaps indicating an attempt to bring awareness to the present moment, a key aspect of Buddhist practice.

The internal struggle becomes explicit with the question, "Do I want to be a bodhisattva or nibble on those Saxon breasts?" This juxtaposition reflects a dilemma between pursuing a path of selfless compassion and service (as embodied by a bodhisattva) and succumbing to more immediate sensual desires. The question implies a conflict between spiritual aspirations and the pull of carnal desires. Lopez notes that mindfulness in Buddhism involves awareness and non-attachment, themes that underline Carter's conflict between desire and his spiritual aspirations (122). The proposition "Couldn't we fuck mindfully?" introduces a somewhat ironic attempt to reconcile the conflicting desires. It suggests an awareness of the practice of mindfulness, even in the context of a sensual act. However, the use of explicit language adds a layer of tension and contradiction to the attempt at combining mindfulness with a physical act typically associated with desire and attachment.

The description of refraining from physical contact despite a "bristly tumescence" indicates a conscious effort to resist the pull of immediate gratification. The decision to take a protective step backward when the other person moves closer to the bed reflects a physical manifestation of the internal conflict, emphasizing a hesitancy to engage in the desired action. Carter is a womanizer and his sex desire is much stronger than his Buddhist nature (17) and complication between desire and mind is in the heart of the narrative. His mentor's words always guide him to his Buddhist nature,

> "All humans by nature are Buddhas, as ice by its nature is water," Christopher once said. "Buddhahood is like the sun, and the ego is like a dark cloud blocking the view. Even though you might not see the sun in the sky, it's always there, Carter. That's what 'Buddha' means— to have awakened to this truth. Everyone has the potential to become a Buddha. Everyone. Even you, love." (28)

Here, Christopher Wolf conveys a fundamental concept in Buddhism known as Buddha Nature. The analogy he uses is powerful and aims to illustrate the inherent potential for enlightenment within every human being. The comparison of all humans to Buddhas is framed by the analogy of ice and water, emphasizing a transformative understanding. The analogy of ice and water suggests that just as ice is essentially water in a frozen state, all humans are essentially Buddhas in a latent or unawakened state. This implies that the potential for enlightenment, or Buddhahood, is innate in every individual. The shift from ice to water symbolizes the transformative process of realizing one's Buddha Nature, where the frozen state of ignorance and delusion gives way to the fluidity of awakened understanding.

The analogy continues with the comparison of Buddhahood to the sun. Buddhahood is described as a radiant and constant presence, akin to the sun in the sky. However, the ego is likened to a dark cloud that obstructs the view of this luminous truth. This metaphor underscores the idea that enlightenment is ever-present but may be obscured by the clouds of ignorance, self-centeredness and attachment that constitute the ego. The statement, "That's what 'Buddha' means—to have awakened to this truth. Everyone has the potential to become a Buddha. Everyone. Even you, love," encapsulates the essence of the Buddhist teaching. The term "Buddha" is explained as one who has awakened to the fundamental truth of existence. Wolf extends this notion to affirm that everyone, regardless of their current state, possesses the potential to realize this awakening, emphasizing inclusivity and the universality of the path to enlightenment (28). The affectionate term "love" adds a personal and compassionate touch to the message, reinforcing the encouragement for the listener to recognize their own inherent Buddha Nature.

> "Karma is the Sanskrit term for action," he reminds everyone. Turn fuh auction. "The law of karma meticulously accounts for every thought, every word, every deed. This means that everything, absolutely everything, we do with our body or mind has a corresponding result. Our actions, good or bad, will eventually ripen into fruit—or the dreaded lurgy." (38)

Karma, originated from Sanskrit, is fundamentally about actions. That is to turn to action. The concept of karma in Eastern philosophies suggests that, every action, whether it's a physical deed, a spoken word, or a mere thought, contributes to one's karmic account. No action is without consequence. Every action, whether intentional or unintentional, will have repercussions. The consequences of our actions will manifest over time. "The dreaded lurgy" is likely a colloquial expression for negative

consequences or undesirable outcomes. Wolf seems to be conveying the idea that karma, as the law of cause and effect, takes into account every aspect of our actions—thoughts, words, and deeds. The consequences, whether positive or negative, will unfold in due course, akin to fruits ripening on a tree or the manifestation of undesirable outcomes, depending on the nature of our actions. Buddha nature, karma and results can be realized through meditation,

> Poetry is the silence between the words. Likewise, meditation is the emptiness—the openness—between the thoughts. Rest in that emptiness, and you're resting in your omniscient Buddha Nature. Allow Buddha Nature to rise naturally during your meditations, and Buddha Nature will teach itself. (39)

Wolf's statement draws a profound parallel between poetry and meditation, asserting that, much like the significance of silence between words in poetry, the essence of meditation lies in the emptiness and openness between thoughts. The advice is to rest in this mental emptiness, suggesting that within such stillness, one connects with their omniscient Buddha Nature—the inherent, awakened nature within every individual according to Buddhist philosophy. Thurman describes meditation as the space between thoughts, where clarity emerges—a principle reflected in Christopher Wolf's teachings to Carter about stillness (64). By allowing this Buddha Nature to naturally surface during meditation, Wolf proposes a self-guided process of learning and understanding. The quote encapsulates the idea that the quiet spaces in both poetry and meditation hold a profound wisdom, and by embracing the openness within one's consciousness, one can tap into a deeper understanding of their true nature.

Wolf's idea, "Making a vow takes strength, keeping a vow gives you strength (54)," resonates particularly well with the concept of the Bodhisattva vow in Buddhism. The Bodhisattva vow is a commitment taken by individuals aspiring to attain Buddhahood not only for their own liberation but also for the benefit and enlightenment of all sentient beings. Initiating this vow demands strength as it represents a profound dedication to selfless service and compassion. However, the true strength, as Wolf suggests, lies in the consistent practice of upholding the Bodhisattva vow. By steadfastly working towards the well-being and enlightenment of others, practitioners not only contribute to the welfare of the world but also cultivate a deep inner strength derived from the fulfillment of their altruistic commitment. The transformative power of the vow is reflected in the ongoing journey of compassion and selflessness, reinforcing the idea that the act of keeping such a vow becomes a continuous source of strength for the Bodhisattva practitioner.

> Whatever sustenance you drew from Christopher and Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche and the demure Miss Malone, has managed, in just seven nights, to give way to something rotten and hollow— and perhaps, you fear, beyond your control. You close your eyes and squeeze your temples, two or three of the more gruesome snapshots lingering in your brain like a septic stink. Regardless, your body still hungers for something. "Fuck, fuck, fuck." (57)

In this quotation, the narrator reflects on a shift in the emotional and psychological landscape, suggesting that the sustenance gained from influences like Christopher Wolf, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche and Miss Malone has swiftly deteriorated into a sense of hollowness and decay within just seven nights. The use of vivid imagery, such as "something rotten and hollow," conveys a profound sense of internal disintegration and a fear that this unsettling transformation may be slipping beyond the

narrator's control. The act of closing the eyes and squeezing the temples signifies a desperate attempt to manage the overwhelming sensations, with disturbing images lingering like an inescapable stench in the mind. Despite this internal turmoil, there's a physical hunger (sex) persisting, possibly indicating a deeper craving or void that remains unfulfilled. The repetition of expletives, "Fuck, fuck, fuck," underscores the intensity of the narrator's distress and frustration, encapsulating the visceral and disconcerting nature of their current emotional state. This distress is intensified by the pornographic DVD (57).

For meditation, the narrator suggests Carter to have his "eyes shut, you place the palms of your hands together, bow your head, and whisper to that dimly flickering spark in your chest, "I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the Dharma. I take refuge in the Sangha" (62). The narrator describes a moment of contemplative and spiritual practice. With eyes shut, the individual assumes a posture of reverence by placing the palms of their hands together and bowing their head. This physical gesture signifies a humble and respectful acknowledgment. The whispered words express a formal declaration of taking refuge in the three fundamental aspects of Buddhism known as the Triple Gem. This recitation and physical gesture are part of a ritualistic act that signifies a deepening connection with the core tenets of Buddhist practice, providing a sense of spiritual grounding and commitment to the path. Sex and love are different things. Catholics regard marriage as a sacrament but sex as a hungry ghost, a sin. Buddhists also have the same notion about sex. Sex is a sin. Mai finds it contradictory because all religions agree that God is, all literally, love.

> I routinely hear or read, Carter, how we Catholics regard sex as Hungry Ghost having the nature of sin. How marriage can be a sacrament if sex is a sin, I will leave for others to determine. And I disagree passionately with the Buddhist notion that the world and the flesh are evil. Things cannot be evil. You Buddhists have it backwards: The work of heaven is material, the work of hell is entirely spiritual.

> "Any person who truly loves will go to heaven." "Who then goes to hell?" "Someone who imposes hell on himself. Someone who says that he wants to have no part of God, no part of love, no part of joy. It's all about the disposition of the heart, Carter. God is, quite literally, love." (83)

In the above extract, Mia challenges common perceptions about Catholicism's view on sex and expresses disagreement with a perceived Buddhist notion. She rejects the idea that Catholics regard sex as inherently sinful, but not particularly in the context of marriage being considered a sacrament. She passionately opposes the Buddhist perspective that labels the world and the flesh as evil, asserting that things themselves cannot be inherently evil. Mia then presents a provocative reversal, claiming that, in her view, the work of heaven is material, while the work of hell is entirely spiritual, challenging conventional religious beliefs. However, she concludes with a more inclusive and compassionate perspective, stating that anyone who truly loves will go to heaven. The question of who goes to hell is answered with an emphasis on personal disposition, suggesting that hell is a self-imposed state for those who reject love and joy, highlighting Mia's belief in the fundamental nature of God as love. This dialogue captures an implied exploration of religious and philosophical perspectives on morality, love and the afterlife.

> "Yes. God is a being, not a thing. Man and woman are made in the image of God, not the other way around."

> "In my ear, heaven and nirvana sound more similar than different. They're realms. States of divine, transhuman bliss, where there's absolute freedom and no suffering. Buddhists believe that one reaches 'heaven' by dissolving the ego, the artificial self."

"I don't believe that self can dissolve self. Who is capable of dissolving the self?"

"A Buddha."

"But you're not a Buddha."

"Ahh—yes I am. And so are you. We're all potential Buddhas." (84)

In this dialogue between Mia and Carter, there is a philosophical exploration of the nature of God, the self and divine states. Mia starts by expressing the view that God is a being, emphasizing a personal and sentient understanding of the divine. She further asserts that humans are made in the image of God, emphasizing the inherent divinity within humanity. The conversation then shifts to a comparison between heaven and nirvana. Mia notes the perceived similarities between these concepts, describing them as realms of divine bliss characterized by absolute freedom and the absence of suffering. She introduces the Buddhist belief that reaching 'heaven' involves dissolving the ego, the artificial self. Carter, however, expresses skepticism about the idea that the self can dissolve itself. This skepticism leads to the introduction of the concept of a Buddha, someone capable of dissolving the self. Interestingly, Mia claims that she and Carter are potential Buddhas, challenging the conventional understanding of Buddha as a unique and enlightened figure. This statement suggests a shared belief in the potential for enlightenment and self-transcendence within every individual, Buddhist nature.

> Your heart is your Buddha Nature, you remind yourself. It's the voice speaking to you right now, reminding you that karma is in play at all times, in all places. Karma does not punish. It does not reward. But it always leads to either pain or joy. (196)

Here, Mia is advising Carter, emphasizing the significance of the heart as a representation of Buddha Nature. The notion of "Buddha Nature" aligns with certain Buddhist teachings that suggest an innate, awakened potential within every individual. By referring to the heart as Carter's Buddha Nature, Mia implies that there is a fundamental wisdom and compassionate nature within him. Mia goes on to connect this concept with the idea of karma, emphasizing that karma is constantly at play in all aspects of life. In Buddhism, karma refers to the law of cause and effect, suggesting that one's actions, thoughts and intentions have consequences. Mia clarifies that karma, in this context, is neither a form of punishment nor reward; instead, it is a force that naturally leads to either pain or joy.

By bringing attention to the heart as the voice that speaks to Carter, Mia is likely encouraging an awareness of Carter's inner wisdom and the moral compass that guides actions. The reminder about karma underscores the importance of mindful and intentional living, understanding that the choices made have consequences that contribute to either positive or challenging experiences. Overall, Mia's guidance encourages a holistic and mindful approach to life, rooted in an understanding of Carter's inner nature and the consequences of his actions.

Wolf expresses his views that we are our karma. We are omniscient Buddha Nature packaged in a body. Nothing more. Nothing less. Buddha Nature surfing a wave of karma from one lifetime to the next (199). Our actions, thoughts and intentions shape our existence and experiences. The consequences of our actions, both positive and negative, contribute to the fabric of our lives. Every individual possesses an inherent, enlightened nature known as Buddha Nature. This concept suggests that, within each person, there is a fundamental wisdom and potential for enlightenment. The use of the term "omniscient" emphasizes the all-knowing and awakened nature inherent in every individual. The enlightened nature within individuals navigates through the ebb and flow of the consequences of their actions across different lifetimes. Carter is very emotional and nearly breaks his heart when Mia says that she loves him but cannot live with him as a roommate. She wishes to love and live like a wife.

> "Come live with me, Mia. Come stay with me in New
> York."
> "Oh, Carter ... I can't do that. You should understand that
> by now."
> "Not even for the summer?"
> "Not even for the summer. I love you, Carter. I don't want
> to be your roommate." (318)

Carter, with a sense of vulnerability, declares that he meant his words and that he loves Mia with all his heart. Mia's response is equally sincere and emotional; her face softens, and tears well up in her eyes as she reciprocates the declaration of love. However, the tone shifts when Carter proposes that Mia come live with him in New York. Despite the depth of their connection and mutual love, Mia expresses hesitation, stating that she can't do that, even for the summer. She emphasizes her love for Carter but clarifies that she doesn't want to be just his roommate. She wants to be his wife. Only through marriage they can have better karma and better consequences.

Kachtick injects ambition and expansiveness into the narrative as Carter grapples, somewhat successfully, with merging his deepening commitment to Buddhism and his somewhat indulgent encounters with numerous women in his thirties, surpassing the number of times Mia has been kissed. This information is delivered in a bold and initially unconventional second-person voice. Carter adopts this approach in an effort to fully detach awareness from the hindering, ego-driven "I" that operates in terms of possession and desire, symbolized by thoughts like "may I unbutton your blouse now, please?" (14).

In his quest to cultivate a desire-free existence, Carter narrates his story, illustrating both his failures and successes in overcoming passions. The book seamlessly blends character studies with adventure and social commentary with spirituality. Despite, or perhaps because of, Carter's flaws as a libertine yet struggling dharma practitioner, he becomes entangled with Mia's formidable belief system, even though she inaccurately claims to volunteer with a "Jesuit nun." Carter's upbringing, steeped in a somewhat worldly and vaguely Christian environment, leads him to ponder existential questions like "Where was I before I was born? Why does my body feel like a guest house?" (51). His encounter with Mia takes place at a Tibetan retreat hosted in a former Catholic monastery upstate, where she "possesses the milky-white skin and praying mantis beauty of someone who haunts museum archives and listens to Chopin while baking bread" (65).

Kachtick faces the challenge of portraying a determined twenty-six-year-old, Mia, committed to waiting for Mr. Right. She views sex as a sacred act, deeming it worthwhile to wait and transform it into a sacrament. Mia disagrees with what she perceives as a Buddhist disdain for the material world and the physical body, expressing her belief that "the work of heaven is material, the work of hell is entirely spiritual" (83). This sentiment is underscored when she borrows one of Carter's cigarettes, signaling her own connection to the physical realm. Despite their differences, they engage in debates and discover common ground, moving into discussions about Thomas Aquinas, citing Thomas Merton and reflecting on St. Francis. Eventually, their conversations lead to a passionate encounter, leaving Mia uncertain whether Carter is a test or a gift from God (88).

The tension within Carter extends beyond the bedroom as he pursues a degree of courtship with Mia, while simultaneously engaging in relationships with others who are more compliant but less intriguing. Later, during their conflict in Morocco, Carter reflects on his attempts to balance pleasure and ethics: "You'd long fancied yourself as a talented juggler of pleasure and ethics" (216). However, this delicate balancing act proves unsustainable, forcing him to confront the warnings of his teacher, Wolf, a skillfully depicted and poignantly captured character. Wolf cautions Carter, particularly as a bachelor, about the perilous path where middle-aged lust leads inexorably into fear.

As the Buddha wisely taught, indulging in saltwater never truly satisfies one's thirst. Whether navigating the vibrant scene of a New York City nightclub, succumbing to the allure of Entenmann's cookies, seeking out adult DVDs or accumulating more gadgets, or engaging in pursuits like seducing tourists in Mexico or managing the caprices of a temperamental model or a self-absorbed windsurfer during a photo shoot, Carter confronts his inner demons. Even when these challenges present themselves in the guise of alluring figures with long legs, Carter acknowledges his struggles: "you're like an alcoholic who punishes himself by drinking more" (232).

The narrative takes a daringly imaginative turn, initially appearing to let Carter down but executing a deft fake-out and rescue. Carter pivots gracefully, both literally and metaphorically. While some aspects of the novel may stall for those without a solid understanding of Buddhism, Kachtick, being a committed Buddhist himself, endeavors to infuse his compassion into a narrative that simultaneously entertains and imparts wisdom. There's a noticeable shift to a more entertainment-focused mode, later in the story, perhaps compensating for the earlier discussions involving characters like Mia and his teacher, Christopher Wolf. Nevertheless, as a thoughtful tale demonstrating the complexities of right and wrong in various settings — whether in the intimacy of a bedroom or a bar, during a retreat or in moments of meditation — the novel effectively captures the challenges that a modern urban seeker, whether Catholic or Buddhist, may encounter when testing their faith against their actions.

The readers may find themselves perplexed about the direction of the plot when Mia and Carter reach Morocco. However, the second half of the story gains momentum, hurtling forward at a brisk pace. Tensions rise as spiritual conflicts collide with social dynamics, and the Third World clashes with the First (Murphy). Kachtick deserves commendation for his vibrant energy and narrative breadth. Through characters like Wolf, Mia and Carter, he skillfully crafts individuals for whom the reader develops a genuine concern, despite their inherent flaws. Rather than rendering them contemptible, their weaknesses endear them to the reader. Kachtick transforms our urban, disoriented, dehumanized, web-obsessed, consumer-driven culture, saturated with sex, drugs, and media hookups, into a narrative that rummages into moral dilemmas and the consequences of choices.

Conclusion

In this novel, sensuality is portrayed as a guiding force entwined with the pursuit of salvation. It explores the complexities of sensuality, not as an impediment to spiritual growth but rather as a path that leads the characters toward self-discovery and understanding. Carter confronts with his sensual desires and experiences a conflict between his worldly indulgences and his spiritual aspirations. Throughout the narrative, sensuality serves as a vehicle for self-exploration, prompting Carter to confront his inner demons and navigate the intricate intersections between pleasure and ethical choices.

Mia Malone adds another layer to the exploration of sensuality and salvation. Her commitment to maintaining her virginity until marriage reflects a different facet of sensuality—embracing physical intimacy within the context of a sacred and committed relationship. Mia's character challenges traditional notions of sensuality by intertwining it with religious convictions, highlighting the complexity of human desires. The novel suggests that sensuality, when approached with awareness and an understanding of its implications, can become a transformative force. It becomes a tool for characters to confront their inner conflicts, question societal norms and ultimately seek a path toward salvation.

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Travel Writing as a Means for Colonialism: Reading Park's *Travel in the Interior Districts of Africa*

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Abstract

This paper argues that since Euro-imperialism faced legitimation crisis in the late eighteenth century due to increasing rationalist and humanitarian ideologies, travel writing had to grow with a metaphorical use of sensibility to cover the grand design of colonialism in such situation. Mungo Park's narrative is characterized by the trope of sensibility for the same purpose. Being under the guardianship and protection of Joseph Banks, who was the president of the Royal Society and great designer of Britain's colonial expansion, Park tries to project himself in his narrative not as an ambitious and aggressive colonizer but an innocent genuine knowledge seeker.

Keywords: *Travel writing, colonialism, reverse ethnography, reciprocity, and Euro-imperialism*

Introduction

Travel writing had a powerful influence on British culture in the Romantic period. By stimulating the contemporary imagination, it shaped the consciousness of the age towards British imperialism. Following the seventeenth-century course of studies in empirical inquiry, most eighteenth-century travel narratives in the beginning caught an objective style. From the latter part of the century, however, the travel writing showed a subjective element, and there grew a general tendency of travel narratives to foreground the travellers' sensibility. Mungo Park represents in his *Travel in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799), the spirit of the age maintaining both subjective and objective elements: science and sentiment, religion and improvement. He handles them in his narrative in such a way that subjective comes to the foreground for an instrumental purpose to meet the goal of British Imperialism. Park's *Travel in the Interior Districts of Africa* would not be possible without help of the Royal Society. The Royal Society was formed in 1788 for the commercial and geographical exploration of the continent. It was led by Joseph Banks (1743-1820), who was a scientist, collector, traveler, adviser of monarch and ministers, and president of the Royal Society. His interest in British imperialism and his relation with Park is clearly stated in a critical writing called "Mental travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination" by Tim Fulford and Debbie Lee, "He [Banks] was the unseen hand, the shadowy impresario of Britain's colonial expansion…. He sent explorers out to Africa, China and the Poles. He

prepared their journal for publication. Mungo Park had been his protégé"(118). His diplomatic guidelines enabled Britain to achieve imperialism.

Being under the guardianship and protection of Joseph Banks, Park had to project his exploration through his narrative as an "innocent, unaggressive activity, in no way threatening to the local population" (Thompson 569). So in Park's travel, he is seen unaggressive and passive, often enduring to cover the spirit of British colonialism.

For covering the grand spirit and design of colonialism, travel writing had to grow with a metaphorical use of sensibility. Of course, Park's narrative is characterized by the trope of sensibility for the same purpose. As a traveller, he undergoes a lot of suffering in the interior districts of Africa. His suffering in Africa grows to its great intensity which, of course, is capable of drawing the sympathy from the readers as well as from the Negroes in the interior districts of Africa. The mode of his narrative wins the sympathy of his readers in such a way that they see Park as "a lone traveller in the wilderness, engaged in a heroic quest for knowledge..." (Thompson 571). This response from the readers does not indicate Park as an ambitious colonizer but a genuine knowledge seeker.

Orienting Readers to Different Pathetic Situations

In the actual design of Park's narrative, colonialism is hidden by the trope of sensibility that is evoked in different situations. The readers are drawn by his narrative either to his own pathetic situations or to those of the negroes. His journey was full of obstacles and he had to rely soley on native guides and the generosity of local peoples for his food and shelter. In the beginning, his travel was oriented towards Gambia. He stayed there for six months. He tried to adjust himself with the place by learning local language called Mandigo and this helped him to be familiar with local people's custom. Slowly and gradually he gained the power of adjustment with the African peoples through the beginning experiences and this enabled him to go further, which brought him close to many different peoples including black African tribes in west Africa. Among these tribes who lived among the forests and fertile river basins, the nomadic Muslims were most threatening for him as they had a suspicion that he was a trader or a spy though, outwardly, he wanted to show himself as an innocent traveller. In spite of his precaution, the moors (the Muslims) captured him and treated him very badly. He almost died of starvation. During his travel, he had fever many times. He also got a chance to see frequent wars and observe how slave trade was flourishing there. While he was coming back from the Niger, Park made his journey with an   armed slave caravan, being escorted safely back to Gambia. Throughout the Park's journey, there are several situations of his own sufferings and those of the African Negroes. It is better then to observe some of the major situations separately to see how they have contributed to Park's politics.

Towards the beginning of his journey, or particularly the moment before he leaves Gambia, he foresees his journey ahead as "painful and perilous" (Park 18) which he later experiences when he leaves Dr. Laidley and rides on his horse slowly into the woods:

> I had now before me a boundless forest, and a country, the inhabitants of which were strangers to civilized life, and to most of whom a white man was the object of curiosity or plunder. I reflected that I had parted from the last European I might probably behold, and perhaps quitted for ever the comforts of Christian society. (Park 21)

Painful Experiences with the Moors

His sense of pain and peril actually grows in the area of moors who show their ill-mannered behaviour towards him; it is very hard for him to tolerate the suffering caused by the moors, which he describes this way, "The Moors are here in greater proportion to the negroes than at Jarra. They assembled round the hut of the negro where I lodged, and treated me with the greatest insolence; they hissed, shouted, and abused me; they even spat in my face, with a view to irritate me" (Park 75). Besides this, Park also draws reference to how he was robbed of everything he had in his bag thinking that he was a Christian. They had a thought that his property was lawful loot to the followers of Mohammed.

The situation grows pathetic when the Moors at another moment proved them very rude while treating Park even in the conditions of his high fever, which Park has drawn to his narrative successfully to win the sympathy of his readers. While he was taking rest in his high fever, a group of Moors entered the hut, where he was lying, and pulled the worn clothes from me. To irritate him with their usual rudeness was just like a sport to them. Being perplexed at this situation, he left his hut and somehow walked to some trees at a little distance from his camp to take rest theres.

His painful journey gets more intense when his horse fails to go ahead towards the eastward after the Niger River has been approached. His fatigue and hunger together with the failure of his horse, affect the readers' mind with sensibility, which is given in second volume of the narrative:

> I sat down for some time beside this worn-out associate of my adventures, but finding him still unable to rise, I took off the saddle and bridle, and placed a quantity of grass before him. I surveyed the poor animal, as he lay panting on the ground, with sympathetic emotion, for I could not suppress the sad apprehension that I should myself, in a short time lie down the perish in the same manner, of fatigue and hunger. (Park 8)

In all these situations of Park's suffering, what we very often find is his act of Orientalizing the Arabians or the Muslims more than African people. The reasons for this may be that Britain was planning to colonize Africa; but the Arabians had already established themselves there before the Britishers. So in a sense, they were their enemies or obstacles on their way to colonialism. By growing the sensibility against the Moors but for himself and the Negros, he had cleverly blended politics and sensibility in his narrative. For the same purpose, he draws several scenes in his narrative in which the Moors are called and depicted as cruel animals whereas the negroes as having human qualities. One of such references of contrast situations is presented here, which we find in the volume one of the text:

> As I had some reason to suspect that this day was also to be considered as a fast, I went in the morning to the negro town of Farani, and begged some provisions from the dooty, who readily supplied my wants, and desires me to come to his house every day during my stay in the neighbourhood.—These hospitable people are looked upon by the Moors as an abject race of slaves, and are treated accordingly. (Park 94-95)

The very contrast of the Moors with the Africans in Park's narrative caught the eyes of Nicholas Howe too. He wrote about this in his critical writing called *Looking for a River, or, Travelers in Africa* in this way, "Repelled by their [the Moor's] treatment of black Africans taken into slavery, and bitter at the cruel treatment he received as a destitute traveller from them, Park can write with great anger of the Moors" (232). Park contrasts the Moors sharply to the black Africans and highlights their positive

character. They were kind to him and treated him with kindness and generosity. Howe reinforces the same, "It is hard not to feel sometimes that Park works hard to cast black Africans as noble savages too innocent to resist the mercantile cruelty of the Moors" (232).

Reverse Ethnography

To downplay the sense of colonization, Park has foregrounded in his narrative some situations of reverse ethnography in which he inferiorizes himself. It would be relevant here to draw one such situation from the first volume of his narrative in which he is surrounded by the women of Fatteconda, the cpaital of Bondou, desirous to see him:

> They rallied me with a good deal of gaiety on different subjects, particularly upon the whiteness of my skin and the prominency of my nose. They insisted that both were artificial. The first, they said, was produced when I was an infant, by dipping me in milk; and they insisted that my nose had been pinched every day, till it had acquired its present unsightly and unnatural conformation. On my part, without disputing my own deformity, I paid them many compliments on African beauty. (Park 37)

We find similar situation of reverse ethnography in his narrative when he reaches a very large town called Sansanding and is again surrounded by the curious crowds to see him perform his "evening devotions, and eat eggs" (Park (5). The situation suggested by the following lines of volume two of the text draws him being inferiorised, "My landlord immediately brought me seven hen's egg, and was much surprised to find that I could not eat them raw; for it seems to be a prevalent opinion among the inhabitants of the interior that Europeans subsist almost entirely on this diet" (5). However, he had succeeded in persuading them that this opinion was without foundation.

African Women Sympathising Park

In addition to the drawing of the Moors and the scenes of reverse ethnography, Park's narrative focuses our attention to another important part of sensibility that is related to the African women. Women are supposed to be kind and sentimental by nature. These African women too sympathise with Park in his sufferings, which he depicts in his narrative, "I do not recollect a single instance of hard-heartedness towards me in the women. In all my wanderings and wretchedness I found them uniformly kind and compassionate" (Park 49). When he reaches Sego, the capital of Bambarra, the women's rites of hospitality is expressed by the women there as they serve him with food and shelter at night, and sing a song composed extempore in a sort of chorus that focuses on the pathetic condition of Park himself, which we find in volume one of the text:

> The winds roared, and the rains fell. The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree. He has no mother to bring him milk, no wife to grind his corn. Chorus — Let us pity the white man, no mother has he", & c. &c. Trifling as this recital may appear to the reader, to a person in my situation the circumstance was affecting in the highest degree. I was oppressed by such unexpected kindness, and sleep fled from my eyes. (Park 132)

While refreshing themselves after their hard labour, the above piece of song was sung by one of the young women, the rest joining in a sort of chorus to sympathise with Park.

By this extract of the narrative, we come to know that Park is kindly responded by African women. There are many other scenes in the narrative in which he identifies himself with them and they identify themselves with him too.

Sensibility Attached with Slavery

Slavery in West Africa is another focus of Park in his narrative that has charged it with great sensibility. One of the important functions of Park's narrative for this purpose is to produce several situations in which Park identifies himself with the negro slaves of Africa. One among them is the situation of Sibidooloo in Africa, where a slave is understood only in terms of commodity or money. When Park observes a scene of burying the dead body of a slave, which for its slaver, is just a loss of money, he is deeply affected by this comodifying of a human being, and renders it in his writing in volume two, "The slave, who had before gone the village, to my surprise returned with the corpse of a boy about nine or ten years of age, quite naked. The negro carried the body by a leg and an arm, and threw it into a pit with a savage indifference which I had never before seen" (27). Just before throwing the corpse into the pit, he repeatedly used the rough words like "dankatoo" ("good for nothing") — "jankra lemen" ("a real plague") — for the dead body. Park thought that such words could also be applied to nobody but himself. Park observes closely that the pit was very much similar to a grave. When he covered the body with earth, the dooty often expressed himself, "naphula attiniata" ("money lost") (27).

Reciprocity

Park's narrative design also includes reciprocity that thickens the cover of colonialism. Recalling Marcel Mauss's classic analysis of reciprocity in *The Gift*, Peter Hulme makes a point that "reciprocity has always been capitalism's ideology of itself" (Pratt 84). The reciprocity in his narratives can be observed in a scene of Sego, the capital of Bombarra, where he is taken in by a woman slave as a charity case and he presents his "compassionate" lady with "two of the brass which remained on my waistcoat— the only recompense I could make her (Park 132). Mary Louise Pratt rightly observes the Park's politics of reciprocity in his *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, "In Parks [narrative], expansionist commercial aspirations idealize themselves into a drama of reciprocity. Negotiating his way across Africa, Park is the picture of the entrepreneur" (Pratt 81). Of course, there are many instances of reciprocity in the narrative. Since the sensibility that Park produces in his narrative is part of a dramatic design, it is associated with politics.

Politics of sensibility was, of course, the product of the eighteenth century atmosphere of Euro-imperialism that faced a legitimation crisis. Mary Louise Pratt observes this crisis in the following analytical writing:

> Euro-imperialism faced a legitimation crisis. The histories of broken treaties, genocides, mass displacements and enslavements became less and less acceptable as rationalist and humanitarian ideologies took hold. Particularly after the French Revolution, contradictions between egalitarian, democratic ideologies at home and ruthless structures of domination and extermination abroad became more acute. (Pratt 74)

The eighteenth century sentimentality is aptly observed by Peter Hulme too, "Sentimental sympathy began to flow along the arteries of European commerce, in search of its victims" (qtd in Pratt 75).

Conclusion

Park's *Travel in the Interior Districts of Africa* is thus the inevitable result of a legitimation crisis that Euro-imperialism faced in the late eighteenth century caused by the increasing rationalist and humanitarian ideologies. The expansion of commercial colonization could be made possible in such a situation only by adopting the new forms of travel writing as well as colonialism. So, Park, a protégé of Joseph Banks, who was the president of the Royal Society and a great designer of Britain's colonial expansion, could prepare the way for British colonialism only by projecting himself as a modest or self-inferiorizing traveler and his narrative as an appropriate helping tool for British colonialism.

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From Huxley's Soma to Smartphones: Exploration of Digital Dependency through the Lens of *Brave New World*

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Abstract

The research, *From Huxley's Soma to Smartphones: Exploration of Digital Dependency through the Lens of Brave New World* examines the theme of digital dependency through the lens of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. In the novel, Aldus Huxley presents a society that relies on drug soma to escape reality and maintain control mirroring our modern reliance on smartphones and digital technology. By drawing parallels between soma and contemporary digital devices, this study explores how technology influences our behavior, relationships, and sense of freedom. Huxley's dystopian vision serves as a powerful warning about the potential dangers of technological dependence. This research investigates how our constant connectivity and digital immersion can lead to a loss of individuality and critical thinking, much like the effects of soma in the novel. By analyzing the impact of digital media on our daily lives, this study aims to highlight the importance of balancing technological benefits with the preservation of human values. Through this critical analysis, we hope to provide insights into the challenges of digital dependency and encourage a more conscious engagement with technology.

Objectives: The main objective of the study is to
- Compare how people use soma in *Brave New World* with how we use smartphones today.
- Study how being too dependent on digital devices affects our behavior, relationships, and individuality.
- Look at Huxley's warnings about technology and relating it to our society now.
- Discuss the impact of digital devices like loss of personal freedom and critical thinking.
- Suggest ways to use technology wisely keeping our human values and individuality.

Literature Review

This literature review explores digital dependency through the lens of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932), which portrays a society controlled by the pleasure-inducing drug "soma." The novel's depiction of a population kept in check through artificial pleasure draws striking parallels to contemporary issues with digital technologies. Andreassen et al. (2016) investigate the relationship between addictive social media use, narcissism, and self-esteem, finding that higher levels of narcissism

correlate with increased social media addiction and lower self-esteem. Similarly, Rosen et al. (2013) identify a connection between heavy Facebook use and symptoms of psychiatric disorders, suggesting that technology can exacerbate mental health issues, much like "soma" masks underlying unhappiness in Huxley's world. Carr (2010) in The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains argues that the Internet impairs our ability to concentrate and engage in deep, reflective thinking, paralleling Huxley's critique of superficial contentment and lack of critical thought. Pariser (2011) in The Filter Bubble highlights the isolating effect of personalized algorithms that create echo chambers, while Rainie and Wellman (2012) in Networked describe how digital technologies transform social interactions, eroding traditional social structures and creating dependency on digital networks, similar to the engineered relationships in Huxley's dystopia. Twenge (2017) in iGen examines the impact of constant connectivity on youth, noting increased anxiety, depression, and a lack of preparedness for adulthood, mirroring the conditioned complacency and lack of critical thinking in Huxley's society. Collectively, these works underscore the profound psychological and societal impacts of digital dependency, reflecting the dystopian themes of Brave New World.

Methodology

This research *From Huxley's Soma to Smartphones: Exploration of Digital Dependency through the Lens of Brave New World* uses comparative literary analysis. It starts by selecting primary sources like the original text of *Brave New World* and its digital versions, such as e-books and multimedia presentations. It incorporates secondary sources such as scholarly articles, books, web pages, blogs, and critical essays to provide diverse interpretations. Then, it analyzes how excessive technology changes key themes like control and dehumanization. Using reader-response theory, it examines the impact of digital literature on modern life. Finally, it evaluates the cultural and ethical effects of digital literature on today's society**.**

Introduction

Too much dependency on anything is addiction. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the drug soma is used to keep people calm and happy, making it easier for the government to control them. This idea is similar to how we use smartphones and digital technology today. Many people rely on their devices for quick pleasure, social connections, and to escape from problems. Many parents nowadays permit their children to the maximum exposure of smartphones to keep them busy and remain disturbance-free. This grows into a habit or dependency and many times it becomes an addiction without which they cannot live for a while.

This research will scan at the similarities between soma in Huxley's *Brave New World* and today's use of smartphones. It will explore how our dependence on technology affects our behavior, relationships, and freedom. Huxley's book warns us about the dangers of depending too much on technology and losing our individuality. Just like soma makes the citizens of *Brave New World* less able to think for themselves, too much smartphone use can make it harder for us to think critically and connect deeply with the world around us

By studying these comparative issues, we can better understand how digital dependency impacts our lives. We can also find ways to balance the benefits of technology with keeping our human values

and thinking skills strong. This study will offer insights into how we can live in the digital age while staying true to ourselves and our ability to think critically.

Discussion and Interpretation

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* portrays a society in which the drug soma is a tool for maintaining order and happiness. This society's reliance on soma draws a striking parallel to our modern dependence on smartphones and digital technology. The constant need for digital connectivity, instant gratification, and virtual socialization mirrors the escapism and control provided by soma in Huxley's dystopia.

Influence of Soma in *Brave New World*

In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the drug soma plays a pivotal role in maintaining social stability and individual compliance. It is a powerful, state-sanctioned drug that ensures the population remains content, docile, and free from distress. The impact of soma on human beings in the novel is multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, and moral dimensions.

Psychologically, soma acts as an omnipresent escape mechanism. It numbs individuals to any form of discomfort or dissatisfaction. Characters in the novel frequently use soma to avoid negative emotions, which eliminates their ability to experience and process genuine human feelings. This artificial contentment creates a superficial happiness, devoid of true emotional depth and resilience. Bernard Marx and Lenina Crowne's use of soma to cope with their discomfort illustrates how the drug suppresses personal growth and self-awareness.

'Six years later it was being produced commercially. The perfect drug.'

'Let's bait him'

'Euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant.'

'Glum, Marx, glum.' The clap on the shoulder made him start, look up. It was that brute Henry Foster. 'What you need is a gramme of soma'. (Huxley, p.46)

Socially, soma fosters a culture of dependency and consistency. The drug ensures citizens remain unchallenging and obedient, perpetuating a stable but stagnant society. 'All the physiological stigmata of old age have been abolished. And along with them of course…' (p. 47) This widespread usage of soma undermines the development of meaningful relationships and authentic connections. As Helmholtz Watson observes, the reliance on soma prevents individuals from experiencing the full range of human emotions, thereby inhibiting deep, personal bonds.

Morally, soma eats into individual autonomy and ethical reasoning. The drug's ability to instantly alleviate any form of discomfort discourages critical thinking and moral reflection. John the Savage's rejection of soma symbolizes resistance to this dehumanizing control, emphasizing the importance of experiencing suffering as a part of the human condition. 'Stupefied by soma, and exhausted by a long-drawn frenzy of sensuality, the savage lay sleeping the heather. (p.228)

Overall, soma's impact on human beings in *Brave New World* is profound, highlighting the dangers of sacrificing emotional depth, social integrity, and moral autonomy for the illusion of stability and happiness.

Influence of Smartphones and other digital devices on the Modern World

The influence of smartphones and other digital devices on the modern world is so profound that it affects various aspects of daily life, social interactions, and cognitive processes. Smartphones have transformed communication, providing instant access to information and facilitating constant connectivity (Rainie & Wellman 7). This abundant presence of digital devices has reshaped how people interact, work, and even think.

One major impact of smartphones is on social behavior. Social media platforms, accessible through these devices, encourage continuous engagement and often lead to superficial connections. The scenario is profuse exposure to social networks makes people unsocial. Studies have shown that while these platforms can enhance communication, they also contribute to feelings of loneliness and social isolation due to the lack of face-to-face interactions (Twenge 18). Moreover, the pressure to present a curated version of oneself online can lead to anxiety and depression (Andreassen et al. 643).

Cognitively, smartphones and digital devices influence attention and memory. The constant notifications and the ability to multitask can lead to fragmented attention spans, reducing the capacity for deep, focused thinking Carr 119). This "always-on" mentality can impair cognitive control and increase stress levels, as individuals feel compelled to respond immediately to digital stimuli (Rosen et al. 1243).

Furthermore, digital devices shape consumer behavior and personal habits. The algorithms that power social media and online shopping sites track user behavior, tailoring content and advertisements to individual preferences. This can lead to increased consumerism and reinforce echo chambers, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives (Pariser 65).

Digital Dependency and Behavioral Changes

In *Brave New World*, soma is used to suppress negative emotions and ensure a smart population. Similarly, smartphones and diversified digital devices serve as modern-day escapes from reality. They offer distractions through social media, gaming, and instant access to information. This constant connectivity can lead to significant changes in social behavior. Studies have shown that excessive smartphone use can increase anxiety and decrease attention span (Twenge 21). Just as soma pacifies the citizens of Huxley's world, our devices often pacify us, reducing our ability to engage deeply with world affairs.

Broader Impact of Soma and Smartphone

Crash on Relationships

Huxley's characters have shallow relationships, lacking genuine emotional connections. Today, while digital technology facilitates communication, it often leads to superficial interactions. Social media platforms encourage brief, surface-level engagements rather than meaningful conversations. This can result in weakened personal relationships and a sense of isolation, despite being constantly connected. The digital world's emphasis on virtual connections can mirror the emotional emptiness depicted in *Brave New World*.

Loss of Individuality

In *Brave New World*, individuality is suppressed to maintain social stability. People are conditioned to conform from birth, and soma further ensures the controlled behaviour of the population. Similarly, the digital age often promotes conformity. Social media algorithms reinforce echo chambers, exposing users primarily to information and opinions that align with their existing beliefs. The social network fosters quicker response but it limits the depth of hearts. This limits exposure to diverse perspectives, reduces critical thinking, and fosters group thinking. The homogenization of thought and behavior in the digital era reflects the loss of individuality that Huxley earnestly warned about.

Control and Freedom

Huxley illustrates how soma is used to control the population, ensuring that they remain content and unthinking. Today, digital technology can also be a means of control. Algorithms track our online behavior, tailoring content to keep us engaged and influencing our decisions and opinions. This subtle form of control can shape our perceptions and behaviors without our conscious awareness. The illusion of choice and freedom in the digital age can be as deceptive as the contentment provided by soma. In daily family life, it is common nowadays for parents to pacify their children with digital technologies. They often let their kids use gaming consoles, watch TV shows, or play on smartphones to keep them occupied and avoid disturbances. However, this has a lasting impact that can be detrimental to their physical and mental development.

Significance of the study: Maintaining Balance

The study, *From Huxley's Soma to Smartphones: Exploration of Digital Dependency through the Lens of Brave New World* has wider social significance so far as human relationships are concerned. The study examines the effects of digital dependency on human relationships. Understanding these impacts can help in developing strategies to foster healthier interactions and growth in a digitally dominated society.

Understanding the parallels between soma and smartphones highlights the importance of maintaining a balance. Embracing technology's benefits without losing our humanity is crucial. This involves fostering digital literacy, promoting critical thinking, and encouraging meaningful, offline interactions. Setting boundaries for digital use and being mindful of its impact can help preserve our individuality and mental well-being. Overall, while smartphones and digital devices offer numerous benefits, such as improved access to information and connectivity, their influence on social behavior, cognitive function, and consumer habits raises important questions about the balance between technological integration and maintaining mental and social well-being.

Conclusion

Huxley's *Brave New World* serves as a powerful warning about the dangers of technological dependence. This research, *From Huxley's Soma to Smartphones: Exploration of Digital Dependency through the Lens of Brave New World* by examining the parallels between soma and modern digital devices, can gain insight into the potential consequences of our digital dependency. It is crucial to travel the digital age with awareness, ensuring that we harness technology's benefits without sacrificing our

humanity, individuality, and freedom. This research underscores the need for a mindful approach to technology use, balanced connectivity with genuine human engagement and critical thought.

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Culture and Identity of People Living in the Indo-Bangla Borderlands

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Abstract

Borderlands are regions situated near the lines separating two countries or areas. Nations secure their boundaries by controlling the entry and exit of foreign citizens and protecting their people from dangers or threats posed by cross-border movements. In the Indo-Bangla Borderlands, numerous fragile and contested issues have arisen since the colonial demarcation in 1947. Each state frames its foreign policies with the intent of controlling its porous boundaries, though local realities often differ.

The porosity of these borderlands, arbitrarily drawn at some points, has encouraged infiltrations, primarily for illegal trades. This desperate act for survival has turned the borderlands into smugglers' paradises, but it also opens up possibilities for wider demographic and potentially dangerous political changes. As structural entities, borders can generate diverse effects by facilitating crossings that can either integrate or segregate people. Borderlands are also emotional spaces, connected to people through memory and identity (Ranjan 28). They are often termed 'peripheral' and 'marginalised' due to their isolation from the mainland.

For the inhabitants of these regions, the concept of a 'border' carries no political implication. Instead, survival is their primary concern. They coexist with their geographical environments to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, and medical treatment. The modern concept of the border holds little meaning for the mass-dwellers in the borderlands. In many cases, the political and cultural boundaries of a country do not align with cultural fluidity, leading to reunification.

The people living in these border areas exhibit unique cultural prototypes in their lifestyle. This study will focus on how the culture and identity of borderland inhabitants have been affected by the borders.

Keywords: border, borderland, porosity, culture, people, community

Introduction

A 'borderland' is a zone or region within which lies an international border and a 'borderland society' is a social and cultural system straddling that border (Prescott 13). The Indo-Bangladesh borderlands host a variety of communities, each possessing unique traits. Despite their differences, these communities share numerous similarities due to their shared climate and geography. The people of India

and Bangladesh residing in these border regions are deeply intertwined, engaging in a common culture that is essential for understanding the cultural practices of the borderlands. Although political boundaries are present, the customs, habits, beliefs, and other cultural elements surpass these divisions. How does the border create? When the world's political tectonic plates move, they create fissures known as international borders. Many of these come about in ways that for those who experience them are just as overpowering, devastating and unpredictable as earthquake (Schendel 1). This human connection persists despite the modern notion of borders, which fails to account for the emotional bonds among individuals living on both sides.

Objectives

This study aims to explore the socio-cultural dynamics of the Indo-Bangladesh borderlands, identifying interconnections and areas of conflict.

Review of Literature

The existing body of literature on the cultural state of the Indo-Bangla borderland communities is sparse, with the majority of publications focusing on political issues related to the Borderlands. This gap in the research highlights the need for a comprehensive examination of the cultural dynamics within these communities. The proposed subject, therefore, warrants serious attention to better understand the intricate cultural practices and the shared way of life of the people living in these border regions.

People of the Borderlands: Crisis of Identity

The people living in the border areas are as ancient as human history itself. They have faced unique social problems since time immemorial. The term 'border' implies not only a conceptual difference regarding the precise location of borders but also a general meaning, referring to the dividing line between different peoples and cultures. The cultures on both sides of the border often mingle seamlessly with each other.

Borders reflect the mental images of both politicians and common people, yet the practical situations in the borderlands are quite different. Although borders are clearly drawn on official maps, with official restrictions imposed and vigilance tightened, people often break laws and ignore borders to meet their needs. By doing so, they always disregard the political status of the border. The states that came into existence in August 1947 shared a borderland that was anything but natural to them, and that was very difficult to control and defend (Schendel 102).

People use borders and take advantage of them in ways not anticipated by their creators. Borderland inhabitants frequently cross borders without legal permission to seek jobs, trade or smuggle goods, and offer shelter to revolutionaries. Even the 'group of immigrants clearly did not consider themselves trespassers on foreign soil; they ignored the border because they considered it irrelevant to their older claims to the land (The Pakistan Observer 1959). The basic needs, emotional expressions, and problems of individuals and communities are the same on both sides, binding them together. Despite having different political identities, the cultural identities of borderland people are similar in many respects.

Folk and Religion Dominated Culture

The border regions of India and Bangladesh are not homogeneous. For instance, the North-east border (Assam-Meghalaya-Tripura) is geographically isolated from the rest of India. This porous border area sees people from both sides depending on each other for survival. Both countries encompass the diversity of cultures. Before the partition of India in 1947, Bangladesh was an integral part of India, thus embodying religious influences from Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Islam, which are prominently reflected in its art and literature. The people living in these borderlands share occupations, religious beliefs, dialects, and other cultural aspects such as food habits, dress, ornaments, festival celebrations, and the environment.

Borderlands are usually situated far from cities and are among the least developed areas, except for a few regions adjacent to West Bengal. The primary occupations of border people include cultivation, fishing, animal husbandry, and smuggling. Their main focus on life is earning a livelihood and finding shelter. The border people on either side strive to maintain peaceful coexistence and adjust to nature and their environment for mutual benefit. The environments of the Bengal and Assam borders are almost identical, with people living below the poverty line and struggling to survive. In the Assam-Bangla borders, farming is a major occupation, and people cross the border under the protection of the BSF (Border Security Force) for cultivation. This permissible border crossing and unseen river-crossing are open secrets. They also supply fruits, vegetables, and fish to the cities. Some people are involved in small transportation businesses, grocery shops, and manual labor at construction sites, but many are attached to smuggling syndicates. For them, life is merely a biological entity without an urge for education or a high standard of living. They work hard to secure food and shelter.

The people living in the borderlands are predominantly Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Vaishnavas. Besides religious ceremonies, they perform rituals that are not strictly religious. In the Assam-Bangladesh border, Vaishnavaite cultures are honored, and the Rajbongshis, though primarily animists, also follow Hinduism. A few people are followers of Christianity. An interesting fact about the people living in the borderlands is their peculiar religious assimilation. Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims have incorporated various elements from each other's religious practices. For example, in the Dargah of Muslim saints, elements of the Vaishnava tradition, such as 'Chandra tap,' are found, and villagers of different religions worship various images like big trees as gods of shelter, bamboo as the god of creativity, and soil as the god of fertility. Both Hindus and Muslims venerate the tombs of certain pirs (Muslim saints). People often spoke of how they felt they were at the margins of mainstream Bengali, with their rustic-sounding names and rural occupations, sharing more in common with each other than with those who, on either side of the border, at the regional or national level, represented what it meant to be Bengali (Eaton 310).

People in remote borderlands do not have formal schooling; they learn from their families and society. They use a common expression supported by their culture, an oral language called 'Desi bhasha,' enriched with common expressions of the borderlands. All communities share these expressions and live in a highly amalgamated cultural environment, developing a new vocabulary suited to their needs.

The food habits of people in any place are largely determined by the soil, vegetation, and climate. The nature of a society and culture is reflected in its food habits. In the Indo-Bangla borderlands, rice is the main food crop, along with wheat, oil seeds, potatoes, vegetables, sugarcane, and tobacco. Their cooking techniques differ from those of city dwellers, with traditional folk and domestic cooking

on both sides being almost similar, though tribal tastes are a bit different. Boiled rice with fish curry and vegetables is a popular daily food. Small ethnic groups love to drink wine, which is sacred and important for their religious occasions, forming an inseparable part of their worship. This similarity in food habits has fostered a bond among them.

The dress and ornaments worn by border people express their identity. Most of their clothing and ornaments are self-designed, mainly using cotton. While men's clothing has little variety, women's dresses are distinct in appearance. The dress patterns and styles of people on both sides of the border are almost identical, with fabrics made by handloom. They use the same materials for ornaments, deeply connected to the culture of the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Despite the legal frameworks that the two countries aim to follow strictly, the people living in the borderlands have created a friendly atmosphere by sharing many cultural and social aspects. Ethnicity, a common feature among people living in these border areas, is of significant importance to them. The customs, habits, beliefs, and other cultural aspects of border people, whether in mono-ethnic or poly-ethnic societies, always transcend boundaries. The socio-economic change of borderland people is now a pressing need, demanding attention and action to improve their living conditions and opportunities for advancement.

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Illusion of Social Mobility: Reading Status and Social Honor in George Saunders' *Tenth of December*

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Abstract

This study critically examines the intersection of class, status and bureaucracy in George Saunders' selected stories from his *Tenth of December* through the theoretical framework of critical class analysis outlined by Max Weber. In contrast to traditional Marxism' emphasis on class struggle and economic exploitation, Weberian sociology outlines a more intricate perspective by delineating class as market position, status as social honor, and bureaucracy as institutional control. Saunders' narratives expose the illusion of social mobility**,** demonstrating how economic precarity, status anxieties and bureaucratic constraints shape individual agency and reinforce social stratification. This paper investigates how status-driven consumption, hierarchical exclusion and impersonal institutions perpetuate class-based insecurities into the stories. By analyzing the stories employing Weberian lens**,** the paper finds that Saunders' fiction serves as a socioeconomic critique of contemporary American society**,** wherein structural inequalities, symbolic markers of prestige, and bureaucratic rationalization function as mechanisms of disenfranchisement**.** This study contributes to broader discussions on class identity, cultural capital, and institutional power in literary discourse, highlighting the enduring tensions between economic determinism and social stratification in neoliberal economies.

Keywords: Class, social honor, status, subjugation.

Introduction

Unlike Marxist categorization of class into two, Max Weber's concept of class, status provides a different and more fitting approach to analyze the shifts taking place in the formation of working class in America. Mark's focus lies in the economic structures and class struggle where Weber's framework examines the intersections of class, status and party, which is economic position, social honor and political influence respectively that shape the class dynamics. In George Saunders' stories the satire to American corporate culture is often evident. The class division and dehumanizing bureaucracy are the cog in American machinery to determine market-driven class structure and status anxiety. Saunders' stories anthologized in *Tenth of December* (2013) depict the struggle of working-class and lower middle-

class individuals in contemporary America. Moreover, his narratives are not merely about economic deprivation but about the way social class, status anxieties, and bureaucratic structures that shape an individual's identity and agency. This study examines Tenth of December through a Weberian lens, analyzing how Saunders critiques the illusion of social mobility, the emotional consequences of status competition, and the bureaucratic structures that reinforce class divisions in contemporary America.

Literature Review

George Saunders has been credited for finding authentic American voice in his narrative. The characters primarily carry the voice of changing American society under the pressure of economic crisis, globalization, and migration. A range of critical engagement in his narrative reveals a deep sense of dissatisfaction with rapidly collapsing American values and concurrently voices an urgency to reinsert ethicality in living consciousness. In this context, Sian Cain evaluates that the stories are "all about people" and about "humanity and the meaning we find in small moments, in objects or gestures" (para 2) expressed through the motives such as family and domesticity. In Cain's words, "The picture Saunders paints of humanity is one that is united by its messiness, pettiness, self-awareness" but at the core of these dispositions there lies "an inherent, irresponsible goodness that only needs the right test to expose it" (para 6). Moreover, these matters of humanities are laced with working class anxieties such as inability to pay regular bill.

Saunders's characters are general representative of a commercial class and occasionally a social class as well. In the Weberian sense, they are class with skill working in antique business, animal farm and so on. Because of socio-economic condition, they are compelled to work, but they are not paid enough. Gregory Cowles hails his stories as "Ray of Hope" in the time of capitalist degeneration as his narrative "never succumbs to depression" (para 3). The stories are about the potential times when financial uncertainties gloom. Cowles further illustrates, "Money worries have always been figured in Saunder's work" this collection of stories have "deepened [them] into pervasive, somber mood that weights the book with a new and welcome gravity" (para 4). The financial crisis of 2008 must have a looming influence in creation of characters smitten by money-issue.

In fact, it has been difficult to identify and locate working class as a concept and a category. David P. Rando makes similar observation in his critical essay, "George Saunders and the Postmodern Working Class." Rando reflects on:

> In the last twenty or more years, for reasons that include the fall of the Soviet Union, the impact of poststructuralist theory, conceptualization of identity that more and more take race and gender into consideration alongside class, and the general cultural turn in class analysis, it has become increasingly difficult to write about class and unclear what value the "working class" has as a concept for social and cultural analysis or for literary representation. (437)

The category of class, as a part of Marxist aesthetics, has been on a defensive back foot due to the collapse of socialism and rise of multiple identity based studies such as gender and race. Though the concept of class has become a backstage category, Saunders fiction defines all these and "challenges us [the readers] to reconsider basic questions of class representation" (Rando 437). The representation of the characters in these selected stories demonstrate Sanders's "attempts to represent the realities of class

. . . [as] a differential field of experience and identity" (438). Rando calls them a postmodern working class.

Saunders' stories have accumulated praise for their unique style and realistic themes. U. R. Bowie rightly comments that his art tells about ordinary American problems. He illustrates:

> Saunders is great at portraying everyday people in today's America. In "Puppy" we meet Marie, another overprotective, gee-whiz-I'm-trying-my-best-to-be-an-ideal-mom American middle class mother. Marie strives to create a perfect life for her children, to make up for her own far-less-than-perfect childhood. She has a great middle-class husband named Robert the Jolly, who, whenever she brings home another exotic pet—such as an iguana that ends up biting him— never gets irritated. (para 12)

Bowie argues that the class situation is evident in Saunders' characterization. Most of the characters are the result of the widening social class in America which has further been worsened due to the economic crisis and its results. Similarly, in an interview with Benjamin Nugent, George Saunders lets readers know the process of his creation. In Nugent's question "You have known to spend a great deal of time on each story" Saunders explains some back-of-the-stage thoughts on his stories as:

> It ranges from a day, with a story like "Sticks," which is just a few paragraphs, to fourteen years, on 'The Semplica Girl Diaries." Typically it's . . . eight months? The one I'm working on now has taken over a year. I tend to get locked up at certain points. . . . When a story locks up and you get stuck, that's its way of saying, Hey, dummy, you are trying to solve me in the plane of your original conception. (78)

When an author shares the process of creation, it illuminates the reading experiences in unique ways. Saunders is not only sharing his experiences; he is historicizing the stories in spatiotemporal context. Similarly, according to Sam Chesters, Saunders embodies the postmodern sensibility of irony and humor with absolute honesty. Chesters puts his stance in the following words:

> Saunders's writing reflects the metamodern sensibility of the moment in which he writes, as his postmodern objectives are altered and transformed by the ultimately corrective nature of his writing. . . . Saunders's work represents a departure from piercing or venomous satires. He crafts instead narratives built on compassion. Though his work is saturated with absurdity and exaggeration, its underlying foundation is sincerity, a quality well-suited for the work of metamodern satire. (44)

Chesters argues that Saunders's writing embodies the metamodern approach which is a blending of postmodern techniques with a corrective and compassionate tone. Unlike harsh, satirical works of the past, Saunders's narratives focus on empathy and sincerity. Despite their absurd and exaggerated elements, his works ultimately aim to be sincere and compassionate, aligning with the metamodern style of satire that balances irony and earnestness.

In Saunders' stories, readers find the aspect of postmodern satirical aesthetics. Layne Neeper identifies it a significant aspect because of temporality: the postmodern satire in the millennium which stands as a unique reinterpretation of the traditional satirical formula. Moreover, his primary focus is on creating a clear and cumulative impact about American society. His stories, thus, are intentionally take

a moral stand: "committed to a definable, cumulative effect on readers that is unmistakably intended as moral, remedial, and salutary" (284). In the narratives, Saunders represents a unique reinterpretation of traditional satire, sharing many postmodern ideas. Unlike his twentieth-century peers, Saunders aims for a clear, moral impact on his readers. His stories accurately identify human flaws and absurdities within imaginative worlds, ultimately focusing on fostering empathy and improvement in his audience.

A unique artist, Saunders plentifully blends humor with social commentary. The stories are written in a variety of narrative styles, ranging from first-person stream-of-consciousness to third-person limited perspectives. This diversity in narration allows him to explore the complexities of his characters' mental status while maintaining a sharp focus on external societal pressures. Another aspect of his writing is that he employs wit and irony which often juxtapose absurd situations with deeply relatable emotions. For instance, in the story "Victory Lap," Saunders uses the inner monologues of his teenage characters to highlight the absurdity and tension of their everyday lives. This juxtaposition creates a unique reading experience, inviting readers to laugh while simultaneously reflecting on the serious themes beneath the surface.

The critical responses discussed above illustrate that Saunders stories have yet to be critically analyzed from the Weberian perspective of class. This paper makes an attempt to do that.

Max Weber's Concept of Class: A Theoretical Perspective

Max Weber's idea of class, status and party provides a useful framework for understanding Saunders' narratives. In Weber's terms, class is determined not just by ownership of capital—Marx has stressed it does—but also by one's position in the labor market and access to opportunities: "various controls over consumer goods, means of production, assets, resources and skills each constitute a *particular* class situation" (302, emphasis original). For Weber, there are three classes: property class, commercial class and social class. The property class is marked with an "exclusive acquisition of high-priced consumer goods" and enjoys the privilege of "wealth accumulation out of unconsumed surplus" and thus can "control over executive positions in business" (303). Other than this, there is commercial class that enjoy stability and entrepreneurial skills and other "varying qualifications" (304) useful to establish their autonomy. And, there is social class who is "the propertyless intelligentsia and specialists. . . with considerable social differences depending on the cost of their training" (405) and this class depends on other classes to get recognition. Weber argues that status of an individual rests on these complicated layers of class realization. He details it out as:

> Status may rest on class position of a distinct or an ambiguous kind. However, it is not solely determined by it: Money and an entrepreneurial position are not in themselves status qualifications, although they may lead to them; and the lack of property is not in itself a status disqualification, although this may be a reason for it. Conversely, status may influence, if not completely determine, a class position without being identical with it. (306)

The intersection between class and status offers a new and fresh view in Weberian conceptualization of class and status. In capitalist economy, status group can spring from different sources such as lifestyle choices, types of vocation, and by claiming and clinging to heredity status.

In contemporary America, status refers to social honor, lifestyle, and cultural prestige, while bureaucracy reflects the impersonal systems of control that shape daily life. However, class underwent

massive changes, as Sherry Linkson, and John Russo note, "the traditional characteristics of modern industrial capitalist society have been dramatically altered" (367). As a result, 90s has witnessed the increasing growth in economy driven by technology but affecting industrial working classes. Gradually, it started affecting all across the class hierarchies generating anxiety waves regarding "class identity and class relation" (368) However, Geoffrey T Wodtke's study on class, income and inequality during 80s shows that the "inequality trends are governed by changes in within-class income dispersion" (1375).

Kurt B. Mayer contends that the fundamental nature American class structure has become a changing category as individuals can move up and down in the social hierarchies outlined by Weber. He explains:

> [S]ocial position at any given time, [is] a fact which bedevils all one dimensional conceptual scheme of social stratification. At the same time, the increased mobility has also greatly weakened the inheritance of position, particularly in the middle ranges of the economic, prestige, and power orders. In modern, industrial societies, therefore, social classes still clearly inhabit both the top and the bottom of the rank hierarchies, but they are now beginning dissolve in the middle. (462-463)

In the reviews on social class from 1960s to 2020s—Mayer from 1960s, Linkon and Russo in the 2000s, and Wodtke in 2016—reveal the fact that social class in America has been a subject of debate, change and transformation. Yet, the literary representation of these class needs an attention because of the psychological effects it can have on individuals. This paper analyzes how social class in America has been realized in literary discourses. The analysis is based on four of George Saunders' stories collected in *Tenth of December.* In the light of Weber's lens of class and status, the paper explores and analyzes how his characters navigate economic precarity, status anxieties, and bureaucratic oppression.

Interpretation of Selected Stories from Weberian Lens

Class as Market Position: Precarity and Economic Struggles in Saunder's Stories

Saunders' stories in *Tenth of December* are collectively a narrative of social class in America. By including a wide range of characters, their predicaments, social relations, and involvement in different layers of class consciousness, Saunders extends the problem of class mobility into different layers of American life. Thus, these characters stand for different aspects of American people, psychology, and problems. The economic crisis of 2008 has been a source of the dark theme Saunders employs in the stories. The effects of financial crisis were so pervasive to the working class people that they are forced to sell their personal toys to mitigate the existing crisis in family. The stories run parallel to these experiences. This may be the reason, Saunders stories sounds employing Weberian narrators.

Weber's concept of class as market position is evident in Saunders' portrayal of working-class individuals who lack stable economic security. His characters often work in low-paying, insecure jobs where they have little control over their futures. In "AL Roosten," the title character struggles as the owner of a failing antique shop, Bygone Daze, while envying the economic success of Larry Donfrey, a wealthy businessman. Roosten's economic instability and limited market position reflect Weber's argument that class is defined by access to market opportunities rather than just wealth ownership. Roosten's self-worth is deeply tied to his class insecurity, as seen in his desperate fantasies about gaining Donfrey's approval: "Dinner at the mansion would go well. Soon he'd basically be part of the [Donfrey]

family" (103). Roosten's attempt to establish link with Donfrey family is a purposive attempt to climb social ladder.

Despite being open, class mobility is not an easy act particularly in the countries like United States where the class as a position comes as a product of market relation. The story in "Puppy" presents this idea through two women characters of different social class: Marie and Callie whose class positions shape their decisions. Marie, a middle-class mother, can afford consumerist fantasies, while Callie, a working-class mother, must sell her beloved puppy to make ends meet. Marie views Callie's life as a spectacle of poverty, failing to recognize her own class privilege: "It would be a nice field trip," Marie thought (37). Callie's social position depends on her ability to sell a puppy but failing to do so will jeopardize her status. Her precarity stems from the economic struggles she is having. Here, Saunders illustrates how market position limits personal agency, making it difficult for working-class characters to escape economic constraints despite their efforts.

Saunders masterfully depicts individuals struggling to navigate a rigid social order, where economic disparities, status anxieties, and systemic constraints shape human behavior and relationships. Weber distinguishes between class (economic market position) and status (social honor and prestige), arguing that social mobility is often illusory—a belief that one can ascend the social hierarchy through effort, when in reality, structural barriers prevent meaningful upward movement. This tension is evident in "The Semplica Girl Diaries," where the narrator's desperate attempt to gain status through conspicuous consumption exposes the illusion of class mobility. In this dystopian vision, impoverished women from third-world countries serve as living lawn ornaments for the wealthy, illustrating how status groups reinforce exclusivity through material displays. As Max Weber notes ,"A 'status group' means a plurality of persons who, within a larger group, successfully claim a) a special social esteem, and possibly also b) status monopoly" (306). Weber argues that the status groups define themselves through cultural markers that exclude outsiders "by virtue of their style of life, particularly the type of vocation" (306). Saunders' notes that the SGs become "monopolistic liturgies" which functions both as a commodity and a symbol soical status. The narrator's financial recklessness—maxing out his credit cards to maintain a façade of affluence—reflects Weber's insight that status-driven consumption often leads individuals to economic insecurity rather than true mobility. Similarly, in "Al Roosten," the protagonist experiences status anxiety, feeling humiliated in the presence of a wealthier, more socially esteemed peer, Larry Donfrey. Roosten's envy and internalized feelings of inferiority highlight Weber's argument that status competition fosters resentment among lower-status individuals who remain excluded from elite circles. Unlike a Marxist critique, which would frame Roosten's plight as a worker's struggle against capitalist exploitation, Weberian lens emphasizes how status hierarchies create deep-seated emotional and psychological suffering, even among individuals of the same economic class. Roosten's desperate fantasies about being welcomed into Donfrey's social sphere demonstrate how status distinctions are as rigid as class barriers, and shape one's self-worth and social interactions. Saunders also critiques the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic systems, which Weber describes as rationalized structures that strip individuals of autonomy.

In "Tenth of December" an ailing man, Eber, feels powerless within a bureaucratic healthcare system, fearing a loss of dignity as he succumbs to illness. His existential crisis embodies Weber's concept of the "iron cage"—the idea that modern institutions, driven by efficiency and impersonal rationalization, erode individual freedom and humanity. However, Saunders juxtaposes this bureaucratic

oppression with moments of genuine human connection, as the young boy Robin and the dying man develop an unexpected bond, challenging the impersonal forces that define their lives. By framing Saunders' narratives through Weber's model of class and status, it can be seen that his characters are not simply victims of capitalism but of a stratified social order that dictates their life chances, self-worth and interactions. Through economic precarity, status anxieties and bureaucratic entrapment, Saunders reveals the emotional and existential costs of a society where class is rigid, status is exclusionary and institutions are indifferent to individual suffering

Weber differentiates class from status, arguing that economic position does not always translate into social prestige. Saunders' characters obsess over status markers, but their attempts to climb the social ladder often lead to humiliation rather than success. In "The Semplica Girl Diaries" the narrator, a struggling father, believes that purchasing Semplica Girls (SGs)—poor migrant women displayed as human lawn ornaments—will elevate his social standing. His desperation to maintain middle-class respectability is reflected in his financial recklessness: "Visa full. Also AmEx full. Also Discover nearly full" (125). His pursuit of status symbols, despite being financially overextended, aligns with Weber's observation that status groups maintain exclusivity by enforcing cultural and material barriers. The narrator's failure highlights the false promise of class mobility—he can mimic wealth but never truly attain it. Similarly, in "Al Roosten," the protagonist's status anxiety manifests in his self-loathing and obsessive comparisons with wealthier individuals. Roosten's belief that money equals respect mirrors Weber's insight that status often overrides economic realities.

Bureaucracy and the Dehumanization of Workers

Saunders' "Tenth of December" presents a sharp critique of the American class structure, illustrating the ways in which individuals remain trapped within rigid social hierarchies despite the illusion of mobility. Through a series of interconnected narratives, Saunders explores the economic precarity, status anxieties and systemic constraints that shape his characters' lives. Families resort to selling puppies to ease financial burdens, a father celebrates a brief moment of upward mobility before succumbing to exploitative economic contracts, a small shop owner, Al Roosten, suffers status humiliation in the presence of wealthier peers, and a terminally ill man contemplates suicide to spare his family from financial hardship.

Rather than portraying class struggle purely in Marxist economic terms, Saunders' stories align closely with Weber's sociological framework, which distinguishes between class (market position), status (social honor), and bureaucracy (institutional control). Weber's analysis reveals how individuals are not only constrained by economic limitations but also by cultural and social forces that dictate their self-worth, relationships and opportunities.

Louis Tyson points out the difficulty of classifying American working people in class categories because there is "no distinction between owners and wage-earners" (51). The line between the workers and owners is so thin it does not separate these two. Rando depicts that it is not easy "to write about class and unclear what value the "working class" has as a concept for social and cultural analysis or for literary representation" (437). Saunders's characters reject the clear classical 'class ontologies' and subscribe to more affective and subjective collision with prevailing realities. In "Al Roosten," the man with the same name is crippled with the humiliation due to his small shop and processes this inferiority through imagining a lavish invitation in Donfrary's mansion as a gesture of gratitude: "Dinner at the

mansion would go well. Soon he'd basically be part of the [Donfrey] family" (103). Al Roosten and Donfray both have been a part of a fundraising for "LaffKidsoof-Crack and their antidrug clowns" (103) campaign in the request of Chamber of Commerce. But, he is too occupied with his own ontology. He bungles things up, does not attract much applauds, kicks Donfrey's key and wallet under the raiser, and imagines himself helping him and winning a reprieve of helping him find the keys.

Weber's theory of bureaucracy describes modern institutions as impersonal, rationalized systems that strip individuals of autonomy. Saunders critiques this bureaucratic control over human life, showing how individuals become trapped in corporate or systemic constraints. In "Tenth of December," Eber, a terminally ill man, contemplates suicide as he fears losing dignity within a bureaucratic healthcare system. His helplessness reflects Weber's argument that bureaucracies operate with cold efficiency, often disregarding individual suffering: "Something/someone bigger than him kept refusing. You were told the big something/someone loved you especially, but in the end, you saw it was otherwise. The big something/someone was neutral. Unconcerned" (231). Similarly, in "Escape from Spiderhead," prisoners undergo corporate drug testing, illustrating how bureaucratic control extends into the body itself. The characters are subject to scientific rationalization, reducing their emotions to corporate experiments—a perfect embodiment of Weber's "iron cage" of rationalization.

Political Subjugation: The Working Class and Voiceless

Weber's concept of party refers to political influence and access to power, yet Saunders' characters often experience political alienation and disenfranchisement.

In "Puppy" Callie, a struggling mother, is portrayed as incapable of making decisions for her own child, while Marie—a middle-class woman—assumes the right to call Child Welfare on her. Marie's moral superiority stems from institutional power, reinforcing Weber's claim that lower-class individuals often lack political agency.

Similarly, in "The Semplica Girl Diaries," the SGs—migrant women from Moldova, Somalia, and Laos—exist as objects rather than political subjects. The narrator, despite his guilt, does not question the ethics of exploiting vulnerable women, reflecting how political and economic systems render the working class invisible: "No money, no papers. Who will remove microline? Who will give her job?" (167).

The SGs have no political voice; their fate is determined entirely by the wealthy elite who purchase them. This reinforces Weber's idea that political power is monopolized by dominant social groups, leaving the working class excluded from decision-making structures.

Conclusion: Saunders' Characters as Lacerating Individuals

The stories in Saunders's *Tenth of December* expose the lacerating effects on the working class people due to the intersection of class and status in a bureaucratic system. The stories demonstrate how class struggles in America are not just about economic deprivation but also about status anxieties and bureaucratic control. In such a tightly held system class becomes a market position that limits the working-class characters' economic mobility. Since their ability to move across, the class is held by an external force—market—the status competition leads to humiliation rather offering to an upward mobility. As in Simplica girls' case, political structures and its organelles control and inhibit any chances

of social change as they hold political structures completely. Saunders' narrative reveals the illusion of American meritocracy—his characters believe in self-improvement and social mobility, yet structural forces continually undermine their efforts. By exposing the hidden mechanisms of class, status and bureaucracy, Saunders presents a world where economic survival is a struggle, social aspirations are futile, and power remains concentrated in the hands of a privileged few.

In short, the stories provide a compelling exploration of social class and the socio-economic interactions that shape the lives of his characters. Characters like Al Roosten in the story "Al Roosten" are driven by their beliefs in a proper class order. This informs the nature of their class and their relationships and motivations in the stories. Roosten, for example, is consumed by jealousy and a desire for revenge against his friend Larry Donfrey, illustrating how class consciousness can fuel personal conflicts. Through a Marxist lens, Saunders's characters can be seen as embodying the struggles and ideologies that arise from capitalism, highlighting how class structures influence behavior and relationships.

Finally, Saunders skillfully portrays the everyday struggles of people in contemporary America, capturing the distance between their hopes and the reality of their situations. His characters' inability to adjust to societal norms and conventions underscores the challenges they face in navigating a complex and often inequitable world. Through these stories, Saunders sheds light on the diverse obstacles that prevent individuals from achieving happiness and fulfillment. By highlighting these struggles, Saunders encourages readers to reflect on their own lives and the societal structures that shape them, ultimately revealing the nuanced and often harsh realities of class distinctions in the modern world. After all, by highlighting the tensions between economic determinism and social status in neoliberal economies, this study expects to contribute to the literary discourse regarding the discussion of intersection between class identity, cultural capital, and institutional power.

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The Literature Returning to 'Tao': A Thinking from Reading 'El Jardín de Senderos que se Bifurcan'

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Abstract

'El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', the quintessential work of Argentine scribe Jorge Luis Borges, stands as a paragon of 20th-century Latin American Spanish literature. This narrative resonates profoundly with my scholarly sensibilities due to its striking alignment with the 'Yuan'ao' literary concept, a cornerstone of Chinese aesthetics, thereby enabling an interpretation of the short story through the lens of Chinese aesthetic principles. As a dedicated literary scholar, I have discerned a subtle yet profound layer of thought within *'El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*, a layer that Borges endeavors to articulate. This stratum of thought is unveiled through meticulous textual juxtaposition and critical analysis. The articulation of these thoughts, in essence, masks a more profound ambition - the quest for 'Tao'. In the tapestry of traditional Chinese aesthetics, 'Tao' is revered as an eternal essence and the zenith of ontological inquiry, serving as the ultimate archetype that all creative endeavors, including literary works, aspire to emulate.My scholarly endeavor is anchored in the textual fabric of *'El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*, enriched by a constellation of enlightening texts and a spectrum of concepts from Chinese aesthetic treatises. In the process of deconstructing and reconstructing its interpretation, I delve into the underlying concepts embedded within these discourses, aiming to unveil the ultimate pursuit of 'Tao'. I offer a novel perspective that seeks to ignite future dialogues on the cross-cultural dimensions of literary studies.

Key Words: 'El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan', Jorge Luis Borges, Spanish literature, Chinese aesthetics, 'Tao', Text comparison and analysis, Cross-cultural nature of literature

Introduction

I recently re-read the short story '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' (The Garden of Forking Paths) by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges, which is also one of the representative works of Spanish literature in 20th century Latin America. This short story follows a Chinese man named Yu Zhu, who worked as a spy for Germany in Britain during World War I. It tells of his struggle as he is pursued, culminating in the murder of sinologist Albert in order to provide important information to his German superiors, after which he is subsequently arrested.

However, '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' should be seen more as a philosophical novel, even if it appears to be a detective novel on the surface. In fact, the entire novel is filled with the author's various reflections on the world and the resulting obscure language, which has long surpassed the boundaries of detective fiction. These obscure languages remind me of an ancient literary concept popular in traditional China, namely 'Yuan'ao' (遠奧) - the literal meaning of this word refers to the 'Yuan' (遠, distant) and 'Ao' (奧, difficult to understand) features expressed in language. This term first appeared in a classic Chinese literary criticism called '*Wen xin diao long*' (文心雕龍,Carving a Dragon at the Core of Literature), which is interpreted as the literary temperament of 'drawing essence from typical examples of other articles to describe things that are difficult to understand' (Liu).

This association is actually a feasible starting point for research. The concept of world literature often emphasizes cross-cultural universality, which makes the theoretical analysis of traditional Chinese aesthetics accurately applicable to the exploration of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*', a Spanish language literature belonging to 20th century Latin America, a feasible approach. Therefore, several questions need to be raised here to explore this work, including what features belong to 'Yuan'ao' in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurca*' and how they express Borges' ultimate goal in creating this novel, which is to attempt to return literature to the pursuit of 'Tao' (道). Here, 'Tao' is the ultimate existence, highest ontology, and eternal law in traditional Chinese philosophy, Similar to the 'Brahman' advocated by traditional Indian philosophy and religion.

It is worth adding that the above discussions not only involve '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*', but also some other texts worldwide, including some literary works related to the textual features of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' and ancient Chinese aesthetic texts - they will be used to understand '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*'. This also means that the significance of this article is no longer just a new understanding of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*', but a bold attempt at cross-cultural analysis of literature.

Describe the State, Atmosphere, and Meaning

I strongly agree with the view that literature is a rare exploration of a limited world, including all of Borges's literary works, written as an 'encyclopedia of world knowledge' - including cosmic spirits, metaphysical myths, and some historical or literary allusions. These literary works often give readers a vague and beautiful impression - they originate from certain ideological or emotional elements. This feeling endows the work itself with an unfathomable quality, which I call an imitation of the infinite mysterious essence of the world. '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' is no exception, even though it is a short story with a short length, it does not hinder the completeness of its narrative. It only uses some metaphorical and symbolic rhetoric to achieve a state of literary description:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower. (Blake)

However, these images representing certain concepts make it difficult for people to understand their meanings - these meanings themselves have uncertainty. In the world constructed by Borges, everything is chaotic and unrealistic, and the language used to describe this world clearly has characteristics of ambiguity, ambiguity, and complexity - which is also because the described world also possesses these characteristics. For example, in the maze of this story, we can see the dreamlike projection

of consciousness, the magic brought by association, the expression of unique destiny, the seamless fusion of multiple elements, the ghosts of Gnosticism and paganism, the mysterious atmosphere, clever creation, and astonishing illusions... These clever and unique designs create the beauty of art in form, It also creates an inner tense atmosphere - throughout the entire article, this atmosphere full of various design meanings appears in a profound and prominent manner. These elements in the maze form a structure, which is an extended structure that removes time. Borges emphasizes the technique of repetition in his description of the maze in this novel, creating a prism similar to the proliferation effect through satirical replication.

It is worth noting that this Calvino style fiction creates a mixed atmosphere of truth and falsehood, while also revealing a form of equal truth content, and time is just an eternal cycle. The maze described in the novel shares many similarities with the infinite and internally closed stream of consciousness depicted by Virginia Woolf's '*To the Lighthouse*' and Michel Butor's '*L'Emploi du temps' (The time - table)*, and can be said to be a fundamental symbol derived from Kandinsky's abstraction. The things and forms symbolized by these basic symbols are all derived from pure life experiences and are related to philosophical thinking about time, which also makes them possess a dual nature of supernatural and everyday - this inevitably reminds people of Franz Kafka's spatial structure in '*Das Schloss'(The Castle)* and '*Der Process'(The Judgment)*. The two are similar in that their meanings are contained in the discourse direction of the text, which is the deep 'narration' of the unique literary language.

Structure and Language

The previous section's discussion extended to the discussion of structure. The structure of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' creates a feeling that is actually similar to Maurice Maeterlinck's play, filled with some pantheological fantasies, various mysteries and ambiguities, as well as various instincts and imaginations. This is not only about 'respecting the aesthetic value of religious or philosophical thought, and even the strange and wonderful things contained within it' ('Otras inquisiciones' 247), but also about establishing a symbolic forest of Swedenborg style. In this symbolic forest surrounded by art, fantasy transcends everything.

And these fantasies are expressed as a collection of symbols, which is also a characteristic of *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*'s special literary language or textual discourse - traditional writing has been overturned in fact, and the narrative in traditional novels has become an internal, mysterious, flat, fragmented, and illogical narrative. In other words, Borges deconstructed the text and language in the literary tradition represented by classical literature, and replaced it with a new way of expression that is close to Kafka style fantasy. Therefore, the demand for consciousness structure in Borges' creative process has led to the creation of a completely new language - and understanding it, especially the deep meaning, is crucial for understanding the consciousness structure of his creative process.

Regarding language or its interpretation, it can be Kierkegaard style (believing that all rules of language communication lie in the essence of behavior), Hesse style (referring to language contradictions as a sacred hodgepodge), or Wittgenstein style (words are the world itself). The language of all literary works actually belongs to one of them, for example, the language in Peter Handeck's 'Sprechstuecke' (Talk drama) is a typical Wittgenstein style, which attempts to express the world through words. The literary creation concept of 'everything is a vocabulary of a language' ('Luopan') proposed by Borges also belongs to the Wittgenstein style. His description of dreams in '*El Jardín de senderos que se*

bifurcan' is similar to that of '*Der Zauberg' (The Mountain)*, but his almost unconscious monologue is more like '*Finnegans Wake'* and '*The Death of Virgil'* - a monologue that directly deals with the personalities, interests, and inner worlds of different people. Therefore, the connotations of these things spread to existence, even if they may be fictional. Therefore, the deep meaning contained in the language of Borges' '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* should be understood in relation to the existence itself and its related discourse, and his ideological structure in creating this short story is also a description, analysis, and exploration of existence.

Characters and themes

Based on his understanding of the first two parts, Borges attempts in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* to articulate his thinking (about existence and the description, analysis, and exploration of things related to existence) in the creative process of creating texts (i.e. literary works) through language. In this way, the experiential world symbolized by the text imitates the world through language, Infinitely close to the true essence of the real world and connected to the real world. And this kind of connection is presented in the theme of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* throughout the text - which also makes the exploration of the theme of the text an important object of discussion.

However, attributing the entire theme of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* to the grand proposition of 'philosophy' is clearly too broad. A feasible analysis approach is to seek more detailed themes through the characters and plot in the story. However, due to the various difficult to understand characteristics of the structure and language mentioned earlier, it seems difficult to grasp the characters and plot of this story. In terms of characters, Cui Peng, as a novelist or knowledgeable person, symbolizes his predecessors and their experiences in history. The superior of the opposing enemy country (Britain) and Germany respectively represent death and fate. It is worth adding that the sinologists Albert and 'I' in the story are both narratives of 'me', but the difference between the two lies in whether they have achieved some kind of realization - which also means that these characters are just different aspects of the subject. But the question is, what do they (historical experience, death, and fate) mean by pointing to different aspects of the subject?

It is obvious that the sides of these subjects all point to the historicity of the body and are for the individual. In this way, the answer to this question is very clear: the different aspects of these subjects are actually things that are absent from the entire structure, that is, the concept of time belonging to individuals. I use a text that has intertextuality with '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*, which is another work by Borges, '*Historia de la eternidad' (The Eternal History)*, to prove that this is an orientation towards the proposition of time - the 'I' text no longer represents the self of the 'author himself and his experience', but the entire person is described as the self. A researcher of Borges and Latin American literature believes that this narrative about the body is essentially a purely humanistic 'hermeneutic expression of reality' (Wilson). And these expressions appear in the form of characters in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*.

When characters become different aspects of the subject and become symbols of hermeneutic expression, their themes are also expressed in the symbols. In '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*, its theme is infinite time and the rationality of imagination. But how do I deduce the hidden themes through the different aspects of characters as subjects and the symbols expressed in hermeneutics? Firstly, I am connected to the spatiotemporal background of the entire text - in the 20th century, compared to

the survival dilemma in the so-called absurd world that European existentialists were concerned about, the focus of literary narratives by Latin American writers was not a sense of disillusionment, but rather the melancholy of the Wordsworth style. This is also reflected in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*' - it has a absurdity similar to Eugène Ionesco's '*Rhinoceros*'. Borges believes that we should 'see a symbol in a day or a year that belongs to the past and humanity' ('Shiyi'), while also reminding us that in the context of 'flowers always protect death' ('Buyinuosiailisi zhi si'), it is impossible for our own soul to pursue eternal life arbitrarily and blindly. In another poem, '*Robajo*', Borges compares life to chess pieces and creates a sense of oppression in *The Hairy Ape*'s style. This emotion has sparked many literary descriptions, such as the contemplation of fantasy and fate in Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud's '*Le Bateau Ivre' (The Drunk boat)*, the unique ending of voice and anger, symbolizing the impossibility of eternal life. In other words, this absurdity is demonstrated and interpreted by the characters in the text - it showcases the limitations of human existence and cognition in the dimension of time, as well as the resulting sense of powerlessness. It is interpreted as the meaningless essence of being a person in the real world, facing the profound and eternal world in which they exist. Secondly, this theme is also a very common one for Borges' literary works. For example, in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*', there are multiple time chains generated by multiple characters and their perspectives. This form of expression also appears in a poem by Borges, '*La Reconetta' (The Recoleta)*, which is also applied to the finite moments caused by human face of time. However, '*La Recoletta*' presents a different superficial theme, namely the stagnation and uniqueness of history.

Art, Aim and 'Tao'

The previous discussion in this article seemed limited to the scope of traditional literary criticism and did not delve deeper into it. Although these discussions have done a lot of work compared to previous research on '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*', they are still limited to the analysis of postmodern features of fantasy genres and texts.

The themes mentioned earlier demonstrate the crucial role played by the owl of Minerva in '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*'. We can see the shadows of Francis Herbert Bradley, George Berkeley, David Hume, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. General literary criticism believes that these philosophical explorations, such as subjective theories of knowledge and experience and the fragility of personal identity, help enrich and level the content of works, especially adding color to poetic and unfamiliar backgrounds. But this understanding seems incorrect - if we follow this idea, these philosophical reflections are no longer the core of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*'. I believe that even though Borges' literary works often have personality and an uncertain internality in their production and reception, it does not mean that they should be understood as Alain Robbe Grillet's claim that literary works are meaningless. On the contrary, in Borges' works, these themes are the entities that give them meaning. If we can set aside various decorative styles (Baroque, Gondola, and Whitman) in the text, what hides behind various artistic expressions is a strong creative purpose, namely radical avant-garde in Latin American literature.

Not only that, Borges was a devout, even fanatical believer in 'artistic messianism'. Since Gerhard Hauptmann's play '*Die versunken Glocke' (The Shatter the Bell)* was published, creators have set their mission as building a utopia of art. In Borges's view, the reason why humans, as transient beings, create art is because it is another way to overcome pain besides death, and death is a terrible and inevitable

choice. Since humans cannot overcome death, they have created a natural building to face it - this building is art. In his own words, this is 'Art is Isaac, the eternal green.' ('shiyi ') Therefore, the entire text of '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* is essentially an art, in which Borges attempts to imitate the eternal pursuit through art. And Borges' goal in telling the entire story precisely aligns with China's ancient aesthetic proposition - attempting to pursue something beyond human experience and eternity, that is, the essence of eternity, also known as ' Tao. ' This is also reflected in the language of the entire text that was previously discussed. The 'Yuan'ao' feature of the entire language is an imitation of the 'Tao' feature, which is 'Deep and diverse to understand, it is the gateway to endless wonder' (Lao).

The reason why Borges developed *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*'s creation in the form of imitating 'Tao' is because it attempts to stimulate the love of 'Tao' as an existence through existing human knowledge (including different artistic techniques, languages, and philosophical thinking) and use it as a driving force for exploration. This is precisely what Plato did in *Συμποσιον (The Symposium)*.

Conclusion

In this atypical original research article, Borges' short story, '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'*, is seen as a literary return to 'Tao'. I have conducted extensive analysis, description, and exploration of the elements in this, including but not limited to describing their states, structures, language characters, themes, and broader artistic text analysis, to support this viewpoint. They also reveal the inevitable limitations of being a short-lived person in the face of the time dimension. But Borges pointed out that people can transcend the limitations of time and pursue the eternal essence, that is, 'Tao', through art, which is milder and more beautiful than death. Although '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* only involves individual or specific experiences that belong solely to the body, in fact, it should not be understood as some contemplation of individual existence but should also be interpreted as a metaphor for the entire human survival situation - time and space such as death and fate bring tragedy to the human collective and resistance against it (i.e. art).

Therefore, *'El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* is no longer just a discussion about life, especially about individual choices, but also a discussion of various dimensions belonging to the collective category, such as society, culture, history, etc. Therefore, the inspiration it can provide to readers is diverse - which is why I used a playful word combination like 'A Thinking' in the title of this original research article. I also understand why this work can be regarded as a representative work of Borges and 20th century Latin American Spanish literature. It not only subverts literary traditions in terms of expression, but its profound ideas can also make readers think about how humans, whether individuals or collectives, should think about their own situation and live on this basis. The answer given by Borges, in the words of a German poet, is:

Full of merit, but poetic,

Man lives on this earth. (Hölderlin)

The greatness of this work lies not only in its profound explanation of the common dilemma of humanity - the limitations of time and the emptiness it brings, but also in its pointing out that art is a weapon to resist this dilemma and a path to pursue eternity - precisely the original meaning of the Chinese character 'Tao' (Mair 132).

From a broader perspective, '*El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'* is unique for subverting the original literary tradition, but it still represents the human heritage of ancient literary traditions, namely

'Wenyizaidao' (文以載道,literature is the carrier of 'Tao'). In this tradition, literary creation itself has become an exploration, imitation, and expression of 'Tao' - this is not limited to the so-called 'Yuan'ao' literary creation. This kind of exploration can be cross-cultural, so literary creation and research, including the interpretation of *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, can be interpreted in different cultural backgrounds, as I did in this article. Returning to the literary tradition mentioned earlier, it is evident that truly great art, including literature, starts from the human mind or body, with the pursuit of 'Tao' as its own goal, reflecting the sublime beauty inherent in 'Tao' itself. Interestingly, Confucius once praised this beauty as follows: 'If you see it in the morning, then it is worth dying at night.' (Confucius)

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- The title of the article should be explanatory, precise andreflective and should include major areas /variables underscrutiny.

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- An abstract comprising between 200-250 words should beplaced just after the title of the article. It should state theoverview, intervention or research gap, methodology, andfindings of the study as applicable.

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