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Editor's Introduction

It is our great pleasure and my personal honour as the editor-in-chief to introduce Volume 10 Issue 2 of the *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*. This issue is a selection of papers received through open submissions directly to our journal.

This is already the fifth issue of the journal under my editorship; once more, with the precious help of our Co-Editor, Dr Rachel Franks (University of Newcastle/ University of Sydney, Australia), and our two Associate Editors, Dr Jeri Kroll (Flinders University, Australia) and Dr Murielle El Hajj Nahas (Qatar University, Qatar). We have one more associate editor this time: Dr Firas A. J. Al-Jubouri from Newcastle University, UK.

We are now 42 teachers and scholars from various countries, always eager to help, and willing to review the submissions we receive. Special thanks to the IAFOR Publications Office and its manager, Mr Nick Potts, for his support and hard work.

We hope our journal, indexed in Scopus since December 2019, will become more international in time and we still welcome teachers and scholars from all regions of the world who wish to join us. Please join us on Academia and help us promote our journal.
https://independent.academia.edu/EditorLiteratureandLanguage

Finally, we would like to thank all those authors who entrusted our journal with their research. Manuscripts, once passing initial screening, were peer-reviewed anonymously by at least four members of our team, resulting in seven being accepted for this issue.

Note that we accept submissions of short original essays and articles (800 to 2000 words) that are peer-reviewed by several members of our team, like regular research papers. Welcome to submit a paper for our July 2022 issue.

Please see the journal website for the latest information and to read past issues: https://ijl.iafor.org/ Our latest issue is now freely available to read online and is free of publication fees for authors.

With this wealth of thought-provoking manuscripts in this issue, I wish you a wonderful and educative journey through the pages that follow.

Best regards,

Bernard Montoneri
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Postcolonial Gothic Elements in Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*

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Abstract

Nick Joaquin (Nicomedes Márquez Joaquín, (1917-2004) is known for his unique style of writing, tropical Gothic, and applying gothic elements in his stories and novels. This paper examines his first novel *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* through the lens of postcolonial theory. The paper also investigates gothic narratives in his novel by applying David Punter's literary-historical approach. Punter (2000), in his book *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*, examines the metamorphoses of the Gothic as a genre in some selected novels and poems. The book depicts new manifestations of the Gothic during 20th century literature. This paper attempts to investigate how the elements of postcolonial Gothic as discussed by Punter are manifested in Joaquin's novel. In doing so, the contrapuntal method of reading, introduced by Edward Said (1993), is also applied to explore the hidden parts of history in the novel.

Keywords: colonialism, contrapuntal reading, gothic elements, Joaquin, postcolonial theory

Introduction and Literature Review

Postcolonialism is a theoretical approach to studying social and cultural problems in former colonies of Western powers such as Britain, France, USA, and Spain. The postcolonial theory focuses on the relationship between the colonizers and colonized people, and depicts the problems that arise after the independence of formerly colonized countries.

Franz Fanon (1925-1961), Albert Memmi (1920-2020), and Aime Césaire (1913-2008) are the early scholars of postcolonial theory who have significantly contributed to the field. However, it was Edward Saeed's works such as *Orientalism* (1978), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) that garnered the attention of academic circles more than ever.

Postcolonial theory, as an interdisciplinary field, posits various theories and notions. Since the early 1980s, some acclaimed novels such as *Midnight's Children* by Rushdie (1981), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), gained attention due to the presence of gothic elements in postcolonial literature. A growing focus on the connection between the Gothic and post-colonial literature could be traced even before the 1980s. In 1972, the University of Queensland published a collection of Joaquin's short stories entitled Tropical Gothic. The collection comprises nine stories spanning two decades of Joaquin's writings (1946 to 1966). Some scholars refer to Joaquin's unique style of English, his nostalgic sensation toward the Spanish past, and applying gothic elements to define the term "Tropical Gothic".

The Gothic as a genre has the ability to adapt itself to any place and time. From European countries in the 18th century to the contemporary Caribbean, African, or Southeast Asia, the Gothic has evolved by absorbing the indigenous elements of the place, and the spirit of its time. Hence, today the gothic transformations have become a field of study in literature and since the concern for the presence of the stranger has always been one of the critical themes in gothic literature, it has been employed in postcolonial theory as well.

This paper attempts to examine *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* by answering the question: What traditional elements of the Postcolonial Gothic can be found in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*?

To answer the question above, the contrapuntal method of reading is applied to draw out the overarching postcolonial aspects found in the novel. Developed by Edward Said, contrapuntal reading is "a form of 'reading back' from the perspective of the colonized, to show how the submerged but crucial presence of the empire emerges in canonical texts" (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001, p. 92). This method helps to discover intertwined histories in a novel or other works of fiction. Looking at a literary work contrapuntally can reveal different perspectives of the context in which the story takes place.

David Punter's (2000) literary-historical approach is employed, too, to identify the elements of postcolonial gothic in Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*. David Punter (2000), in his book Postcolonial Imaginings, depicts the new elements of the Gothic. For instance, in postcolonial gothic, "Castles transform into pickle factories or family homes complete with verandahs and drawing rooms. Hostile mountainous backdrops fade into packed cities. Ghosts no longer whisper from paintings or haunt ships. Instead, they are the echoes of past memories, appearing where they cannot exist" (Denison, 2009, pp. 5–6). "If we are to engage with postcolonial writing," Punter (2000) writes, "then we have to do it through the encounter

between the postcolonial and the literary, in all its peculiarities, its exemplary unyieldingness, its intransigence, its resistance not only to political appropriation but also to theoretical oversight" (p. 10).

There are several Filipino writers such as Jose Rizal, Linda Ty Casper and Carlos Bulosan whose works lend themselves to a postcolonial criticism, but what distinguishes Nick Joaquin from these other writers is his attachment to the Spanish period, the era which began the formation of the modern Filipino identity. For Joaquin, the Philippine historical culture is created by the tools brought to the archipelago by Spaniards, "like, for example, the plow. The plow did not "corrupt," it begot, the Filipino." He believes that before the Spanish period, "there is not one authentic Philippine date. After the ensuing technical revolution, dates acquire a great practical importance" (Joaquin, 2017a, p. 17). Moreover, Joaquin juxtaposes this period with the succeeding American colonial period in the Philippines.

In recent years, some scholars have examined Joaquin's works from a postcolonial Gothic perspective. Arong (2016) in her essay "Nick Joaquin's Cándido's Apocalypse: Re-imagining the Gothic in a Postcolonial Philippines" explored the idea of the Gothic in Joaquin's writing and claimed that Joaquin is the "most original voice in postcolonial Philippine writing" (p. 114). Arong's (2018) more recent paper "Temporality in Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*" argued as well that Joaquin's novel "should also be read as a strategy for resisting U.S. neocolonialism and a critical view of nativism, shedding light on the disjunction among history, culture, and literary consciousness" (p. 455).

P. Sharrad (2008) examines Joaquin's works contrasted to the history specifically, and in accordance with the history of the Philippines. Sharrad in his article *Echoes and Antecedents: Nick Joaquin's Tropical Gothic* examined Joaquin's works vis-à-vis the history of the Philippines. He pointed out the fact that religions and powers have colonized the Philippines over centuries. Filipinos were invaded first by migrating Malays with a dominant Islamic culture, then came the Catholic conquistadores, and finally the evangelists of materialism. Sharrad claimed that "this discontinuous culture of conquest has produced a certain schizophrenia in the Philippine sense of identity" (p. 355).

Postcolonial Gothic Elements

The past haunts the present: *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* begins in media res. Connie Escobar, as the main female character of the novel, claims that she has two navels. Having been overcome by anxiety, she asks Pepe Monson to fix this problem urgently and through a surgical operation, but Monson is only a veterinarian. Later in the story, the reader meets two inconsistent narratives, one given by Connie, and the other presented from her mother's, Senora Concha Vidal's point of view. Throughout the story, the reader finds out that Connie's husband Macho Escobar has had an affair with Señora Concha Vidal.

Like other gothic novels, the story unfolds the family secrets of the characters, but first and foremost, the memoirs from Connie's past bring great distress to her current life. Pepe Monson, who has always heard from his father about his years in Manila, has been living in Hong Kong for many years so far and is dealing with the past as well.

Doctor Monson, Pepe's father, is a revolutionary nationalist who has been in self-imposed exile for many years. He lives with the memories of the past during the years of exile and has almost lost touch with the present. At the last moments of his life, Doctor Monson regrets that he has

abandoned the present so as to live in the past. Connie's mother, whose character resembles a monster, is a victim of her past, too. In fact, the common point between Connie and other characters is an irritating and mysterious past. This way or another, all characters are prisoners of their past.

The Woman Who Had Two Navels depicts how the past can haunt the present and how ghosts from the past can create trauma in the current life. In this respect, the past always has a malicious effect on the present time; the atonement resulted from the sins of parents.

Sense of Loss

Along with Connie's bizarre claim to have two navels, the novel begins with a sense of loss. It is felt when Concha de Vidal meets Pepe Monson and reveals the friendship between their families in the past. Pepe was unaware of certain facts: "and when I was in school your father was the school's physician. I remember that the older girls were quite in love with him and kept praying for fevers. He was such a handsome, a magnificent gentleman" (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 70).

They talk about the Monsons' family house that no longer exists:

> Your father's family had a famous house in Binondo – Binondo's one of the oldest parts in Manila, the most labyrinthine – and your house was famous because our great men loved to assemble there – to talk, to dance, to quarrel, to plot revolutions. Mother took me there a few times. I was just a child in pigtails and my eyes popped out with bashfulness … It's not there anymore – your father's house … (Joaquin, 2017b, pp. 70-71).

The house is not just referring to materialistic objects here, instead, it is the manifestation of Inheritance of ancestors. It was old and had undergone the presence of several generations of ancestors. The destruction of such a house results in a deep sense of loss. It is necessary to look at the conversation between Concha de Vidal and Pepe Monson to see the depth and breadth of the sense of loss:

> … It was a courteous cordial house –an old, old house even then, and this last war had finally destroyed it, along with all the dear labyrinth of Binondo.
> She said: "It's not there anymore – your father's house …"
>
> He nodded: they had heard it was gone... "It was waiting for us to come home," he added …: "The house of our fathers is waiting for us to come home!" (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 71)

This sense of loss, however, is not limited to the lack of objects such as the father's house; this is the sense of loss that spreads through the souls of the survivors, and like termites in a wooden house disrupts their foggy identities. The characters, here, know that nothing is waiting for them to come back home.

Punter (2000) writes: "we might equally say that what is lost is also impossible to register" (p. 16). It is impossible to come home simply because one's home is nothing but a hallucination of home. The impossibility and loss are the genes that shape the story. The sense of loss is a common point for all characters

The objects in Pepe's office illustrate a sense of life, too:

> "Here" was Hong Kong, in midwinter, on Kowloon side.
>
> And why here? Wondered Pepe Monson, removing bewildered eyes from her face and looking rather dazedly around the room; feeling the room's furniture hovering vaguely – the faded rug on the floor; the sofa near the doorway, against the wall; the two small Filipino flags crossed under a picture of General Aguinaldo; the bust of the Sacred Heart upon the bookshelf, between brass candlesticks; the tamaraw head above each of the shut windows… (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 67).

Along with the atmosphere depicted in the paragraph, here are the materials of a postcolonial position or a gothic imagination: small Filipino flags, the picture of General Aguinaldo, the bust of Sacred Heart, and the tamaraw head; the objects that promote, as Punter writes, "a sense of history as an accumulation of relics, as an accumulative relic, an embedding of a notion of mourning" (Punter, 2000, p. 91).

Everything is foggy and floating, including the identities represented by small Filipino flags thrown in a room in Hong Kong. The picture of General Aguinaldo gives a sense of nationalism and is a reminder of a need for national identity. Even the season can create a sense of alienation: a Filipino, from a tropical land, now is in midwinter. The tamaraw head symbolizes an endangered species. In 1961, at the time of writing the novel, the tamaraw as the only endemic Philippine bovine was, and still is, on the brink of extinction. The whole scene in this paragraph is designed to induce a sense of loss and being lost.

"Fog or mist is conventionally used to blur objects not only to reduce visibility but also to usher in terror, be it in the form of a person or a thing;" Arong (2018, p. 463) writes. Furthermore, we may be more specific about Arong's suggestion that the fog in this scene ushers in terror, even considering the semantic difference between terror and horror. In fact, terror as a classic gothic convention has a variety of manifestations. Thus, it is possible to suggest that fog, here and among various emanations, refers to being lost. In addition to fictional functions, fog can indicate the lack of clarity not only for the physical objects in the scene but also for the identity of the character. "Hong Kong's infamous fog, especially during winter," when it incorporates the characters of the novel, can be a metaphor for the characters' fogy identity as well.

Hidden Histories: Hong Kong itself, as the setting, carries implications for Filipino nationalism. "Hong Kong is an important locale for Filipino revolutionaries and expatriates. Jose Rizal practiced as an ophthalmologist in Hong Kong prior to his exile in Dapitan, and the first Philippine Republic led by General Emilio Aguinaldo used Hong Kong as its base for its government-in-exile," Arong points out and compares Doctor Monson's character to General Artemio Ricarte, a nationalist who is regarded as the Father of the Philippine Army. It can be claimed that Doctor Monson's wishes never came true and the destruction of his house suggests the failure of the Revolution and Filipino nationalism.

Although Doctor Monson is a former rebel who has fled his country concerned with the aftermath of the war, it is inconsistent with San Juan's (1984) point of view that Doctor Monson "has contributed to the alienation of his children by indulging in the fashionable pose of self-exile – a metaphor of colonial domination – and has thereby doomed his offspring to private hell" (p. 149).

If we accept Arong's claim that the character of Doctor Monson in the novel is based on the true-life of General Artemio Ricarte (2018, p. 463), then we will find out that Joaquin considers him the last and authentic representative of the Revolution and the only general who never surrendered to U.S. forces. There is evidence to support this point of view, too, including the descriptive similarities that can be drawn between this novel and another essay by Joaquin.
In his book *A Question of Heroes*, Joaquin asks a question that seems simple to answer at first glance: "when stopped the Revolution?"

"On April 1, 1901, Don Emilio took the oath of allegiance to the United States and on April 16 he called on the warriors still in the field to lay down their arms." By acknowledging and accepting the sovereignty of the United States, Aguinaldo put an end to the Republic.
"The Republic had indeed ended – but had the Revolution?" Joaquin asks, and if the answer is no, so when stopped the Revolution? And answers: "Certainly not on that March day when Don Emilio fell captive in Palanan, nor on the April Fool's day when he swore allegiance to the United States, not yet on the day he called his armies to surrender." (Joaquin, 2005, p. 213)
Furthermore, it is no surprise that Joaquin is complaining about the misreading of the 1900s by Filipinos:

> The 1900s that were Empire Days to the Americans, and for Filipinos the ABCs of a new culture, are usually read in terms of peaceful development, but is this a correct reading of the 1900s? Have we been trained not to see an important movement of that period: the continuing Revolution? (Joaquin, 2005, p. 213)

Joaquin is involved with both sides of the controversy: on the one hand, he is angry at those who have surrendered their lives and even hearts to the dominant military power and prevailing culture: His favorite cliché is depicting people swiftly and wholeheartedly falling in love with America. The submerged evidence is of a bitter, stubborn, and quite widespread resistance. The American lovers won in the end, and so thoroughly that we could forget there was even a struggle (p. 213). On the other hand, he is targeting those who promoted New Propaganda and left the Filipino identity to deteriorate.

After Aguinaldo's surrender to the Americans, Ricarte became the leader of the Revolution as "the only general who never swore allegiance to the United States," and "this was in the days when the canon of national heroes was being formed, and Ricarte could not, of course, be allowed even a minor place there, not so much because he was still alive as because he was still active, dangerously active," (Joaquin, 2005, p. 214) Joaquin writes, and even accuses the New Propaganda of abusing Ricarte's revolutionary struggle:

> Where the Republic fell, in 1901, in the person of Aguinaldo, the Revolution ground to a stop, in 1945, in the person of Ricarte.
>
> At that time, to suggest him for national hero would have meant a lynching but since then there has been the New Propaganda to make it square but square not to be anti-American (Joaquin, 2005, p. 214).

Joaquin, in his novel and essay, gives similar descriptions for Doctor Monson and Artemio Ricarte and seems to have a clear tendency to differentiate between Aguinaldo and Ricarte's struggles:

> … a few more years, and he and his general were pale fugitives, fleeing up rivers, through jungles, over mountains; the Yanqui soldiery hot on their heels. But he had resisted to the end – he and so many other splendid young men – resisting with the spirit when, bound and jailed, they could no longer resist with arms. Their general might submit; their general might take the oath of allegiance; their general might call on all the still embattled caudillos to come out and surrender – but these hardheaded young men flung at the Yanquis their gesture of spiritual resistance, preferring exile to submission (2017b, p. 74).

Joaquin (2005) has clearly separated the Republic from the Revolution as two mainstreams of the political view in the Philippines: "… we have been emphasizing the wrong movement in the 1900s," he claims, "the mainstream of our history was not our political development or education for self-rule, not the First Philippine Assembly or the rise of Osmeña and Quezon, or the Jon's Law. The mainstream is the continuing Revolution" (p. 226).

It seems that Joaquin has not even forgotten to pick out the Billiken to play a role in his novel as a metaphor, to show the cultural tendency of society to what he calls "emphasizing the wrong movement." (p. 226) According to Dorothy Jean Ray (1974), Billiken or Biliken (with one 'l' in the novel) is a charm doll created by Florence Pretz, an American art teacher and illustrator most likely in 1908, and "along with the horseshoe, the rabbit's foot, and the four-leaf clover, the Billiken is one of America's favorite good-luck pieces."

Surprisingly, the charm was widely accepted in other countries such as Japan, and even today, it is known as the God of things as they ought to be. In the Philippines, Billiken became the symbol of friendship between the USA and the Philippines thanks to participating in Manila Carnivals (1908-39) as the King of the Carnival. "But the nostalgia-evoking carnival god Biliken is also an icon of colonial amnesia" (Hau, 2015). According to McCoy and Roces (1985), the original organizer of the carnival was an American colonel George T. Langhorne. Caroline Hau (2015) writes: "Americans had taken a pre-Lenten festival and turned it into an instrument of pacification aimed at celebrating Philippine-American "friendship" and defusing any lingering hostility between Americans and Filipinos in the city."

In Joaquin's novel, Billiken plays a crucial role and is described as "an old fat god, with sagging udders, bald and white-bearded and squatting like a Buddha; and the sly look in its eyes was repeated by the two navels that winked from its gross belly" (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 100).

Connie's keen interest in Billiken reflects the influence of American modernism on Filipino identity.

Shame and Blindness: Concha Vidal, her husband, and Connie, all have sinister roles in the novel; however, it is essential to find out how these monsters are created. In Joaquin's novel, characters are living in a situation that creates monsters; that can transform individuals and also objects into monsters. It can even extract monsters from memories. However, at least some of these monsters are victims themselves. They have no choice but to become monsters. In fact, that is a monstrous estate: the estate of being colonized.

Many monstrous forms, "take the literal form of hybrids, mixtures of man and animal." Beyond the scary or different appearance, the relationship between monstrosity and power, the power that creates the monsters, can be studied, which "will inevitably maintain a dialogue with the realm of the political." David Punter (2000) writes:

> To take the emblematic European case of Frankenstein, we have there a text that has been read as being about power in all manner of ways and inevitably also, of course, about powerless-ness. We might think, for example, about the curious kind of power Victor Frankenstein wields over his creation, the power to bestow and in the end also to withhold life. Or we might think about the monster's frustrated and ultimately futile attempts to wield some kind of power over his own environment and over his creator, attempts that are doomed to come to nothing (pp. 110–111).

However, monsters do not always appear like Frankenstein. Punter, by reviewing different novels, explores how monstrosity is manifested in individuals and society. He – according to the novels he reviews – lists some features which lead to monstrosity. The first one is "shamelessness" which refers to "a history of unbelievable" or unacceptable actions performed by individuals, "however, they apparently feel no shame."

In Joaquin's novel, Concha Vidal and her husband do not appear in the form of hybrids; instead, what makes them monsters is shamelessness. Concha is not ashamed to talk about the corruption of her husband:

> Her father's in the government, you know, and when Connie was still in school there were some stupid charges against him – bribery, and using up the public funds, and having his daughter on the government payroll also she was just a schoolgirl who had never been inside an office (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 76).

and:

> I told her that people who had our advantages must expect to be envied and reviled by people who were not so fortunate; and there were many things grown-ups did which couldn't properly be judged by young people until the young people were grown-ups themselves… (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 77).

Connie's disillusionment actually begins when she discovers her father's money is "blood sucked from the people." However, this is not the only qualm about Connie and her family. Monsters can be victims too. Considering the point that Connie's father was a noted ilustrado but had transformed into a corrupt politician from a patriot, and the point that Concha is from a patriot family, too, leads us to a pervasive projection, which is a sort of inevitable fate. Concha and her husband's shamefulness is actually "a projection of the shamefulness of the society" they are surrounded by.

The projection can ruin everything in society, including the childhood of the characters. Connie becomes a monster precisely because of her childhood; as Punter (2000) writes: "there is the enduring relevance of the monster as a representation of childhood experience, as an at least initially uncomprehending victim of a realm that represents the adult world gone mad, crazed with its own power" (p. 111).

However, the project of monstrosity is not limited to individuals. It is like poisoned air that infects all aspects of being, including places and cities. That "wilderness is not in the far places of the earth, those spots on the map which are simply marked as terra incognita or 'Here be Dragons,' but right in the heart of social life" (Punter, 2000, p. 118).

In the novel, even Manila and Hong Kong have metamorphosed into monsters: Paco

> … had resumed his solitary explorations of the city but what he now saw increased his discomfort: the heat-dazzling panic-edgy streets darkened in his brain with doom, dirt, danger, disease, and violent death. Some venom was at work here, seeping through all the layers, cankering in all directions (Joaquin, 2017b, p. 93).

Conclusion

The Postcolonial Gothic combines two complex and contested terms: the Postcolonial and the Gothic. Joaquin's combination and employment of the resulting elements from the conjunction of these two terms creates new elements of the Gothic. Although there are no old and dreadful castles mentioned in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, Joaquin's novel is imbued with the transformed form of some Gothic elements such as: sense of loss, the past haunts the present, hidden histories, and shame and blindness. Moreover, for Joaquin, applying gothic elements is a way to revive the repressed parts of historical memories of the Philippines. As discussed in hidden histories, he tends to explore the traces of the erased or hidden history in his novel. By recreating historical characters in the novel, he also focuses on the historical ambiguity, which resulted from the impalpable presence of those erased parts of the past at present. By placing those characters in a land of exile, Joaquin creates a sense of loss and by creating situations that turns humans into blind and shameless creatures, he provides a contemporary sense of Gothic.

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Violent Memory: Haruki Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*

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Abstract

Modern information technologies have radically transfigured human experience. The extensive use of mnemonic devices, for instance, has redefined the subject by externalizing aspects of inner consciousness. These transformations involve the incorporeal but deeply felt, violent dislocations of human experience, traumas that are grounded in reality but which challenge symbolic resources because they are difficult to articulate. I am interested in how the unseen wounding of mnemonic intervention is registered in the "impossible" language of speculative fiction (SF). SF is both rooted in the "real" and "estranged" from reality, and thus able to give form to impossible injuries. This paper argues that Haruki Murakami uses the mode of SF in his novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* to explore how mnemonic substitutes interfere with the complex process of remembering World War II in Japan. I will demonstrate how, through SF, Murakami is able to give form to an unseen crisis of memory in postwar Japan, a crisis marked by the unspeakable shock of war and by the trauma that results from the intrusion of artificial memories upon one's consciousness of history.

Keywords: commemoration, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Haruki Murakami, speculative fiction, trauma

> "…there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."
> (Walter Benjamin, 1968, p. 248)

The violence done by technology is manifold and far-reaching. From the destruction caused by modern military weapons, to the toxic effects of industrial pollutants, technology-facilitated physical violence has become increasingly severe over the years. There are other forms of technological violence equally profound, though less perceptible to us. Modern information and communication technologies have radically collapsed space and transformed time, transfiguring our concepts of historical consciousness. These subtler technological transformations involve incorporeal but still violent dislocations of human experience. These dislocations constitute trauma,[1] a wounding of the human psyche. Yet, because these wounds are invisible, they are difficult to identify or acknowledge. I am interested in how such wounds are registered in the "impossible" language of speculative fiction[2] (SF). This paper explores how Haruki Murakami's SF novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* conveys the unseen wounds of postwar commemoration, a technological reshaping of memory that encourages forgetting and prevents healing.

Trauma is an experience constitutive of modernity (Micale and Lerner, 2001, p. 10), and many consider the modern subject "inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma" (Seltzer, 2013, p. 18). Sigmund Freud, for example, in his post-World War I text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), asserts that psychological wounds can occur "without the intervention of any gross mechanical force" (p. 10), putting an end to the long-held belief that the traumatic neuroses of military combatants result from physical wounding. Freud argues that a traumatic experience causes the mind to split as a means of defence into the everyday conscious and the "repressed" unconscious. For Carl Jung (1935), trauma results in psychological dissociation, where the ego separates into fragments, or complexes, as a means of defending the psyche against damage (p. 71). Walter Benjamin (1968) recognises a similar kind of psychic wounding as endemic to the modern urban experience. In the city, the individual is overwhelmed by the "series of shocks and collisions" that subject "the human sensorium to a complex kind of training" (p. 175). For Benjamin, this "shock" (an affect Freud closely relates to the notion of trauma) "become[s] the norm" (p. 162) and leads to an "atrophy of experience" (p. 159). Likewise, Theodor Adorno (1981) calls attention to the insidious violence of commodification and reification, sociotechnical processes that entrench in modern society a destructive rationality, resulting in the "mutilation of man" (24).

The increasingly unnoticeable technological re-orderings of everyday life in the Information Age further complicate this psychological wounding. The extensive use of digital technologies and our newfound ability to retrieve and generate information, particularly, have changed the way that we remember. Our reliance on what Bernard Stiegler (2003) calls "mnemotechnics," artificial supplements that exteriorise and store memory, has meant that we no longer need to actively remember. Mnemonic devices (like cinema and digital records) have disrupted older ways of commemorating difficult pasts, leading to anxieties about our ability to actively shape cultural memory. A growing number of scholars have explored how this exteriorisation of

[1] The word "trauma" (from the Greek word meaning "wound") originally indicated a physical injury requiring medical attention but now describes the psychological wounds caused by devastating, painful events (Phillips, 2007, pp. 74–5).

[2] Introduced in the 1960s, the term "speculative fiction" is a broad umbrella term that indicates the constantly evolving aesthetic field of science fiction as it continues to blend with other genres. In this paper, I use the terms "speculative fiction" and "science fiction" interchangeably.

memory has not only affected individual and collective memory, but how it has radically transformed human subjectivity (see e.g. Lury, 1998; Landsberg, 2004; Hoskins, 2018).
The effect of mnemotechnics on memory is a question that Haruki Murakami explores in his 1985 SF novel, *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World*.[3] Recent alterations in World War II commemorative sites in Japan have been accompanied by debates about selective remembrance and the appropriation of the past. This has challenged the legitimacy of historical memories and raised questions about how different commemorative tools affect and shape remembrance. Murakami's novel engages with these questions, framing the encounter between memory and mnemotechnics in postwar Japan as trauma.

SF: A Language of the Impossible

Throughout history, the trauma of subtler technological violence has been marked by encounters with the supernatural. The shock of new technologies has often coincided with accounts of hauntings (see, e.g. B. Allen, 1982; T. Gunning, 2004; P. Thurschwell, 2004). This suggests that the unseen psychological impact of technology finds expression in the language of the impossible – language that exceeds the boundaries of rationality. This idea is reinforced by Roger Luckhurst's (2005) argument that recent narratives of alien abduction directly "negotiate the traumatic encounter of subjectivity and technology" (p. 233). The abductee, probed with various technological devices, "embod[ies] the 'implantation' of the machinic into the human world," reflecting the invasiveness of contemporary technologies into our most intimate spaces and human passivity in the face of it (pp. 235–236).

These strange disturbances articulate the rupture that is the essence of trauma. Trauma studies in the humanities theorises that the psychological experience of trauma is marked by the subject's dissociation from reality, which creates a hole in consciousness (Caruth, 1995, p. 89). This rupture translates into what Ruth Leys (2000) calls a "crisis of witnessing," which is a crisis "manifested at the level of language itself" (p. 268). In line with this, trauma scholars indicate the constitutional failure of linguistic representation in viably testifying to the traumatic experience. They point to the inability of (strictly) realist modes of writing – writing that is mimetic and purports to authentically represent reality – to aptly relate the "unbelievable" experience of trauma (Wolfreys, 2002; Whitehead, 2004). Indeed, there is a sense that language can only successfully bear witness the moment it *fails* to represent, (Caruth, 1996; Felman & Laub, 1992).[4] Trauma challenges our symbolic resources, even as it demands representation.

SF is a mode well suited for articulating the unknowable processes of trauma. This is because SF is not confined by the conventions of more naturalistic forms of fiction, which privilege more "empirical" ways of seeing. Following Darko Suvin's definition (1979), SF is a mode of fiction that is rooted in reality, corresponding to our cognitive understanding of what is "real," but is at the same time necessarily "estranged" from reality. Whether they are imagined projections of present trends or invented possibilities rationalized into the world of the text (pp.

[3] I use Alfred Birnbaum's (2011) English translation of the novel. In the original Japanese, the alternate worlds of the novel are distinguished by the use of different first-person pronouns, *watashi* (the formal "I") and *boku* (informal "I"). As this nuance is difficult to convey in English, in the English translation, Birnbaum uses different tenses – the past and present – to distinguish the two worlds (Karashima, 2020, ch. 3).

[4] It is for this reason perhaps that trauma scholars turn their attention to "modernist" writing as a form that can aptly communicate the distortions and ruptures of the traumatic experience. The dichotomy set up between realist and modernist (and other non-realist) forms of writing can be understood to register the debate in psychoanalysis about whether trauma arises from actual events or in fantasy (Hartman, 1995, p. 538).

63–84), these estrangements encourage readers to work through the discontinuities between the fictional and the real, and thereby gain new insights about the world. SF is therefore a "split" sign system, a mode encouraging the self-conscious play with the inherently divisible nature of language. The genre's self-conscious openness to alterity (and to the impossible) allows writers to represent traumatic experiences that themselves "challenge… the capacities of narrative knowledge" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 79). At the same time, SF writing also always returns back to the material, and is able to root unknowable trauma in the "real." As I will show, Murakami employs SF, a language of the "impossible," because it is able to give form and expression to the unseen wounds that result from the violent intrusion of mnemotechnics upon memory, thereby allowing him to proffer trauma as a source of Japanese historical consciousness.

WWII and Disavowal

The one event in modern history that has arguably produced the deepest rupture in Japanese culture and identity is the shocking military defeat that brought an end to World War II in the Pacific zone. In an effort to end Japanese imperialist ambitions, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tens of thousands of people, most of whom were non-combatants, were killed instantly.[5] Many of those who survived the initial bombings would later die from radiation poisoning and other bomb-related injuries (Vergun, et al., 2012, pp. 405–408). The obliteration of these two cities prompted the Japanese to concede defeat. To a culture that would rather face death than dishonour, the act of surrendering must have been enormously damaging to national pride. These feelings were further complicated by the occupation of Japan by Allied forces (1945–1952), which brought about major change, including the conversion of the Japanese economy into a US-controlled capitalism, and the transformation of the political system. The shock of defeat, the unthinkable violence of the bombs, and the upheaval of postwar social change culminated in a profound disruption of Japanese culture and identity.

The Japanese remembrance of the catastrophic part of this history has been problematised by a tension that exists between private and public remembering. At the individual level the memory of a catastrophic event is often repressed, and this presents a challenge to individual healing (Caruth, 1996, p. 11). This is further problematised by the complexities of cultural memory. Remembering becomes enmeshed in processes of power that undergird the construction of collective memories. These cultural reconstructions of the past – which may take the form of national myths and other historiographies[6] – potentially interfere with psychological or cultural healing because they can obscure aspects of a nation's past, and these distortions can affect each citizen's overall perspective and their attitude towards healing. In the case of Japan, the persistent denial of its wartime atrocities, which had precipitated the eventual dropping of the atomic bombs, has been seen as preventing citizens from confronting the events of the past honestly. After the war, the Japanese government frequently revised

[5] Although exact numbers are uncertain, and figures from Japanese and American officials differ, it is generally estimated that the number of deaths in Hiroshima is approximately 140,000, and 70,000 in Nagasaki. Most of the deaths occurred instantly, or within a short period after the bombs were dropped (Roth, 2008, p. xxi).

[6] I use the term "history" to refer to events and processes that occur in the past. "Historiography" is used to refer to the writing of history, the attempt to describe and explain history, inferring from evidence that remains. Historiography, along with other constructed forms of cultural memory, from cultural and national myths to various monuments and memorials, are referred to collectively as mnemonic reconstructions.

information in school textbooks,[7] and up until 1990, officials continued to deny aspects of Japan's war crimes that had triggered US retaliation (Chang & Barker, 2003, pp. 33–34). Official narratives served to focus attention, instead, on victimisation, post-war peace and recovery (Yoneyama, 1999, pp. 5–8). The Japanese people were prevented from remembering, and consequently, denied their own trauma. This complex process of remembering the war, and the manner in which mnemonic substitutes continue to interfere with individual consciousness and healing in contemporary Japan, lies at the heart of Haruki Murakami's novel.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (hereafter referred to as *Hard-Boiled*), Murakami presents the reader with two worlds. The "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" is a "realistic" landscape that we identify as the "real" Japan. This is juxtaposed with the "End of the World," a dream-like "town" that contains elements of the fantastic, such as unicorns that "absorb the egos" of the people that inhabit it (Murakami, 2011a, p. 263). These contrasting worlds run parallel to each other and are presented in alternating chapters, further distinguished by different modes of address. In its original Japanese, the narrator of the "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" sections speaks through the formal "I," or Watashi, (in the English translation by Alfred Birnbaum, the protagonist uses the past tense), and in "The End of the World" sections, he uses the informal "I," Boku (in the English translation, this is signalled by the use of the present tense). While there seems to be a clear division between the two worlds, the reader eventually recognises that they merge. Characters and objects in the "real" world appear in the dream realm, and entities that seem to belong to the fantastical realm intrude into the "real-life" city spaces of the "Hard-Boiled Wonderland." Murakami troubles the seemingly clear division between the "realistic" and the "fantastic," the "real" and the "imaginary," in order to draw attention to the unstable links between signifiers and referents. In doing so, Murakami problematizes the status of the "real," thereby opening up the possibilities for representing the trauma surrounding World War II, a catastrophe grounded in reality but which challenges symbolic resources.

Violent Commemoration

The "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" is a near-future Tokyo full of advanced technologies that suggest a world built upon a continuing commitment to technological advancement and a focus on "science for the sake of pure science" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 29). In this world, information has become the prime commodity. An "infowar" takes place between two entities, the Factory and the System, a not-so-subtle reference to the American system of technological productivity that defined post-WW2 Japan. This reference signals a historical disjunction, when Japan abruptly turned away from long-standing imperialism and aggression in order to focus on the new goals of democracy and peaceful progress, beginning during the MacArthur Occupation (Tsutsui, 2007, p. 255). The Americanised technoscape of the novel is also therefore a metonymic device for the concomitant forgetting of Japan's violent past that needed to happen for this rapid progress to take place, gesturing to a cultural amnesia that is rooted deeply in present-day Japan.

The protagonist Watashi is employed by the "System" as a "calcutec," one who "shuffles" or "launders" information by means of an extreme method of data security wherein the human brain is transformed into an instrument of data processing. Watashi's brain has been partitioned by means of a complex biomedical procedure that isolates his "core" consciousness

[7] The "textbook controversy" is a notable example of how the Japanese government was seen to "euphemize" the events of World War II, substituting textbook descriptions with more "neutral" descriptions, a distortion condemned by other nations (Yoneyama, 1999, p. 5).

(Murakami, 2011a, p. 113). His core consciousness becomes a "black box" (p. 255) that is "borrowed" for elaborate computations whilst keeping the subject "unaware" of its actual content and leaving him with "no memory of anything" (p. 114). Watashi is, in a most literal sense, mindlessly bound to the System; these augmentations do not enhance Watashi's natural ability, but instead make him a mere function of larger techno-political processes. The protagonist's lack of agency and his isolation from kin and society indicate an interruption of identity and an unseen injury. This trauma becomes clearer as Murakami reveals how such "progress" has interfered with the protagonist's own memory and sense of reality.

The brain implant enables Watashi to perform intricate calculations with little effort, but the effects are deadly. In order to stabilise the shuffling mechanism, Watashi's brain has had to be "fixed" and this interferes with its natural and necessary evolvement (Murakami, 2011a, p. 256). The Professor, the strange old scientist overseeing these procedures, has fixed Watashi's brain by creating a visual copy of his "core consciousness," rendered and edited on a computer, and then inserted into his brain (p. 262). The duplication results in a "three-way cognitive circuitry" enabling the Professor to toggle between his waking consciousness, his "core" consciousness, and the graphic simulation of his core consciousness (p. 264). However, this partitioning of his mind threatens to permanently cut Watashi off from his own core consciousness, locking him into the artificial system. As a result, the protagonist begins to experience perceptual dislocations and he realizes that he is "crumbling" and that "parts of [his] being [are] drifting, away" (pp. 151, 164, 238–239), a situation that leads to death.

While critics have read this cybernetic enhancement as registering the "complexities of the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the organic world and the digital" (Corrigan, 2015, p. 803), I argue that the brain implant symbolises the violent replacement of the individual's own memory with an artificial approximation of the past. We are told that the "core consciousness" is the place where one "sort[s] through countless memories" and arranges them into "complex lines… [and] bundles," a process that shapes one's "cognitive system" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 256). The "core consciousness" is therefore the site of memory. As the early, obtrusive reference to Proust suggests (pp. 9–10), the novel is centrally concerned with the nature of memory. There is an indication here that Watashi has surrendered some part of his memory to a greater system and that the narrative he retains is not truly his own, an idea Murakami explores in his later work, *Underground* (2003). Memory is a theme that pervades much of Murakami's work. Novels such as *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1997), *Norwegian Wood* (2002), and *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (2014) explore the fallibility of memory, and the ways it is regulated by society and post-industrial culture. In *Hard-boiled*, Murakami engages with the question of memory substitution, specifically examining the regime of memory that fills the psychological void created by the trauma of WWII, a complex process of simultaneous remembering and forgetting.[8]

Dream-Worlds and the Unspeakable

Murakami approaches this complex encounter with artificial memory through the play of the "fantastic" and the "real." The relationship between the "real" world and the "dream" world of the "End of the World" sections is staged through an initial opposition of their symbolic systems. This encourages an understanding of the dream-world – the Town and its objects – as a type of figurative recovery of what cannot be consciously acknowledged or understood in the "real" world. The Professor comments on this dissociative state, telling the protagonist that the

[8] Murakami's work communicates an evident interest in the war. Novels like *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994-5) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2005) include explicit references to World War II and Japan's actions in it.

Town is the unconscious sector of his mind in which he can "reclaim everything from this [conscious] world" that he has had "t'give up" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 274). In other words, the Town and its imagery articulate what cannot be spoken in conscious life, what therefore has been disavowed or repressed. Reading the Town as unconscious symbolic recoupment immediately brings to mind Jungian theories of symbolism in dreams. For Carl Jung (1964), the unconscious mind is a repository of personal memories both acknowledged and suppressed, but also of an inherited cultural knowledge, a shared "collective unconscious" that one is not directly cognizant of. Dreams are symbolic expressions of this unconscious, "essential message carriers from the instinctive to the rational parts of the human mind" (p. 52). Jung suggests that recurring dreams may serve as an attempt "to compensate for a particular defect in the dreamer's attitude to life," or, may result from a traumatic moment that "has left behind some specific prejudice" (p. 53). In other words, dream images offer an authentic picture in compensatory relation to the conscious self.

Although Murakami avoids any explicit remarks about the event, there is an undeniable sense that the Town symbolically compensates for the unspeakable events of World War II. Although it is a place of "perpetual peace" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 248), its landscape and objects bear traces of warfare and destruction. Boku describes the "rows of empty factories" and the "nexus of passageways" as resembling "medieval entrenchments," which "entrenc[h] the camped grounds between one building and the next" (p. 65). In addition to this, the Town is inhabited by old officers who carry themselves in an "officious" manner that can be credited to "long career[s] in the military" (p. 83). They spend their days in the Bureaucratic Quarter "reminiscing about past campaigns" (p. 87), grateful that there is "[n]o victory, no defeat" (p. 317), an image of denial that characterises Japan's national historiographies. The symbolic connection to the events of World War II is further strengthened by the epithet "the End of the World," a likely reference to Toyofumi Ogura's novel *Letters from the End of the World* (1948), an eyewitness account of the atomic bombing of Japan written in the form of letters from a survivor to his dead wife. The Town's objects are therefore symbols that consistently point to the war while paradoxically denying any specific relation to World War II, an event so traumatic that it can only be safely dealt with through symbols. To readers familiar with Japan's history, the unspoken referent of the war is an unmistakable presence that haunts the tale. Even the conspicuous absence of any direct reference to the war in the protagonist's waking world (a striking absence considering the thematic focus on memory and the past) can be understood as a principal signifier for a past that has been silenced. In light of this, the Town comes to stand for disavowal itself, its symbolism both revealing and concealing the trauma.

The disavowal of the past is powerfully depicted by Boku's painful separation from his shadow, which becomes the central conflict driving the "End of the World" plot. As a condition of entering the Town, Boku must surrender his shadow through a literal amputation carried out by the Town's Gatekeeper. We learn that the shadow embodies "all memory of [one's] old world" and is the part of the self that is connected to the past. Its separation results in its death, for shadows "can't live without people" (Murakami, 2011a, pp. 62–63). According to Jungian theory, shadows are archetypes, innately recognisable and hereditary symbolic entities, which represent repressed aspects of the self that one wishes to cast off (Jung, 1959, p. 20). For the Town to maintain its peaceful state, all shadows must be abandoned. Read through Jungian theory, Boku's individual memory of the past is considered the part of the self that is most distressing and must be discarded and replaced by a more sanitized versions of the past.

This scene of denial sets the stage for what I believe is the key to the novel, namely the encounter with mnemotechnical reconstructions that complicate remembrance and cause

traumatic rupture within the self. It is crucial to remember that the Town is a technological approximation, a "computer visualization" of the protagonist's inner traumatised state (Murakami, 2011a, p. 262). Murakami takes care to emphasise that the protagonist's own core consciousness has been dislocated, and that his cognitive system is overridden by a prosthetic system, an inexact technological copy that will always be "part[ly] foreign" (p. 269) to him. In the Town, "[w]hat resembles meat is not. What resembles eggs is not... Everything is made in the image of something" (p. 224). This simulation is the product of the Professor's "editin'… resequencin' … [and r]earrangin'" of the original "jumbled and fragmentary" elements into a "story" (p. 262), a "convenient" technological conversion (p. 263). This artificial substitution "[b]esto[ws] order upon chaos" (p. 263) by condensing complex memories of the past into discrete components, reconstructions that reshape individual experience, for when "memories change, the world changes" (p. 283). This suggests that the denial of the past is not just an individual act of renouncement, but a condition imposed by external forms of commemoration, including officially sanctioned ones, that paradoxically aid and "order" one's own disjointed memory of the difficult past.

Commemoration, Passivity, Repetition

Murakami demonstrates how these memory substitutions re-position the subject from one who experiences the past to one who merely watches. The shift to the position of spectator serves to distance the individual from the traumatic event. That in turn encourages forgetting. In a compelling section of the novel, Watashi experiences the disruption of his consciousness by artificial memories, intrusive flashbacks that are characteristic of trauma, but unusual in that he experiences it as if watching a "newsreel" in the "movie theatre." On the screen he sees his shadow, "a figure in the distance," in grave danger of being engulfed by a flood but unable to speak. Watashi, a "member of the audience" watching the disaster on screen, is powerless, unable to even acknowledge that the shadow is his, and so "do[es] nothing" to help it (Murakami, 2011a, pp. 237–238). This surreal moment illustrates how forms of commemoration encode the initial trauma, reducing it in this case to the visual dimension, which is a debilitating abstraction of experience. Further, these externally constructed forms of commemoration intervene to isolate the traumatic event, preventing the subject from identifying with it and thus from taking responsibility.

The reconstruction of memories is invariably entangled in questions about control. What authority determines public forms of memory and shapes our knowledge of history, and thus our identity? The hegemonic dimension of such considerations is embodied in the figure of the old Professor, who represents the authority responsible for reconstructing Watashi's core consciousness and thus his memory of the past. The Professor is described as bearing a strong resemblance to "a major pre-War political figure" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 26), and advocates a rigorous focus on scientific advancement and efficiency for the sake of "evolution" (p. 49). The Professor advocates unyielding progress that "puts [its] trust in science" (p. 29), a "pure focus" (p. 253) sometimes blind to the "trouble [that is] ma[de] for others" (p. 274). It is the same "pure focus" on scientific advancement that Murakami identified, in his acceptance speech on receiving the Catalunya International Prize 2011, as the postwar "myth" of "Japan's technological prowess," a myth advanced by the government to stimulate postwar economic recovery.[9]

[9] In this speech, Murakami (2011b) identifies that post-World War II national policy pursued peace and prosperity through a commitment to technological advancement and "efficiency." This distorted logic resulted in substantial developments in nuclear power generation, with thirty per cent of electricity generated by this means, in spite of the renouncement of nuclear power after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

If the Professor symbolizes the authoritative construction of cultural myths, then the details that Murakami ascribes to this authority prove to be unsettling. After admitting the full extent of his unrestrained experimentation, the old man tells the horrified protagonist:

> [A] scientist isn't one for controlling his curiosity. Of course, I deplore how those scientists cooperated with the Nazis conductin' vivisection in the concentration camps. That was wrong. At the same time, I find myself thinkin', if you're goint'do live experiments, you might as well do something a little spiffier and more productive. Given the opportunity, scientists all feel the same way at the bottom of their heart. (Murakami, 2011a, p. 193)

This admission directly aligns the Professor with the rationalist brutality of the Nazi regime and implicitly to the Japanese atrocities of WW2, revealing a kind of quasi-scientific imperialism hidden under the veil of empiricist neutrality. This kind of instrumental reason is complicit in violence towards humanity, and especially striking in its irony, considering Japan's denial of its own imperialist brutality during this time. Murakami seems to suggest a transnational ideological connection between imperialism, Nazism and fascism, a provocative relation that indicates a gap in official historiographies that tend to brush off the Axis as a "hollow alliance" (see e.g. Law, 2019). In addition to this, Murakami alerts us to an ironic repetition of violence that occurs within the processes of postwar commemoration, with the Professor repeating unto the protagonist a violence similar to wartime tyranny. According to psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious compulsion to repeat destructive behavior is the paradoxical attempt by the unconscious to assimilate adverse experiences, incidents that have been "forgotten" and "repressed" (Freud, 1958, p. 150). This theory seems to be an appropriate means through which to read the Professor's careless violence. The reconstruction of the past that focuses on recovery and advancement is, essentially, a way of "forgetting," a way of deflecting issues of identification and culpability, which unwittingly reproduces a brutality that is neither apprehended nor overcome.

Empathic Re-Engagement

Murakami is not as concerned with the veracity of intervening forms of commemoration as he is with the potentially debilitating paralysis that results from these memories. The protagonist's consciousness is "[f]lash-frozen" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 258) as a result of his prosthetic memory, and he is unable to evolve and therefore survive. Murakami rejects the seemingly common sense notion of memory as a storehouse of stable ideas, to use John Locke's metaphor, literalized in the Professor's simulations, which assumes that memory is singular and removed from the present. Instead, Murakami emphasizes that the reification of memory is a traumatic state of disassociation from consciousness. This state leads to certain death, suggesting that memory must not be static but instead change with time and gain meaning through active processes in the present.

With his memories reified in the real world, the protagonist is powerless to change his fate and to escape the scientist's "closed circuit." However, Murakami suggests that there is a way to transcend these confines. The ambiguous ending of the novel presents readers with an unexpected form of re-engagement with the past that vitally connects it with the present, thus repossessing it from the permanence of history. For most of the "End of the World" narrative, we are given to understand that the protagonist's desired recovery of "self" depends on his being able to reunite with his shadow and escape from the Town (Murakami, 2011a, p. 63). We presume that this integration of self will somehow change his fate in "reality." Yet, at the last moment, the protagonist changes his mind. He tells his shadow: "[t]his is my world. The

Wall is here to hold *me* in, the River flows through *me*, the smoke is *me* burning" (p. 399, emphasis in original). His shadow, upset with his choice, warns him that if he stays in the Town "[he] will not be living. [He] will merely exist." Boku replies that nothing is certain, and that "little by little, [he] will recall things. People and places from our former world, different qualities of light, different songs." He is hopeful that when he starts to actively remember "[he] may find the key to [his] own creation, and to its undoing" (p. 399).

Critics have read the ending as a desire to abandon the technological world of post-industrial Japan and to retreat into a "fantasy Utopia inside… [the] mind" (Napier, 1995, p. 4), revealing an aspiration to "improve upon the subconscious world through his own understanding of it," a "pursuit of knowledge" that does not accord with the world of technology (Scott, 2009, p. 58). The novel has thus been criticized as being escapist (Napier, 1995, p. 126). However, the fact that the Town is a technological simulation is a crucial point that moderates such assessments. Boku's choice to stay within this simulation suggests an acceptance of this artificial state, and the understanding that these false memories are part of him, regardless of the catastrophic effect on his existence. This in turn implies the realization that he cannot return to a state of prior innocence, and that there is no unified consciousness that exists outside of the encounter with these mnemotechnics. The protagonist, in choosing to inhabit this liminal state, exemplifies the struggle to come to terms with a manufactured part of identity, constituted by the artificial other that resides within.

Murakami suggests that meaningful reengagement lies beyond the conscious or rational grasp of history. In his unconscious mind the protagonist discovers that a more intuitive kind of memory offers a means of transcendence. Boku's duty in the Town is to "read old dreams" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 38) sealed inside the skulls of dead unicorns. It is a task that he cannot understand at first. He finds himself uncertain of its "purpose," and hindered by the "unfathomable" silence and "nothingness" that seems to fill these skulls. As Dreamreader, he senses an "inherent pathos…[he] has no words for," but is unable to "unrave[l] the chaos of vision" or "grasp any distinct message" from the "endless stream of images" (pp. 59–61). Unable to access these memories, he feels his own mind "hard[en]" into "solid rock" (p. 225). However, Boku discovers the Town's collection of discarded musical instruments and through them begins to recall certain songs and is "reawakened" (p. 386). Music opens up an emotional space that "thaw[s] mind and muscle from endless wintering" (p. 369) and allows his mind to be "transported great distances" (p. 367). With music, the dormant old dreams are "awaken[ed]" in the unicorn skulls and he begins to feel the Town "liv[e] and breath[e]." Music, and the creative engagement it implies, becomes the solution for bringing the past dreams into present apprehension, allowing him to experience the Town and its people as if they were "all [him] self" (p. 369). The distance between the self and the artificial collapses and Boku is driven to take responsibility for it. What is implied is that an *empathic* remembrance of the past, whether or not this remembrance is authentic or artificial, one's own or an official version, is an act of imaginative self-creation that is necessary for reconciling the two sides of a divided self. Murakami suggests that empathic remembrance involves bringing this "other" past into proximity and allowing oneself to be "touched" by it. Connecting emotionally with a memory that was not originally one's own repossesses the distant past by acknowledging its emotional weight in the present, thus transcending the boundaries imposed by external forces.

Murakami urges us to recognize that one's awareness of the past is made possible through the mediation of available representations, even as these may paradoxically entail the forgetting of one's own memories. More than this, Murakami urges reflection upon one's own culpability

in the act of forgetting. The protagonist realizes that the Town exists as "the consequenc[e] of [his] own doings" (p. 399), and that it is his own stubborn repression of the past, and subsequent dissociation, that facilitates the Professor's artificial reconstruction (p. 268). Similarly, we must recognize that the harm done by memory regimes proceeds only from one's own wilful disavowal of a disturbing past.

Conclusion

The temporal relationship of the past to the present is linear and continuous. However, the relationship between history and memory, remembering and forgetting, is tangled and complex. This is further complicated by a traumatic event, one such as the Japanese defeat in WWII, that resists being fully grasped or represented. The void in the aftermath of this catastrophe in Japan was filled by a regime of memory marked in large part by pragmatism and selective amnesia. This regime of memory, with its officially sanctioned mnemotechnics, provided comfort and meaning by embedding the individual into a collective, symbolic domain. However, as Murakami shows us, this reconstruction of the past and of meaning constitutes a trauma of its own, inhibiting individuals from coming to terms with past violence on their own terms, which can be harmfully debilitating. This crisis of memory is therefore a double wound that marks a breakdown in the distinction between the individual and the collective.

The merging of private memory and public space raises questions, as the novel shows us, about the status of the traumatic injury, whether it is part of the private fantasy realm or part of collective public space. Murakami uses SF to communicate this uncertainty by building a world that, on the one hand, recreates reality as we know it, while, on the other hand, simultaneously conveys the overwhelming shock that defines trauma and that prevents its representation. The Town conveys the latter through the foregrounding of the constructedness of its fantastical imagery, thereby revealing the absence, the void, of the traumatic reality it represents. Its symbolism gestures towards a pain that it never directly describes. And yet the Town is also a material entity implanted into the protagonist's brain, with very corporeal consequences. Fantasy, here, is emphatically materialist. Rather than being a mode of escapism, as some might argue (Suvin, 1979, p. 8), fantasy here has the effect of estranging "cognition" itself. The split sign system of SF is therefore able to articulate the unspeakable but very real shock of Japanese postwar trauma. The protagonist's choice to stay in this dissociative state demonstrates Murakami's ethical position, and his insistence that remembering the violent past, whether or not one is restricted by official versions of it, is a moral imperative, even if it seems to have dire consequences. One must always hold on to the possibilities inherent in the fact that memory, propelled by empathy, will exceed any attempts to control it, and this is a means of liberation.

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Subjectivity and Revenge in Karen M. McManus's *One of Us Is Lying*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the issues of peer rejection and revenge among adolescents through their portrayal in young adult literature (YAL). Adopting the lens of Lacanian theory on subjectivity and desire, the paper analyses a revenge plot in Karen M. McManus's novel *One of Us Is Lying* and its origins. It argues that peer rejection contributes to contradictory self-concepts; how adolescent characters view themselves clash at some point with how others regard them, leading them to seek retribution. Their attempt at revenge will be examined along the lines of Lacanian psychoanalysis, and the paper argues that their revenge is driven by the impulse to fulfil the Other's desire, which eventually fails due to the unobtainable nature of the desire itself.

Keywords: adolescents, Lacan, peer rejection, young adult literature

Literature is viewed as a means to represent different facets of human culture, including that of adolescents. This group of the population is significant in that they are at a transitional age where most human maturation and identity formation take place, and the bulk of literature written about them tries to capture this process. Such stories can help connect adolescents to their roots and to the human condition at large, as well as facilitate their achievement of personal identity (Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, & Johnson, 2015, pp. 8–9). Central to that experience, however, is an array of negative emotions and problems that comes with being an adolescent, especially those concerning the more social aspects such as peer relationships and one's place in society. Young adult literature depicts these problems and their consequences.

Since its origin in the twentieth century, YA literature has grown and diversified, yet the scholarship surrounding it seems to concentrate itself around a limited group of well-known texts that have a strong impact on popular culture (Fitzsimmons, as cited in Fitzsimmons & Wilson, 2020, pp. 17-18). One common element that has been heavily examined in most of these YA books is the aspect of maturation of the young adult characters; the vast array of works under this label offers multiple complex variations of this. Since adolescents are often characterized as both powerful and disempowered, many young adult novels make a point to "interrogate social constructions" and present these adolescents in relation to their social contexts (Trites, 2000, p. 20). These constructions include the institutions which young adults are inevitably a part of and which have a certain degree of influence on their lives.

As an example of such representation, this article focuses on Karen M. McManus's *One of Us Is Lying* (2017). The novel follows in the footsteps of many of its predecessors like S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967) and Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) in that it positions adolescent characters in familiar domains such as schools or their own neighborhoods but also has them navigate serious issues of murder and criminal accusations. The article explores how YA characters driven by the angst that stems from peer rejection can seek retaliation through violence. Towards this end, Jacques Lacan's theory on subjectivity and desire is employed due to its applicability to the psychological states of the young adult characters being discussed. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, with particular emphasis Lacanian theory, this paper aims to analyze the reasons behind the revenge acts carried out in the novel and illustrate how they are spurred by the perpetrators' own incongruous self-images and their inability to handle the powerlessness that stems from rejection.

Literature Review

Adolescence is a period marked by change, be it physical, emotional, or social. While a clear and unanimously accepted boundary of at what age adolescence starts or ends can hardly be found, many sources delineate the benchmarks for adolescence to include ages as young as 10, according to the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM), to as old as 25, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (Curtis, 2015, pp. 9–10). Hence, many use the term adolescence more broadly with a focus on it being a transitional progression from complete dependency to a state of capability to handle developmental tasks, respond to contextual demands, and cultivate "personal agency" (Curtis, 2015, p. 1; Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003, p. 478; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996, p. 769).

Adolescence is wrought with not just physical, but cognitive, psychological, and social changes, as well as various stressors such as familial conflict and emotional disruptions (Arnett, 1999, p. 317; Latrobe & Drury, 2009, p. 4). In addition, adolescence is regarded as a "disorienting and liminal space" (Tribunella, 2010, p. 75) in which its occupants, namely, teenagers or young

adults, are often portrayed as psychologically "alienated" and "overwhelmed" (Underwood, as cited in Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003, pp. 276-77). Its challenges also include having to negotiate unfamiliar social roles (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004, p. 1120). Ironically, and perhaps dangerously, these young adults are in the age group where they have to face and make many "critical and reverberating life choices" (Costa et al., 1994, p. 6).

According to a number of leading social and cognitive psychological theories pertaining to adolescence, major developmental tasks during this period include the search for one's identity and the formation of meaningful relationships outside of the family. In *Adolescence: Continuity, Change, and Diversity*, Nancy J. Cobb (2010) defines it as a time when girls and boys try to forge a stable identity for themselves, to examine the choices around them and determine the sources of their personal strength (pp. 10, 26). Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory states that the key for adolescents to construct their identity is experimentation with different new things to see which fit them the most and to connect the roles and skills cultivated in their earlier experiences with the ideals of the future; this is followed by the achievement of intimacy through forming meaningful relationships with others (Erikson, 1968, p. 128). Robert Havinghurst likewise defined the developmental tasks during the adolescent years as involving the acceptance of one's characteristics and cultural identity and the achievement of mature relations with peers (Latrobe and Drury, 2009, pp. 26–28).

Therefore, it is not surprising that connecting with others, especially peers, and understanding oneself are intertwined for young adults. In fact, the answers to the question of "Who am I?" are often found in adolescent relationships to other people (Cole, 2009, p. 124). In particular, peer groups constitute a point towards which adolescents orient themselves in order to establish autonomy from their parents, and social acceptance from their peers may determine emotional development for adolescents well into adulthood (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 21). The significance being placed on peer relationships marks this as a focal point in adolescent life (Marston, Hare, & Allen, 2010, p. 960), so much so that some deem teenagers to have "a passionate herding instinct" (Brown, 1990, p. 171). As found in Csikszentmihalyi and Larson's study, adolescents' emotions are frequently linked to events concerning peers (as cited in Rosenblum and Lewis, 2003, p. 280). However, since social interactions with peers are likely to present abundant challenges and stressors, such as arguments, ridicules, and aggression, teens are also constantly tested and measured in terms of their ability to navigate these difficulties (Reijntjes, Stegge, & Terwogt, 2006, p. 90). Failure to respond positively in such situations may result in one being excluded or rejected (K. Sullivan, Cleary, G. Sullivan, 2004, p. 34).

Exclusion or rejection from peers could then lead to diverse, often unsavory, outcomes. How teens respond to rejection may take many forms. Certainly, there are coping methods that are positively viewed and encouraged, but some adolescents do react unfavorably to even the smallest hint of ostracism. In fact, a study by Eisenberger, Lieberman, and Williams (2003) suggests that the neurocognitive response that occurs during social exclusion is akin to how the brain reacts to physical pain, implying that we are undergoing an "injury to our social connections" (pp. 291–292). Other negative effects are also common, such as helplessness (Orri et al., 2014, p. 7), loneliness (Asher and Wheeler, 1983, p. 13), depression (Sandstrom, Cillessen, & Eisenhower, 2003, p. 533), and self-defeating behaviors (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002, p. 613). Whereas some emotional responses are personal and rather passive, more violent reactions can often develop as well. Individuals who have faced rejection, especially repeatedly, may become aggressive and turn their pent-up emotions outward in what has been termed the outcast-lash-out effect (Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006, p. 213;

Reijntjes et al., 2010, p. 1394). Warburton and his team (2006) have attributed this tendency to the perception of threat to one's control which thus elicits an attempt at restoration (p. 214).

One possible end result of the outcast-lash-out effect is revenge, whether in thought or in action. Böhm and Kaplan (2011) define this as the culmination of "external violations" and "internal vulnerability" born out of a traumatic situation which reduces one to an inferior position (p. 19). According to Gollwitzer, Meder, and Schmitt's study (2011), revenge serves a proximal goal of making the perpetrators suffer in equal measures, while the ultimate goal is to send a message to the wrongdoers, thereby making them understand why they are being punished (p. 372). This is supported by another study where goals of revenge, including the aim of preventing transgressions in the future, "demonstrating powerfulness" and "inducing guilt," are included (Gollwitzer, 2007, p. 121). Correspondingly, Orri et al. (2014) assert that revenge serves a communicative purpose, one which informs others of their misdeeds and connects the individual's distress to the actions of others (pp. 6-7). In many cultures, revenge functions only as a fantasy and having it as a motive is usually frowned upon (Miller, 1998, pp. 161–162). Nevertheless, it is still considered as a method for delivering justice (Miller, 1998, p. 168).

Teens who feel they have been wronged by others, be they family, friends, or society, may feel revenge is an appropriate course of action. Take bullying as an example; while aggressive behavior or revenge are usually ineffective in solving bullying problems, a portion of victimized teens still employ it as a coping strategy (Wilton, Craig, & Pepler, 2000, p. 241). Since bullying frequently takes place in the company of others, due largely to the fact that bullies enjoy having their assertion of dominance and intimidation witnessed, the presence of other peers who display support of the bullies, either through blatant encouragement or through passive bystanding, may serve to reinforce the link between victimization and peer rejection (Esch, 2008, p. 380; Olweus, 1994, p. 1173). Revenge could therefore be a way for the victimized or rejected adolescents to regain their control over the situation.

Taking into consideration the significance of peer relations and the adverse impact of peer rejection, it may be useful to integrate psychoanalytic theory in the analysis of texts dealing with young adults, with specific emphasis on how such psychological impact factors in an adolescent's maturation. Gaining maturity can be analyzed along the lines of gaining knowledge, as Tribunella (2010) writes that "[a]dolescence is effectively defined by initiation into knowledge" (p. 53), which essentially translates to "a realist sensibility about oneself" (p. 56). It can then be asserted that self-awareness is integral to the construction of a young adult's identity. Towards this end, this paper will draw upon Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory regarding subjectivity and desire to analyze revenge in McManus' novel.

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, subjectivity hinges upon the existence of desire; more specifically, "the subject is caused by the Other's desire" (Fink, 1997, p. 50). From the moment of birth, or conception even, it is the decision of the parent(s), their desire for something that creates the physical presence of the subject. This reliance on the Other's desire continues throughout their lifetime, for when the subject matures enough to integrate themself into society, their being becomes "mediated by the other's desire" (Lacan, 1949/2006, p. 79). In other words, every action of the subject is addressed to one of the Other. The Other's desire is no longer only that which spurred the subject into being; it is now "the cause" of their desire as well (Fink, 1997, p. 59). By extension, it is the Other that "controls a human being's external world" and "regulates his or her assumption of a 'self-image'" (Nobus, 1999, p. 120).

This internalization of the Other's desire, while essential to the subject's formation of self, remains ever futile. Fundamentally, one "can rarely and is rarely allowed…to completely monopolize" the attention or the desire of the Other (Fink, 1997, p. 55). Thus, the attempt on the subject's part to offer up themself to magically fill the lack felt by the Other is in itself a losing battle. Not only is the Other's desire not singular, but it is also constantly shifting. As such, the subject, in their quest to respond to this desire, ends up perpetually, and unsuccessfully, scrambling to catch up with it (Fink, 1997, pp. 50-5, 54).

Such unattainable nature of desire is not only limited to that of the Other, but also the subject as well. This begins to take shape from the time a child begins to recognize him/herself as a subject. Referring to one of Lacan's best-known theories, the mirror stage, it is often described as a moment of identification in which a child is able to identify him/herself with that image reflected in the mirror and conceives of such an image as being distinguished from others (Lacan, 1949/2006, pp. 75–76). In addition, Lacan (1949/2006) also postulates that the mirror presents to the child "a primordial form," a form which he calls the "ideal-I" or an ideal image of the child itself (p. 76). However, it is this ideal-I that spawns a mental discordance as reconciliation between the mirror images and the subject's social determination is "irreducible" (Lacan, 1949/2006 p. 76). The mirror itself also serves as a "limit" which, in Lacan's words, "cannot be crossed. And the only organization in which it participates is that of the inaccessibility of the object" (1986/1992, p. 151). To put it simply, the *I* that is created in the mirror stage represents the assembled desire of the subject that cannot be obtained, or, as Nobus (1999) concludes, "an I that can never be realized" (p. 117). To make matters worse, the mirror stage consequently results in aggression. Acting as a point at which self-concept (that the child can conceive of itself relationally and contextually to others) originates, this stage can be seen as the "ontological mould for the social struggle for prestige," thereby instigating aggression or even destruction (Nobus, 1999, p. 112; Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 151). In fact, such aggressiveness is found in every social interaction, benign or otherwise (Lacan, 1949/2006, p. 79). Even children, once cognizant of their position in the social context, can express envy of other people's affection as well as their achievements, which potentially includes resentment (Hay, 2019, p. 85). Therefore, such desire for the ideal version of oneself, as well as for social recognition over others, can lead to failure. Imperative though it may be to the construction of subjectivity, desire eventually is "predicated upon a fundamental lack of the impossible 'lost object'" (Newman, 2004, p. 159) and "not attached to any clearly realizable or realistic goal" (Kirshner, 2005, p. 3), ultimately rendering it unobtainable.

The unachievable desire is then tackled with different coping mechanisms, most of which reside in the realm of fantasy. In a sense, it can be said that adolescents employ fantasy as they grapple with their place in the world. Given "the salience of issues of social competence" in this period (Marston et al., 2010, p. 960), it is understandable that envisioning and mentally playing out their actions and anticipating the ensuing reactions are to be expected, even in highly stressful events. As a matter of fact, the assessment of said competence is often determined by a person's ability to appropriately socialize and understand social expectations of their behaviors (Wilton et al., 2000, p. 243; Reijntjes et al., 2006, p. 90), and the underlying motive for these mental imaginings is their desire to foster connection with others (Twenge et al., 2002, p. 614). In a similar vein, Lacan views fantasy as a realm in which the subject manipulates their position "with respect to the Other's desire" with the purpose of eventually arriving at that which is desired (Fink, 1997, p. 60). However, as the true desire of the Other is obscure, the subject tries to "stitch desire to the fabric of social reality" by transforming it into other tangible or recognizable fantasies (Kirshner, 2005, p. 5). Hence, it makes sense that, in Lacanian theory, fantasy's ultimate function is to sustain reality by "cover[ing] over the lack"

(Newman, 2004, pp. 162–163). One such manifestation of fantasy is the aforementioned revenge, which is a response to a violation of the desire for social connectedness or expected treatment from others, a "perceived humiliation" that begs to be dealt with (Böhm and Kaplan, 2011, p. 20).

All in all, it can be seen that young adults undergo a transitional period that unavoidably makes them susceptible to intense, often negative, emotions. The centrality of social relationships, especially with peers, during this age also heightens their emotional response to rejection, which can result in aggression and retaliation. Through a psychoanalytic lens, these adolescents become subjects that, in the process of maturation, are motivated by the desire of the Other, constantly rotate themselves and their actions around such desire, and eventually fail due to the very unattainable nature of desire itself. This puts the subjects in a perpetual losing position in the power dynamics against the Other. This line of reasoning will be applied to the analysis of *One of Us Is Lying* in the following section.

Discussion

In 2017, American author Karen M. McManus brought the themes of maturation, rejection, and power into focus in her debut novel, *One of Us Is Lying*. Marketed as a mystery, the book follows a group of students in the town of Bayview as they go from being ordinary high schoolers to murder suspects in the span of one afternoon. After ending up in detention on the same day through a curious coincidence, Bronwyn Rojas, dubbed "The Brain" in the official synopsis of the novel, Nate Macauley, the school's resident delinquent, Cooper Clay, a rising baseball star, and Addy Prentiss, homecoming princess and doting girlfriend to Cooper's best friend, Jake, witness the mysterious death of fellow classmate Simon Kelleher who experiences a sudden allergic reaction and dies shortly afterwards. Simon is notorious as the creator of About That, a gossip application on which he posts rumors and stories about other students, using only their initials. Given that *About That* also features gossip about the four students, there is more cause for the police to suspect one or more of the four students, nicknamed the Bayview Four once investigation begins, as the culprit. After they undergo various challenges stemming from the investigation as well as the rumors spread by the application and its successor Tumblr page About This, it is then revealed that Simon has killed himself and has intended to frame his four classmates. Simon's plan is continued posthumously by an accomplice, Jake Riordan, who seeks to make Addy pay for cheating on him. A manifesto left in the care of Janae, Simon's friend, declares that Simon has committed suicide to take revenge on the society that has made his life miserable and to do it with more imagination than anyone has done before.

The main events of the book are catalyzed by the negative experiences of two YA characters – Simon and Jake. For Simon, as a school's outcast and the creator of About That, he is predictably shunned by his peers, leaving him with only one friend, Janae. Most of the student body at school regard him with a mixed sense of trepidation and resentment. Bronwyn, for example, who is normally "too squeaky clean" to be a target of About That (p. 28), still has a policy that "As a general rule… I try to give Simon as little information as possible" (p. 4). This does not bode well for his psyche as peer rejection from childhood to young adulthood is consistently recognized as a risk factor for strong negative emotions and behaviors (Trentacosta and Shaw, 2009, p. 357; Reijntjes et al., 2006, p. 90). More specifically, Simon feels humiliated when he is disinvited from the after-prom party held by one popular classmate and is "'not even allowed to go'" even though he is on the junior prom court (p. 323). On a more personal level, he is rejected by Keely, the girl he has tried to pursue, who confesses to her boyfriend,

Cooper, that she "hooked up with [Nate] at a party to get rid of Simon" (p. 266). Another character who has had a part in angering Simon is Bronwyn, who "told him the wrong application deadline" for a Model United Nations competition and caused him to miss the cutoff (p. 136).

Whether or not these acts were done intentionally is of no significance. Simon still develops, as a result, numerous internalizing problems, including loneliness, social anxiety and depression, as is often the case when perceived rejection is high (Sandstrom et al., 2003, p. 533). It is suggested that Simon is not a socially well-adjusted person. Janae says, "he'd been depressed for a while," and the fact that he only has a limited number of friends is in itself indicative of his social awkwardness (p. 322). Worse, this conforms with Dodge et al.'s study that there is a tendency for individuals having experienced rejection to display excessive aggression toward peers due to an assumption of peers' hostile intent (as cited in Reijntjes et al., 2006, p. 90). These perceived negative experiences then unsurprisingly spur Simon into a negative act of his own, which is to devise the plan that lays the foundation of the novel.

As for Jake, Simon's unexpected partner, his perceived culprit is his own girlfriend, Addy, who cheated on him with one of his friends. Jake's controlling nature coupled by Addy's loyalty towards him serve to enhance his feeling of betrayal as he originally believed that Addy was devoted to him. Although at first Jake is not aware of Addy's act of infidelity, Simon makes sure to reveal this fact to him in order to enlist his help in actualizing the plan. Jake, in his anger, readily agrees to Simon's plan.

While the circumstances surrounding their trauma are different, both feel a sense of entitlement that justifies a payback. Jake entertains the position of a popular boy with an almost perfect life—a strong member of the school's baseball team, a pretty and equally popular girlfriend, and a solid group of friends. From his point of view, it is easy to experience a sense of invincibility, or at least, superiority, over other teens. From Addy's description of him, possible bias aside, Jake is "the best running back Bayview High's seen in years" and he and Cooper, after becoming best friends in the freshman year of high school, have become "basically the kings" of their class (pp. 43–44). Therefore, finding out about his girlfriend's infidelity is likely a big blow on his ego that becomes a traumatic event for Jake in several ways. First, Addy has always been in a submissive position to him. Addy admits that she "never turn[s] Jake down" (p. 45) and always does things to please him, like dressing the way he likes or wearing her hair a certain way, so much so that her sister observes that Jake "ran every part of your life for three years" (p. 311). Men, in general, are "sensitive…about losing the interest of their partner, of feeling taken for granted" (Böhm and Kaplan, 2011, p. 88). Hence, Addy's intimacy with another man, especially one he considers a friend, is seen as insulting to him since it implies that he no longer has control over his girlfriend, or that his control over her is not as absolute as he thinks. This fractures the perfect image of himself that Jake has likely developed from his past socialization.

As for Simon, his purported intent of revenge is, admittedly, more twisted than Jake's. While the object of Jake's contempt is concrete and singular – Addy being the only one deserving of blame – Simon's victimizers are plural and collective. According to Janae, he "always felt like he should get a lot more respect and attention than he did" (p. 322). He feels he is wronged by everyone by being ignored and rejected and thus wants to show this dissatisfaction through his suicide. This is in line with Orri et al. (2014)'s study in which interpersonal trouble, as well as the perception that such issues are insurmountable, has been cited as part of the inciting reasons leading up to suicide (pp. 6–7). This is further elaborated in the manifesto that Simon leaves

behind with Janae. Admitting that "*I hate my life and everything in it*," Simon explains he "*decided to get the hell out*" (p. 321). However, he discloses that he did not want his so-called exit from life to be banal and clichéd.

> I thought a lot about how to do this. I could buy a gun, like pretty much any asshole in America. Bar the doors one morning and take out as many Bayview lemmings as I have bullets for before turning the last one on myself.
> And I'd have a lot of bullets.
> But that's been done to death. It doesn't have the same impact anymore.
> I want to be more creative. More unique. I want my suicide to be talked about for years. I want imposters to try to imitate me. And fail, because the planning this takes is beyond your average depressed loser with a death wish (p. 321–322).

Not only is he set on taking his own life, he also aims to cause such a stir with it that his death will be remembered. As seen here, he does not identify any specific person as the instigator of his suicidal ideation; instead, it seems he wants his death to target any random student or, in his words, "as many Bayview lemmings" as possible (p. 321). He also shows that he has pondered the method extensively. Therefore, his eventual choice of scapegoats may be somewhat understandable. Early on in the novel, Simon mentions that he views the Bayview Four as "walking teen-movie stereotypes," which, to him, possibly represents the different factions of the student body at Bayview High (p. 11). Framing those whom he believes embody the school environment that antagonizes him can then serve as a unique way of exacting revenge that he aims to achieve.

Indeed, both Simon and Jake have their own agenda for partaking in the elaborate revenge plan. However, both of their actions can be analyzed in a similar way; their revenge is reflective of their misguided and distorted view of others which they cannot reconcile with reality, thus prompting this disturbing and detrimental scheme. To clarify, both characters have been immersed in the world of images which have inevitably had an impact on their psyche. These images, thus accumulated in much the same way through existence in society as through one's interaction with parental figures, have been internalized and crystallized into a global image that a person uses to form "a coherent 'sense of self'" (Fink, 1997, p. 37). Similarly, these characters have internalized how others see them and combined with their own perception of how they should be regarded by others, thereby constructing an ideal image. As Erikson (1968) has theorized, adolescents "are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are" (p. 128).

This line of analysis may apply more effectively to the case of Jake than Simon, although Simon's struggle with the ideal image has a more severe consequence. As mentioned earlier**,** Jake has been enjoying a favorable position in the school hierarchy and approbation from his social circle. This seemingly positive social stance is exacerbated by the acquiescent behavior of Addy. This high school culture, in which a well-adjusted and confident disposition such as Jake's is encouraged and accepted, is in fact harmful to the popular teens as well as the rejected; these popular teenagers are allowed to "think of themselves as superior, divest themselves of empathy and social responsibility," and eventually let their perceived "infallibility" direct their decisions, often bad ones (Sullivan et al., 2004, p. 34). Falling into this trap of indulging in popularity, Jake cannot help but regard himself as superior, and therefore he reacts exceptionally strongly to Addy's betrayal. Jake's consistent success in imposing control over Addy's decisions and behavior throughout their relationship has reinforced his conviction in his superiority. Having Addy neglect his significance, and by extension his influence, as her

boyfriend, even while intoxicated, hints at the loss of control he normally wields around her. On top of this is the fact that the person with whom Addy cheats is one of his own friends who continues to act casually around him, making Jake feel like he is being taunted. His words to Addy when she confesses confirm this belief: "You let me hang out with a guy who's laughing his ass off behind my back while you jump out of his bed and into mine like nothing happened. Pretending you give a shit about me" (p. 103). As a result, this creates a discrepancy in an image that he has constructed about himself as the perfect boyfriend who "treat[s] [her] like a queen" (p. 103). Addy voices this sentiment perfectly when she realizes that what Jake is doing serves as "The perfect revenge for cheating on a perfect boyfriend" (p. 325).

Simon, on the other hand, suffers from a different type of dissonance as he is consumed not by the aggregate of external positive notions of him but by his own perception of himself. Initially largely invisible, Simon is recognized for the first time by other students after he posts a scandal on an app called After School before he builds "his own app" (p. 44). At this point he has garnered a reputation for himself and made people "scared of him" (p. 44). Undergoing such a shift in his peers' perception of him is reflective of the common experience of role confusion during adolescence, which has a rather negative implication. For a person still in the process of forming a stable identity, there is a need for unity "between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him" (Erikson, 1968, p. 87). Seeing how his social presence alters from being overlooked, and even rejected – considering "the way Jake just dropped Simon freshman year…as if Simon didn't exist anymore" (p. 325) – to being able to spark recognition and apprehension may cause him to internalize an image of himself that is more powerful than he really is or than his peers really perceive him to be. Through About That, he is able to make his schoolmates not only wary of the sources from which he receives the information, but also apprehensive about upsetting him and consequently ending up with their misdeeds revealed on the app.

His action, while under the guise of maintaining the anonymity of the persons involved, can still be considered as a relational form of bullying (Flanagan et al., 2013, p. 692). Though he does not seek direct confrontation, he does realize that it grants him power over his peers. Here Simon is capitalizing on the adolescents' fear of "social pain" which can stem from being publicly humiliated and later ostracized (Ouwerkerk, Kerr, Gallucci, & Lange, 2005, p. 322). His so-called power is validated even more by the fact that what he posts, however unlikely, "you could pretty much guarantee every word was true" (p. 28). The peers' grudging acceptance of his cyber assault is the "action without belief" that perpetuates the structure of domination (Newman, 2004, p. 164). Such power dynamics inevitably form the various images of his powerful self that he accumulates and identifies with in the same way a child catches and internalizes images fed to it by parents (Fink, 1997, p. 36).

The problem is then worsened as Simon has to contend with the actual opinions that the others hold about him. With few friends and a reputation of spreading degrading rumors about his peers, Simon is, at best, tolerated among his social circle. This clashes with the self-concept that he has constructed in his head, which is why he feels he deserves "more respect and attention" (p. 322). Hence, it can be interpreted that he is unable to cope with the lack that results from not being able to reconcile the disparate images of himself as he has formulated and as his peers' project. This failure contributes towards aggressive or problem behavior, which is in line with the actual tendency of rejected youth (Reijntjes et al., 2010, p. 1394).

Such discord is inimical to their ego since it obviously disrupts the process by which individuals make sense of the world, which is through the juxtaposition of "what we see and hear with this

internalized self-image" (Fink, 1997, p. 37). As adolescents, they have acquired more advanced cognition for self-evaluation and contextual consideration, which results in them being more self-conscious and susceptible to negative assessments by others (Reimer, 1996, p. 322). While the heightened reflection of the self allows adolescents to know themselves better and form a stable identity, it also poses a risk of the different self-images colliding with each other. According to Rosenberg, such a clash is most inclined to emerge during adolescence (as cited in Harter, 1990, p. 533). Correspondingly, adolescents' vulnerability to disturbances in their self-concept can be harmful to their identity (Lau, 1990, p. 112). For Jake and Simon, their vulnerable sense of self is further weakened by the inability to reconcile the different self-concepts and self-images. As a result, they resort to revenge as a coping mechanism for their unbearable situations, and their intent to take revenge reflects their version of an ideal community made up of others and of themselves.

Nevertheless, in reference to Lacanian theory, revenge, when situated in the realm of the ideal, or the fantasy, is doomed to fail. As has been established, while adolescents such as Jake and Simon mature, peer acceptance is of paramount importance, and perceived rejection does have a lasting negative effect. Consequently, they strive towards the traits that would earn them favor with peers, whether consciously or not. Still, rejection is always an imminent possibility (Trentacosta and Shaw, 2009, p. 357). Consequently, the formation of the subject, which is dependent on external images compiled into "an illusory image of cohesion and stability" with which the subject identifies, results in failure (Lacan, 1949/2006, pp. 79–80; Newman, 2004, p. 154). Influenced heavily by these ill-formed self-concepts, Simon and Jake both face disappointment that escalates into anger, causing them to lash out in the form of revenge in order to maintain the self-image that they believe to be most beneficial for them. In an indirect way, retaliation as such can serve a purpose of restoring the subject's "inner psychic balance" as its aim is to reestablish self-esteem (Böhm and Kaplan, 2011, p. 34). However, when revenge is taken against the fundamental lack within a person's psyche, it does not achieve its goal because the balance that they are trying to regain is essentially impossible to pin down.

It follows, then, that the purpose Jake and Simon's revenge scheme ends up serving is only as a tool to seek power both over others and over their own fate. What can be discerned from their actions is obviously not the kind of restoration that is defined by Böhm and Kaplan (2011) to be rather productive and reconciliatory (p. 35), but indicative of the feeling of perceived humiliation, anger, or powerlessness, from which aggression often ensues. By trying to punish others for the grievance received, both characters transfer their feelings of inferiority and indignity to those they deem to be at fault. This corresponds with several studies that refer to revenge as an "other-directed emotion" that projects negative feelings of the individual onto others (Orri et al., 2014, p. 6; Böhm and Kaplan, 2011, p. 35). In Simon's case, his choice of revenge which is suicide, goes one step further by permanently "relieving" himself of any negative feelings (Orri et al., 2014, p. 6) and even retaining control of his own life (Hendin, 1991, p. 1154). As such, both Simon and Jake are able to control the situation, the others involved, and their own position in how it plays out.

For these adolescent characters, the power dynamics that surrounds them and its influence are undeniable as young adults are active subjects who exercise power and on whom power plays. That is to say, they are embarking on a path toward autonomy as they are now constantly considering different "avenues of duty and service" with "free assent," driven by both the desire and compulsion to make choices that deviate from those of their parents but not from those of their peer groups (Erikson, 1968, p. 129). They get to grapple with challenges and "test the limits" of their power in their culture and society in which they navigate (Trites, 2000, p. 54).

On the other hand, these young adult characters are influenced by the external forces that abound in their immediate and extended circles. These social or cultural institutions operate to shape adolescents by showing them how much and how far they can employ their individual power (Trites, 2000, p. xii).

In Simon's case, it is quite clear that even though his manifesto proclaims the suicide to have a more sweeping impact, essentially he only wants to target those who have had a direct hand in making him unhappy. Apart from the psychological discordance contributing to his misery, his decision to carry out the scheme is further triggered by shame. While it is a common facet of adolescent emotions, shame may be felt especially strongly by those who struggle with the disparity between the ideal self and the real self (Reimer, 1996, p. 322). Suffering from this very contradiction within himself, Simon likely harbors a fair amount of shame, which then develops into paranoia about not being able to achieve or maintain the façade of the ideal self. It is not only a failure to achieve the respect that he desires, but also his own paradoxical self-concepts that give rise to confusion and thus shame in his mind. While he projects himself as not part of, and even above, the clichés of high-school cliques and drama, he also secretly craves it as it would mean acceptance and inclusion, which implicitly confirms he is behaving correctly in social contexts (Ouwerkerk et al., 2005, p. 322). This is seen most obviously when he "rigged the votes so he'd be on the junior prom court" (pp. 323–324). An expected reaction is that Simon "acts like he's above caring whether he's popular, but he was pretty smug when he wound up on the junior prom court last spring" although nobody knows "how he pulled that off" (p. 11). Janae confirms that "He'd make fun of people for being lemmings, but he still wanted the same things they did. And he wanted them to look up to him. So he did it" (p. 324).

Being cognizant of these discrepancies leads to his shame as he "couldn't stand the thought of … everyone at school knowing he'd done something so pathetic. Like, he'd spent years spilling everybody's secrets, and now he was gonna get humiliated with one of his own" (p. 324). As a result, he reacts in such a way that would remove shame or prevent shame – an internally-induced sentiment – from developing into humiliation – a feeling provoked by external factors. This decision is hinted at by his penchant for violence as seen in his online posts on the 4chan message board that Maeve discovers. Not only is he one of those labelled as "a bunch of sickos" celebrating school shootings (p. 176), he also demands a more creative method of "violently disrupting schools" (p. 271). One of his 4chan posts says he wants teens engaging in this public violence to "Raise the stakes, for God's sake. Do something original…Surprise me when you take out a bunch of asshole lemmings. That's all I'm asking." (p. 271). This may explain why he reacts in such an aggressive way to the wrongs he feels have been done towards him. Simon's embarrassment over his ruse makes him paranoid about his peers discovering the truth, which will then worsen their attitude towards him and even lead to further ostracism.

This instability is suggestive of his lack of control over the events in his life despite the fact that he actually covets it. His slide into depression and violent inclination also emphasize his lack of control over even his own mental state. Considering this, taking revenge through suicide is a way for him to regain control as he believes he has cleverly mapped out how those wrongdoers' lives will be destroyed after his death, as well as how his death, the action of which he has complete agency, is integral to said destruction. Here Simon treats death as an opportunity to reestablish subjective power. Moreover, he can also baffle and scare other people because, as he plans, the people will watch "it unfold for a year" and still "have no clue what actually happened" (p. 322), giving him a promise of a continuing invisible authority. In fact, even after his manifesto is scheduled to come out, he can still carry on haunting many of the others with guilt and doubt. By inflicting remorse through his suicide, Simon is exacting

"permanent suffering" on those involved (Orri et al., 2014, p. 6). This possibly reinforces the feeling of power that he can wield over those who have subjugated him one way or another. However, while justice has been served – Simon may have achieved a coveted sense of authority and power at the time of his death – this form of justice makes it hard for readers to sympathize with him. Simon, in this case, joins the rank of other characters who take revenge through their own "idiosyncratic notions of their own right," while the audience perceive their claims, methods, and motivation to be unseemly (Miller, 1998, p. 171). At the end of the day, Simon executes his plan with the purpose to dominate others, even unbeknownst to them, in order to extinguish the insecurity and shame that he experiences.

On the other hand, Jake is strongly caught up in the power he receives from partaking in this revenge plot. Unlike Simon, Jake does not use his life as a means to communicate his anger and resentment to those he deems guilty; rather, he maintains the scheme after Simon dies by publishing Simon's pre-written posts on Tumblr. While Jake's involvement is explained as Simon's ploy to keep him from revealing Simon's secret about rigging the junior prom votes that Jake accidentally finds out, this only accounts for the initial portion of it. After seeing how effective the plan is in rattling the lives of the targets, especially Addy, Jake becomes obsessed with the power that he feels he now has. As Janae confirms, Jake "'got really into the whole thing once Simon died. Total power trip watching you guys get hauled into the station, seeing the school scrambling and everybody freaking out about the Tumblr. He liked having that control'" (p. 326). The way that the messages affect people's opinions of the Bayview Four and confuse them about the case gives Jake a sense of control that, similar to Simon, he loses when he learns about Addy's affair.

Witnessing the effectiveness of the revenge endows him with even more confidence and, corresponding with what Böhm and Kaplan (2011) explain, shifts his view of himself into that of "an avenger," carrying with it a sense of righteousness and invincibility that intensifies Jake's obsession with this newfound power (p. 20). He even attempts to continue after Nate is arrested, reasoning that "That should've been Addy" and that they "need to turn it around" (p. 329), illustrating his enjoyment of the power to dictate the fates of these other characters. This sentiment is also extended to Janae. When Janae confronts him and demands they stop, he responds by saying, "Not your call, Janae. Don't forget what I have on hand. I can put everything on your doorstep and walk away." (p. 329). In his twisted perspective, much like Simon's, the revenge acts are attached with a purpose beyond a personal reason, which is why they are pursued tirelessly (Wiggins, 2018, p. 6). In the same scene, Jake also manifests his aggression, which has evidently increased, as he chases after Addy after realizing she has been listening to his and Janae's conversation, with a blatant attempt to hurt or kill her.

> Instead, he shoves me to the ground, kneels down, and slams my head on a rock. My skull explodes with pain and my vision goes red around the edges, then black. Something presses across my neck and I'm choking. I can't see anything, but I can hear. "You should be in jail instead of Nate, Addy," Jake snarls as I claw at his hands. "But this works too" (p. 331).

It is evident from his actions that once he has experienced the position of power that comes with taking revenge, Jake becomes addicted and no longer recognizes the line that determines when he should stop. He once again gets to feel the superiority that has been so typical for him before Addy's infidelity; consequently, it is not surprising that he holds on to it with such fanatical fervor.

Conclusion

One of Us Is Lying serves as a good example of a YA novel, which brings to the forefront the issues of peer rejection and how the fear of such rejection factors significantly in the psychological development of adolescents. Since during this period, the significance of peer relations and acceptance is undeniably high, it naturally becomes indispensable to teens' identity formation. Being ostracized by peers may therefore result in damaging effects to an adolescent's self-concepts. As mentioned, such threats to their self-image indeed lead two teen characters in the novel, Simon and Jake, to react aggressively and to take revenge against those who are perceived as culpable.

Their revenge is enacted through a complicated scheme to frame those perceived culprits. Apart from expressing their anger and sorrow to others, their plan also achieves a by-product of power obtained from being able to control the fates of their targets and the opinions of others. Nevertheless, since their revenge derives from the desire that is fundamentally unattainable, it eventually fails and the power they gain from it does not last. This novel points to a crucial angle of young adult representation in literature that their psychological well-being, especially their sense of self, is heavily tied to their interpersonal relationships with their peers, and failure to form healthy connections can lead to devastating results, both for them and for the others involved.

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Negotiating Cultural Identity in *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore three modes of cultural identification presented in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. With three intersecting plotlines, the novel focuses on three divergent modes of cultural identification in different spatio-temporal contexts. The first kind of cultural identification is imbued with a sense of foreignness, exemplified by the judge, Jemubhai, whose cultural identity is deeply shaped by imperialist ideology during British colonization of India. As Indian culture is negated by the colonial power, Jemubhai adheres to English cultural identification and disavows his Indianness. The second mode of cultural identification revolves around the issue of cultural authenticity in the diasporic context for Biju, a young migrant, illegal worker in various restaurants in New York. To survive in a foreign country, Biju forces himself to transgress cultural borders, which disconcerts Biju and further prompts him to pursue cultural authenticity. The third mode highlights Sai's and Gyan's trajectories of cultural identification. Just as Sai, Jemubhai's granddaughter, embodies the idea of in-betweenness, Gyan, Sai's math tutor, manifests the desire to escape narrow nationalism. Both Sai and Gyan evoke the potential of crossing borders. Juxtaposing the three modes of cultural identification, Desai's novel explores the process of negotiating cultural identity and gestures towards a field of border-crossing identity.

Keywords: authenticity, cultural identity, foreignness, Kiran Desai, in-betweenness, *The Inheritance of Loss*

Introduction

Situated in Kalimpong, a town at the contested Indo-Nepal border in north-eastern India, Kiran Desai's second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, weaves three intersecting plot threads into her narrative, spanning some five decades from the colonial past in the 1930s to the globalized present in the 1980s. One plot concerns the story of the retired judge, Jemubhai Patel, who is estranged from his Indian cultural roots and lives in the shadow of British colonization. Spending his solitary life in Cho Oyu, a dilapidated mansion in the Himalayas, Jemubhai immerses himself in memories of his youth during the British colonization in the first half of the 20th century, triggered by the arrival of his granddaughter Sai. Another plot is centered on Buji, a migrant, illegal worker who lives in the liminal space of the restaurants' basements in New York. The degrading poverty in New York and the media report about political agitation in Kalimpong galvanize Biju to relinquish his unfulfilled American dream. After much struggle, Buji, the son of the judge's cook, embarks on the journey to the dreamland only to realize that the outbound journey is also a return to the "imaginary" homeland. The other plot focuses not only on the conflicts between Sai, the Judge's granddaughter, and Gyan, a Nepali in Kalimpong, but also on political unrest, particularly the Gorkhaland Movement in Kalimpong.[1] Through Sai's and Gyan's perspectives, the narrative highlights the younger generation's discontent with the status quo.

With the interlaced story threads, *The Inheritance of Loss* maps three modes of cultural identification. First, Jemubhai's cultural identification is imbued with a sense of foreignness, which signifies non-Indianness or, more exactly, Englishness. Literally, foreignness is an attribute of something that comes from a foreign country, yet foreignness is a notion not merely racially but also culturally charged. Jemubhai's foreignness is acquired by turning himself into a non-Indian in terms of culture. Remarkably, intertwined with the sense of foreignness is the state of self-abjection. Forming his cultural identity in the colonial period, Jemubhai demonstrates how colonial interpellation constitutes the colonized individual as an abject subject and, thus, Jemubhai constructs his identity as a foreigner in his homeland so as to belie his self-abjection. Second, in the diasporic condition, Biju's cultural identification reflects his abiding concern over the choice between adherence to one's roots and coming to terms with "routes" or "the processes of adjustment and negotiation" (Sarwal, 2017, p. 2) while moving out of one's original culture. The third mode features a potential tendency to cross borders, exemplified both by Gyan, who longs for an escape beyond ethnic and national boundaries, and by Sai, who inhabits the in-between space, a space that accentuates "assimilation of contraries" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). Examining the discrete ways that cultural identity is consolidated and contested, this paper investigates how the characters in the novel negotiate their cultural identity and what underlies the three modes of cultural identification.

Several critics have drawn attention to the relevant issues of colonialism, globalization, and nationalism in Desai's novel. Shalini (2009) focuses on the lingering effect of colonialism that causes the Judge's loss of self-esteem and dignity (p. 198). From the postcolonial perspective, Spielman (2010) argues that Desai's novel "shows us a radical postcolonial subjectivity in

[1] Historically, the region of Kalimpong belonged to Sikkim and Bhutan in the 19th century before the British launched wars with Sikkim (then an independent kingdom, but occupied by the British in 1861) and Bhutan to take over the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling district, with Kalimpong being one of the three (Dasgupt, 1999, pp. 47–48). "Gorkhaland" comes from the Nepali language Gorkha, which creates a sense of unity for the Nepalis. In1986, a new violent movement was launched by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a political party founded in 1980, to demand "official recognition of their language, and a separate Gorkhaland for the Nepalese community in Darjeeling" (Datta & Sengupta, 2020, p. 97).

which flexibility, assimilation, multiculturalism are preferable to maintaining difference" (p. 74).

An intrinsic part of these two critics' views is indeed the issue of identity; that is, how colonized people are deprived of their identity and how identity is inflected by differences in the postcolonial period. Highlighting the effects of globalization, Dennihy (2009) points to the negative picture of globalization shown in Desai's novel. Concilio (2010) categorizes Desai's novel under the label of "global novels," which bring to the fore the comparisons between postcolonial situations in India and diasporic conditions in New York (pp. 89, 102, 105–6). Jay (2010) underscores the fact that nationalism is not superseded but spurred by globalization (p. 73). Though not particularly pronounced, the issue of identity is embedded in these readings. In fact, all three plots of Desai's novel resonate with the pertinent theme of "who I am" or "what I belong to," not just ethnically but also culturally, by portraying the characters faced with the challenges of colonialism, nationalism, or diasporic conditions in the era of globalization.

In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall (1990) conceptualizes cultural identity in two ways. First, cultural identities reflect "common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people," with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (Hall, 1990, p. 223). In this sense, according to Hall (1990), the conception of cultural identity underscores "oneness," the truth or the essence of a certain ethnic group (pp. 223–4). Second, cultural identity is "a matter of becoming" (Hall, 1990, p. 235). Acknowledging the fact that cultural identities, instead of being fixed, go through transformations, this conception of cultural identity recognizes "ruptures and discontinuities" (p. 235) and accentuates difference from the past or the origin. Hall (1996) states more clearly in "Introduction: who needs 'identity'?" that identification should be viewed "as a construction, a process never completed—always 'in process'" (p. 2). In line with Hall's notions of cultural identity, Desai's novel navigates through the process of constructing cultural identity in different historical contexts. Shifting between different characters' experiences, the novel tackles several critical questions: How is the construction of cultural identity mediated? Can individuals reject a certain cultural identity imposed on them? Can individuals transform their cultural identity in a certain way? In a word, how do individuals negotiate their cultural identity?

Unlike several essays which have addressed identity issues in Desai's novel in terms of identity crisis and cultural clash (Kondali, 2018; Subbulakshmi, 2019; Pandey & Wani, 2019), this paper delves into the dynamics of cultural identification in different historical conditions and further indicates the submerged theme of border-crossing inherent to Desai's novel. For one thing, borders refer to the geographic and political boundaries of a certain territory. With the story mainly set in Kalimpong, the novel posits a world where geopolitical borders between nations are contingent on political power and frequently contested.

These geopolitical borders manifest themselves as "arbitrary constructions" (Brah, 1996, p. 198). For another thing, geopolitical borders, by extension, serve as a metaphor for the social, cultural and ethnic boundaries which, though intangible, circumscribe a person's identity. In this regard, according to Anzaldúa (1987), the border functions "as a dividing line" (p. 3) that differentiates the legitimate from the illegitimate in terms of sexuality, ethnicity, and culture. Such a dividing line is interrelated with the way that identity is shaped. As Anzaldúa (1987) further notes, the struggle with identity issues coincides with "the struggle of borders" (p. 63). In the same vein, Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* demonstrates that the existence of tangible

and intangible borders is linked covertly or overtly to the way people constitute their cultural identity. This paper shows that towards the end of the novel, the possibility of border-crossing is indeed envisioned.

Jemubhai's Foreignness and Abject Self

In her interview with *The Guardian* (2009) after winning the Booker Prize, Desai offers a portrait of her grandfather, on whom the depiction of the main protagonist, Judge Jemubhai Patel, is based. Desai describes her grandfather in the following way: "As a child, he had sat under a streetlamp to learn the English dictionary by heart. He sailed to England on a scholarship; returned a judge; travelled from village to village holding court beneath the trees; dispensed justice under the fundamentally unjust colonial system. *His face was a mask*" (para. 2; emphasis added). Desai's words evoke Fanon's description of the colonized in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As Fanon (1967) suggests, "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture" (p. 38) and the colonized would become whiter as they gain "greater mastery of cultural tool that language is" (p. 38). To be assimilated into the colonizer's culture, the colonized like Desai's grandfather and Jemubhai make every effort to acquire the English language to the extent that they seem to wear a mask concealing their negated true self.

Indeed, in the novel, Jemubhai responds to the imperialist interpellation of the colonial subject[2] by obtaining the mastery of English language and culture, which eventuates in his becoming a foreigner, alienated from his Indian culture. During British rule, the young Jemubhai strives to learn the English language and wins the chance to study in Cambridge, England, which paves the way to his recruitment into the Indian Civil Service. Back to India, he takes great pains to consolidate his cultural identity by performing English cultural practices. Eventually, internalization of the cultural hierarchy alienates him from his culture of origin and converts him into a foreigner. While searching for a place to ensconce himself, Jemubhai enters the mansion Cho Oyu and decides that he "could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of *being a foreigner in his own country*, for this time he would not learn the language" (Desai, 2006, p. 32; emphasis added).[3] Built by a Scotsman who enjoys reading travel accounts during British rule, Cho Oyu materializes a westerner's idea of adventure, which is inspired by British writers' imagination of India. However, for Jemubhai, Cho Oyu is not so much a product of "adventure-imperialism," termed by Said (1993, p. 155), but it evokes Jemubhai's imaginary cultural identification. The foreign atmosphere of Cho Oyu appeals to Jemubhai, who is unable to feel at home in his homeland, India.

Jemubhai's cultural identity as a foreigner at home is constituted in the process of negating and disavowing his Indian self. Food acts as a catalyst for self-negation and self-disavowal. Just as he boards the ship, setting off to Britain in 1939, Jemubhai also embarks on the journey of jettisoning his native food culture. On the ship, the smell of Indian-style food prepared by his mother arouses discomfort in his cabin mate and triggers his feeling of shame. What further infuriates Jemubhai is his mother's concern that Jemubhai may not be able to use a knife and fork. With a sense of inferiority, Jemubhai furiously throws the whole package of food overboard, condemning his mother for her "undignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love" (Desai, 2006, p. 43). Jemubhai's denunciation of his mother's food, prepared out of

[2] In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) uses the interpellation of "Dirty nigger!" or "Look, a Negro!" to describe the process of the colonized coming into being as an abject in relation to the colonizer (p. 109). Slightly different from Fanon's interpellation, Jemubhai in Desai's novel is called on by the imperialist power to become part of the colonial administrative system, the Indian Civil Service.

[3] Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (New York: Grove Press, 2006). All the subsequent quotations are from this edition and followed by page numbers in parentheses.

maternal love, is an unequivocal gesture to devalue Indian culture. Nevertheless, such inferiority does not vanish along with the food; even after he discards the package of food, the smell of the food remains, exposing "the stink of fear" of being Indian (Desai, 2006, p. 43). Indeed, the uninviting smell of the food reveals Jemubhai's abject self.

The signification of food and smell deserves further interpretation. As Jay (2010) reminds readers, "food is culturally coded in the novel; what and how one eats regularly carries symbolic import among the characters" (p. 128). In Jemubhai's case, food, instead of providing beneficial nutritious substance for humans, is perceived to be offensive and threatening to his sense of self and functions as the abject in Kristeva's concept of abjection. Kristeva (1982) puts it directly, "Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (p. 2). In terms of human psychological development, abjection marks the moment when we confront the threatening other, distinguish ourselves from the other, and draw a boundary between "me" and the "(m)other" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 13). Elaborating on Kristeva's theory, Grosz (1989) points out that the abject refers to the improper, the unclean and the disorderly that disturbs order and system and thus has to be expelled so that proper subjectivity can be achieved (p. 71). In the novel, Jemubhai perceives the food prepared by his mother as the abject, which the self should be separated from. Jemubhai's act of throwing the food away is to cast out the abject that threatens to undermine the English cultural identity, or the ideal self, which he endeavors to construct. Nonetheless, his body odor affected by the food persists, distinctively marking him as the abject other during his stay in England. On the bus, no passenger would take the seat beside him as "girls held their noses and giggled, 'Phew, he stinks of curry!'" (Desai, 2006, p. 45). The smell of curry, exuded from Jemubhai's body, prompts repulsion.

Obviously, in England the smell of curry deepens his sense of self-abjection. The abject image of his self is not merely reflected in other people's eyes, but gradually he himself finds fault with his physical appearance and body odor to the extent that he eventually conceals himself in the shadows with a twisted mind. Jemubhai finds "his own skin odd-colored" (Desai, 2006, p. 45), and even under strict self-scrutiny as well as the constant gaze of others, he begins to "wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling" (Desai, 2006, p. 45). Identifying with the negated image of his self in people's eyes, he examines every part of his own body in a prejudiced light. Just as Fanon (1967) points out, "Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity" (p. 110) and the colored body is "the burden of that corporeal malediction" (p. 111) that the colonized wish to throw off. In Jemubhai's case, he thus prefers "shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he [is] suspicious that sunlight might reveal him, in his hideousness, all too clearly" (Desai, 2006, p. 45). After severe self-examination, Jemubhai starts "the process of making" (Singh, 2009, p. 55), transforming himself by using foreign things, adopting new habits, and "performing English identity" (Spielman, 2010, p. 77). In addition to correcting his English accent, he takes great pains to remove any physical differences or non-English characteristics. Particularly, Jemubhai cultivates the habit of covering his originally dark skin with white powder.

A series of conflicts between Jemubhai and his family ensue due to his new habit. After his return to India, Jemubhai still follows the habit of applying white powder on his skin, which renders him a foreigner in his hometown. However, the powder puff triggers confusion. Out of curiosity, his wife, Nimi, rummages through his suitcase and belongings and finds several items for personal grooming in a toilet case, including "a jar of green salve, a hairbrush and comb set in silver, a pom-pom with a loop of silk in a round container of powder" (Desai, 2006, p. 182). All these objects convey "crisp light lavender scents…of a foreign place" (Desai, 2006, p. 182)

in stark contrast to the smell of dust and rain in Jemubhai's hometown. Unable to find the puff, Jemubhai panics, which creates chaos in the family and further reveals the discrepancy between the foreign thing and the local language. Jemubhai's family attempt to know what exactly is missing. Insomuch as this foreign thing that Jemubhai uses to transform himself has no word in the local language, it is almost impossible to translate what Jemubhai calls "powder puff" into something familiar to Jemubhai's family, who even have trouble vocalizing its foreign name. The act of transforming his self through this exquisite powder is to construct a cultural identity that differentiates and alienates Jemubhai from his family.

To reiterate his constructed Englishness, Jemubhai practices English cultural habits, among which keeping pets is a significant one. Jemubhai cultivates the modern, foreign habit of pet keeping as a symbol of English culture which he immerses himself in. While studying in Cambridge in order to be the member of the ICS, he is unable to have any connection or intimacy with humans for fear that his English accent would be the target of derision and his physical presence the object of abhorrence. Instead, Jemubhai builds up a friendship with the landlady's dog. This relationship with a dog is nevertheless foreign to Indian culture; as the narrator puts it, "[t]his was his first relationship with an animal, for in Piphit the personalities of dogs were not investigated or encouraged" (Desai, 2006, p. 122). Then back in India, despite his alienation from his family and relatives, Jemubhai retains this foreign practice of keeping a dog as his pet. Even when his granddaughter, Sai, comes to live with him, the only being that Jemubhai feels intimate with is his pet dog, Mutt. But more than building a relationship between humans and animals, pet-keeping instills a sense of superiority in pet owners. According to Grier (2010), keeping pets reflects the social, economic and cultural status of the owner (p. 7). For Jemubhai, keeping a pet is a modern, cultural practice which demonstrates and reinforces his English cultural identity. That is why the narrator describes Mutt as a "concept" (Desai, 2006, p. 354), and why Jemubhai's sense of self is totally lost when Mutt is stolen.

Jemubhai constructs his cultural identity through the abjection of his Indian self, and by performing English cultural practices, Jemubhai consolidates a new cultural identity for himself. As he claims to be a foreigner in his own country, his cultural identification is permeated with the sense of foreignness which denotes Englishness and superiority. Desai's narrative captures the way that Jemubhai negotiates his cultural identity in the shadow of colonial and postcolonial legacies. In the process of his negotiation, Jemubhai might console himself with the illusion of being a foreigner, but not without cost, the cost of losing kinships as well as his culture of origin.

Biju's Quest for Cultural Authenticity

In contradistinction to Jemubhai's rejection of Indianness, Biju's longing for pure Indianness arises in response to cultural displacement. Working illegally in New York, Biju yearns for Indian culture but finds nothing purely Indian. Gradually, he prioritizes cultural authenticity by demarcating the line between the authentic and the inauthentic. Biju's adherence to cultural authenticity is mainly reflected in his anxiety not only about food but also about cross-ethnic encounters in globalized, diasporic conditions.

Biju's experience of working in restaurants in New York exposes global culture as a mixture of the fake and the authentic. To be more specific, in those restaurants where Biju works illegally, the underground and the aboveground worlds are far different.

While those nominally "French," "colonial" and "American" restaurants are meant to offer fancy and high-class dining experience, illegal workers from different postcolonial countries converge in the underground world, which is crowded, unsafe, and unclean. The food signifies superiority, but the culinary process is marked by opposite connotations. In an ironic tone, the narrator describes the contradictory mixture as "the balance, perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below. Mix it up in a heap and then who would patronize [the] restaurant?" (Desai, 2006, p. 25). Despite the separation of culinary processes from customers' dining experience, the so-called French food inevitably turns out to be fake. In the cosmopolitan city of New York, such restaurants are a travesty of authenticity; as Biju wonders, "Do restaurants in Paris have cellars full of Mexicans, desis, and Pakis?" (Desai, 2006, p. 25). Though the term hybridity is not used specifically by the narrator while describing the scene of globalization, the conflicting mixture of the first and third worlds represented by the restaurants nonetheless captures the essence of cultural hybridity in terms of cross-cultural encounters and cultural fusion.[4]

Whereas cultural hybridity characterizing global culture undermines the possibility of certifying cultural authenticity, Biju, feeling disconnected in a foreign country, still struggles for authentic Indian culture which he belongs to. The question of what it means to be a true Indian recurs in his diasporic experience. For instance, in New York, working with Pakistanis, which is supposedly intolerable to Indians, unsettles Biju, for whom the line between Indians and Pakistanis is rooted in his cultural beliefs. Food becomes another source of Biju's anxiety especially when the line between the edible and the inedible is blurred. As he works in restaurants that serve beef, Biju is faced with the dilemma between his job and religious belief. To solve this dilemma, Biju attempts to distinguish between "a holy cow and an unholy cow" (Desai, 2006, p.151) in order to convince himself that cows in the United States are not sacred and therefore edible. Indeed, the idea of edible cows sums up Biju's struggles between roots and routes. On the one hand, Biju adheres to the root of his identity constituted by Indian culture and insists that "one should not give up one's religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them" (Desai, 2006, p.151). On the other hand, Biju is still inevitably confronted with the fact that the meaning of "holy cows," contingent on "a process of movement and mediation" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 19),[5] has been changed as a result of moving along the route.

In the era of globalization, with the increasing flows of people, cultural hybridity, though disturbing to Biju, is an ineluctable phenomenon. Biju's coworker Saeed from Zanzibar undoubtedly demonstrates the necessity of adaptation, transformation, and mixture in the face of cultural hybridity. As Saeed claims, he is willing to marry any woman for the green card, and in order to earn money, he has no scruple about working in a dress store named "Banana Republic," "synonymous with colonial exploitation and the rapacious ruin of the third world" (Desai, 2006, p.112). According to Horne (1999), Saeed can be viewed as a sort of post-colonial trickster, who "refutes colonial binary oppositions and definitions" (p. 133). Able to "transmute

[4] The term hybridity has many meanings. Though Bhabha (1994) develops the concept of hybridity to open up a space of negotiation and to destabilize cultural supremacy (p. 37), hybridity is not so much empowering as threatening and arouses anxiety in Biju's circumstances. In my analysis, I am in line with Grossberg's view of hybridity as an image of border-crossing, mobility, uncertainty and multiplicity (1996, pp. 91-92). See also Marwan M. Kraidy's *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (2005), Chapter One, for a broader meaning of hybridity.

[5] Through the image of "roots," Gilroy (1993) suggests the notion of a natural, stable and rooted identity in connection to the homeland while the homonym "routes" emphasizes that identity is in a process of continuous change.

himself" and "embrace fluidity" (Horne, 1999, p.133), Saeed adapts to different or even antagonistic principles in globalized, diasporic conditions.

Nonetheless, for Saeed, despite the adaptations in order to survive, the fundamental principle is never violated; that is, he would never relinquish his religious faith. Saeed prioritizes his multiple identities in this way: "First I am Muslim, then I am Zanzibari, *then* I *will be* American" (Desai, 2006, p. 152; emphasis in original). Obviously, religion forms the most essential part of his identification, and thus he refuses to eat pork and insists on his religious ritual every morning. Still, it is noteworthy that Saeed's religious practices have been adjusted to his diasporic conditions in the U.S. Given that it is not convenient for him to attend the real mosque, he purchases "a model of mosque with a quartz clock set into the bottom that was programmed, at the five correct houses, to start agitating: 'Alah hu Akbar, La ilhaha illullah, wal lah hu akbar...'" (Desai, 2006, p. 152).[6] It can be argued that Saeed's religious ritual practice is a mixture of the imitated, unreal mosque and the authentic words. In this way, the ancient words offer "sustenance to create a man's strength, his faith in an empty-bellied morning and all through the day" (Desai, 2006, p. 152). Saeed's faith remains unchanged despite all the transformations that he has to undertake in his diasporic experience.

Biju and Saeed embody two discrepant views of how diasporic subjects can negotiate their cultural identity. While Saeed strikes a balance between adaptation to the global, hybrid culture in New York and insistence on his religious roots, Biju decides to pursue authenticity which is not adulterated by differences and changes. Biju admires Saeed's religious insistence so much so that he inadvertently ignores Saeed's flexible adjustments. Inspired by Saeed's adherence to religious faith and thus motivated to "live within a narrow purity" (Desai, 2006, p. 152), Biju eventually works in a cafe named "Gandhi Café," which claims to be an "all-Hindu establishment. No Pakistanis and no Bangladeshis" (Desai, 2006, p. 155). Serving no beef meal, the owner of Gandhi Café emphasizes that his food is "the real thing, generic Indian" (Desai, 2006, p. 161). Authenticity is reiterated, which appeals to Biju's fascination with pure Indianness.

Nonetheless, Biju's quest for authenticity is frustrated, since the so-called Indian restaurant is not established on the basis of the owner's identification with Indian cultural roots, but rather it aims to fulfill the market's demand. In the first place, Biju is convinced that the Gandhi Café is a place without any contradictions. According to the narrator's depiction, "as [Biju] approaches the Gandhi Café, the air gradually grows *solid*" (Desai, 2006, p. 154; emphasis added). The word "solid" succinctly signifies Biju's desire for something unmixed with differences so as to guarantee a pure, authentic Indian identity. But it later dawns on Biju that the owner's hyphenated name Harish-Harry implies "a deep rift" (Desai, 2006, p. 164) and even alienation from the real Indian culture. It is the principle of capitalism that Harish-Harry follows: "find your market. Study your market. Cater to your market" (Desai, 2006, p. 161). In short, marketing, demand-supply, and profits are what Harish-Harry identifies himself with.
While encountering ethnic, cultural and religious diversities, Biju still longs for a cultural identity that is authentically Indian. Overwhelmed by a sense of loss, Biju turns to the memory of his past life in the village with his grandmother. For Biju, Kalimpong becomes the distant, "imaginary" homeland,[7] urging him to return. But his return to Kalimpong does not lead to the

[6] These words are a common Islamic Arabic expression, used in various contexts by Muslims in their prayer in times of distress or to express determination.

[7] Here the term "imaginary" has two connotations. One is the images transmitted by the printing press. In the novel, Biju receives the news of the political conflicts through the newsagent who sells copies of "*India Abroad*" (Desai, 2006, p. 250) and at that moment, the news reconnects Biju with his homeland, which is, as Benedict

realization of cultural authenticity. Indeed, as Biju ends up being robbed of all his possessions on his journey back home, Biju's move is ironic, and his quest for cultural authenticity is futile.

Towards Third Space and Beyond Borders: Sai's In-Betweenness and Gyan's Desire for Escape

The third storyline of Desai's novel deals with how Sai and Gyan negotiate their cultural identity within the region of Kalimpong, which is traversed by ethnic and cultural borders. Indeed, both Sai and Gyan engage with the issue of border-crossing. Border-crossing occurs on two levels. On the literal level, it is defined as the act of crossing the geographic and political borders between nations, such as Biju's transnational border-crossing. On the other level, there exist borders between classes, cultures or ethnicities. In the novel, Sai never travels abroad and even seldom moves beyond the hill village where Cho Oyu is located. But Sai's family and educational backgrounds increase her chances of crossing over the dividing line that differentiates people and, as a result, Sai tends to interact with those from different classes and cultures, such as the sisters Lola and Noni, who have assimilated into British culture, Biju's father the cook in Cho Oyu from a lower caste, Father Booty the Indianized priest from Switzerland, etc. Similarly, inside India, Gyan's Nepali identity forces him to confront the ethnic and cultural demarcations. In the narrative, the conflict between Sai and Gyan due to their different cultural and ethnic identities triggers their contemplation of the way that the construction of identity is based on the demarcation of boundaries. Despite their different trajectories, both Sai and Gyan manifest the desire to transcend borders that may lead to the exclusion of otherness.

Diverging from her grandfather's identification with English culture and his abjection of his Indian self, Sai's cultural identity is infused with the sense of in-betweenness owing to her family backgrounds. Sai's father, a Zoroastrian who grows up in a Zoroastrian charity for orphans, completes his college education with the financial support from a donor.[8] After college, he joins the Air Forces and later is recruited as an astronaut for the Indo-Russian space project. To some extent, Sai's father has achieved a sort of social mobility from the dispossessed orphan to the professional elite. On her mother's part, given that Sai's grandmother Nimi is abandoned during pregnancy by Sai's grandfather Jemubhai, Sai's mother is never close to her father, but she is sent to St. Augustine's Convent, where she receives English education as Sai later does. With all these family backgrounds, Sai's identity is characterized by in-betweenness. Being both Indian and Zoroastrian, while culturally English, Sai occupies a location imbued with ethno-racial as well as cultural heterogeneity.

Throughout the narrative, Sai embodies the state of in-betweenness. Though she performs more English than Indian cultural practices, Sai harbors doubts about cultural hierarchy ingrained by the nuns in St. Augustine's Convent. Her westernized education in the convent notwithstanding,

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Anderson argues, imagined. The other connotation is Biju's imagination (Desai, 2006, p. 112), from which his longing for homeland emerges. Either mediated by images in the printing press or formed through his imagination of those good old days, Biju's homeland might not correspond to the real place but suggests "a mythic place of desire" (Brah, 1996, p. 192).

[8] Seldom do critics pay attention to the ethnic and religious identity of Sai's father as a Zoroastrian probably because Desai mentions this piece of information in passing. Nevertheless, this paternal inheritance should contribute in some degree to Sai's in-betweenness. Also, it reinforces the fact of ethno-racial heterogeneity in Indian society. The population of Zoroastrians in India was estimated at 61000 in 2012 according to Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (https://www.fezana.org/files/Demographics/Zworld6Sep12.pdf). For the history of the Zoroastrian migration to India and the diasporic condition of Zoroastrian community and religion in India, see Monica M. Ringer's *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastriaism in India and Iran* (2011).

Sai does not uphold the belief that Western culture is superior to Indian culture. To Sai, the dichotomy between the West and the East is suffocating and full of "contradictions" (Desai, 2006, p. 33), which she constantly brings into question. Sai's in-betweenness renders her receptive to differences[9] and sympathetic towards such a character as the cook in Cho Oyu, with whom Sai forms a close tie. By the same token, the community that Sai associates herself with, including Father Booty and Uncle Potty, can be described as a mixture of Indianness and foreignness. Particularly, the narrator portrays Father Booty, the Swiss priest who lived in India for more than four decades, as "an *Indian foreigner*" (Desai, 2006, p. 242; emphasis in original), who has made foreign cheese localized. Within this heterogeneous community, Sai establishes a cultural identity that tends to be more inclusive than exclusive, transcending borders.

On the other hand, Gyan is positioned differently from Sai in terms of ethnicity as well as culture. Unlike Sai, Gyan cannot use a knife and fork with ease, nor can he celebrate Christmas without feeling anti-Western sentiments. Gyan's ancestors migrated from Nepal to Darjeering in the 1800s; later, some of his family members are recruited by the British Imperial Army to fight, but none of them has ever won any acknowledgement from the British Empire. They have never been to England but have been left in poverty. In other words, in the social hierarchy under British colonization, Gyan's ancestors occupy the lowest rank, being totally dispossessed. As a Nepali, Gyan's ethnic background marks him as an outsider in Indian society, posing an obstacle in his search for a decent job despite his college degree.

Unemployment further worsens Gyan's situation and leads him to the involvement in political conflicts accompanied by the rising nationalism rekindled by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in the 1980s to call for the creation of a separate Gorkhaland state in the Nepali-speaking areas of northeastern India. Indeed, it is not so much Gyan's political stance as his frustration with the status quo that motivates Gyan to join political demonstrations. Even when he is accidentally driven into the crowd of protesters on the street, Gyan's attitude cannot be characterized completely by enthusiasm but punctuated by detachment and skepticism. Caught in the political turmoil, Gyan is overwhelmed by the tension between reality and history so much so that he appears detached, moving "beyond this moment" (Desai, 2006, p. 173) and looking back skeptically at the demonstrators from a different perspective with "a feeling of history being wrought, its wheels churning under him, for the men were behaving as if there were being featured in a documentary of war" (Desai, 2006, p. 173). The protest scenario seems familiar, virtual, yet unreal not only because the scenes of political demonstrations have been broadcast in the media but also because history often repeats itself. What is transpiring at the moment already seems like déjà vu, whereas Gyan finds reality unchanged. Years after the end of British colonization and after India's independence, inequality still remains entrenched in Indian society. Scanlan (2010) pinpoints the irony evoked by Gyan's skepticism: "Shrug off the Empire, shrug off the nation, and who is to say that one will not feel oppressed in the homeland" (p. 271). Gyan's skepticism engenders a desire to "[f]ly away. Free from history" (Desai, 2006, p. 173). This desire to be free implies a wish to evade confinement within the borders of nations and ethnicities, for Gyan gradually realizes that national or ethnic identity politics may lead to a narrow strip which can be oppressive rather than liberating.

The underlying issue of borders that surfaces in Gyan's reflection on the contemporary political protest is also confronted by Sai. Books, mainly the *National Geographic,* symbolize Sai's

[9] Similarly, Spielman (2010) notes that Sai becomes used to "a life of seemingly incongruous things" and wants not only "English but also Indian things" (p. 83).

tendency for border-crossing.[10] Indeed, the *National Geographic* plays a critical role in Sai's imaginings of the world. The fact that the narrative begins with Sai reading the magazine and often portrays Sai being immersed in the world of the *National Geographic* demonstrates the significance of the magazine in Sai's life. To a large extent, the world presented in the *National Geographic* inspires Sai's imagination as well as her desire to explore and go beyond the boundary of places. The logo of the *National Geographic*, a yellow frame, suggests a border between the inside and the outside, between here and there in Sai's case, stimulating a desire to explore the natural world or the cultural landscape and the pictures in the *National Geographics* trigger in Sai the "urge for something beyond the ordinary" (Desai, 2006, p. 77). Undoubtedly, the *National Geographic* projects a different world vision that encourages Sai to move beyond. Towards the end of the narrative, such an urge to move beyond recurs in Sai's mind as she thinks of "all the *National Geographic*s and books she had read. Of the judge's journey, of the cook's journey, of Biju's. Of the globe whirling on its axis. And she felt a glimmer of strength. Of resolve. She must leave" (Desai, 2006, p. 356). Here, "the globe whirling on its axis" refers to an Inflatable Globe, given by the *National Geographic* as a present to readers, and the globe invites Sai to travel, to cross the borders of the framed, stagnant life in Cho Oyu. More significantly, the image of the globe highlights the original round shape of the earth without being demarcated by all sorts of visible as well as intangible borders.[11]

In sum, both Gyan's wish to escape and Sai's inclination to move beyond borders suggest the young generation's potential of crossing into a "third space," which, according to Bhabha (1994), may open "the way to conceptualizing an international culture, not based on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (p. 38). In this third space, cultural identification is not based on exclusion of differences, but on inclusion of otherness, hybridity, and heterogeneous mixtures. Once binary thinking and either-or constraints are challenged, cultural border-crossing would be feasible. Though Bhabha does not directly address the connection between cultural hybridity and border-crossing, Grossberg (1996) does associate the idea of hybridity with that of border-crossing, arguing that both suggest "an image of between-ness which does not construct a place or condition of its own other than the mobility, uncertainty and multiplicity of the fact of the constant border-crossing itself" (pp. 91-92). Indeed, Gyan's desire for escape resonates with Sai's tendency to cross boundaries. Both invoke a different mode of cultural identification, not constructed within certain borders but motivated by a force to transcend borders.

Conclusion

In Desai's novel, three different kinds of cultural identity are presented by the main characters. In different historical, political, and cultural contexts, Jemubhai, Biju, Sai and Gyan embark on different journeys of negotiating their cultural identity. Jemubhai's identification with English culture turns him into a foreigner in his homeland. Biju's diasporic experience of cultural displacement leads to his quest for cultural authenticity. Sai's in-betweenness as well as her tendency to cross the boundaries between different cultures provides a space for cultural

[10] Noting the symbolic role of the *National Geographic* in the narrative, Bălănescu (2010) suggests that the magazine provides Sai with a venue to construct her imaginary travels (p. 255). Further than that, my reading focuses on the implication of border-crossing carried by the magazine.

[11] While using a different term, G. C. Spivak (2003) offers the concept of planetary as an alternative to imagine "an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space" (p. 72). Sai's contemplation on the Inflatable Globe evinces similar imaginings of the world that cross borders.

heterogeneity. Gyan gestures towards border-crossing in the aftermath of the political uprisings, being aware that nationalism ultimately incurs oppressive confinement.

Desai's novel eventually draws attention to the issue of border-crossing, which becomes a constant act in the era of globalization. Indeed, the question of borders preoccupies Desai's narrative. In the beginning chapter, depicting the spectacular view of the Himalayas, the narrative foregrounds the arbitrariness of borders that nation-states have endeavored to demarcate in the mountainous areas. As the narrator puts it, Kalimpong is situated at the center of international political contestation, a place on a "messy map" where great amounts of "warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there–despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders" (Desai, 2006, p. 10). Contingent on political power struggles among different nations, these man-made lines cannot withstand the natural force of the mist, sweeping over borders that are proven absurd, tenuous and permeable. To some extent, Sai and Gyan, like the mist among the mountains, have the potential of transcending borders. In transcending borders, Sai and Gyan could conceive of an identity which is endowed with the capacity to accommodate differences.

Though Gyan's tendency to go beyond national boundaries and Sai's inclination to cross borders remain unfulfilled, the juxtaposition of their cases points to the novel's central concern about the prospect of an alternative identity not restricted within political, ethnic and cultural borders that entail division and exclusion. As Desai remarks in an interview: "In a world obsessed with national boundaries and belonging, as a novelist working with a form also traditionally obsessed with place, it was a journey to come to this thought, that the less structured, the multiple, may be a possible location for fiction, perhaps a more valid ethical location in general" (as cited in Monaco, 2017, p. 314). *The Inheritance of Loss* exemplifies Desai's effort to search for such an ethical location that can accommodate heterogeneity.

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Politically Marginalized Female Figures: *Female Grassland* and *Celestial Bath*

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Abstract

Yan Geling's early work Female Grassland 雌性的草地 (Yan, 1989) is a novel published in 1989, while Celestial Bath 天浴 (Yan, 2008) is a short story published in 1996. Both of Yan Geling's works focus on female sent-down youth, with stories set in the grasslands of the Tibetan pastoral countryside during the mid-1970s, in the waning years of the Cultural Revolution 文化大革命 (1966-1976). This paper discusses women's fragmentation to analyze the obstacles to women's liberation during the sent-down youth movement, illustrating how female sent-down youth' tragic experiences resulted because of political power.

Keywords: *Celestial Bath*, *Female Grassland*, female fragmentation, oppression, Sent-down youth

It is important to have an overall understanding of the movement's significance to sent-down youth in China. Chinese sent-down youth, or the cohort of rusticated, or educated youth (Chinese: 知识青年/ 知青)[1] represents one of the largest worldwide migrations in history. As Gao Zongchi 高宗池 (born 1993) notes, tens of millions of young students were sent to the remote and poverty-stricken rural countryside in the 1960s and 1970s, all in the name of "re-education" (Gao, 1995). The relocation of millions of urban youths to the rural countryside became one of the major social events in modern Chinese history and has profoundly shaped the life experience and ideological outlook of an entire generation. As You notes in the article *Educated Youth Should Go to the Rural Areas: A Tale of Education, Employment and Social Values,* China's rustication movement represents the largest urban-to-rural migration known in human history, and estimates the effect of that relocation on the education, labor outcomes, and social values of youth in the rural areas (You, 2018).

Sent-down youth are widely described as successful and optimistic in the literary texts of the time. The political propaganda of the period portrays simplistic, stereotypical, and idealized female images, which do not come close to revealing women's practical life experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Yang and Yan demonstrate that previous studies understate the extent to which revolutionary dramas performance served as political propaganda in this period. Upon closer inspection, gender roles portrayed in revolutionary dramas can hardly be said to represent the actual oppressed status of women in China during the revolution (Yang & Yan, 2017).

Through all these studies, though, there is still little discussion about how females were oppressed during the Chinese sent-down youth movement. *Female Grassland* and *Celestial Bath* are the earlier works of Yan Geling and are very popular. Yan even reflected that *Female Grassland* is her best work, because she was young and passionate when she wrote that novel. *Celestial Bath*[2] was published in Chinese and won First Prize in the National Students and Scholars' Literary Contest (Taiwan). Later, this short story was translated into English and published in the collection *White Snake* 白蛇 *and Other Stories* by Aunt Lute Books (San Francisco) in 1999. Later, Yan wrote the script for a film adaptation titled *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl* along with Joan Chen, a famous actress and director. The film stars Li Xiaolu 李小璐 (born 1982), who acts as the heroine Wen Xiu 文秀. The novel and its adaptive film are mostly complementary in representing the plight of female sent-down youth.

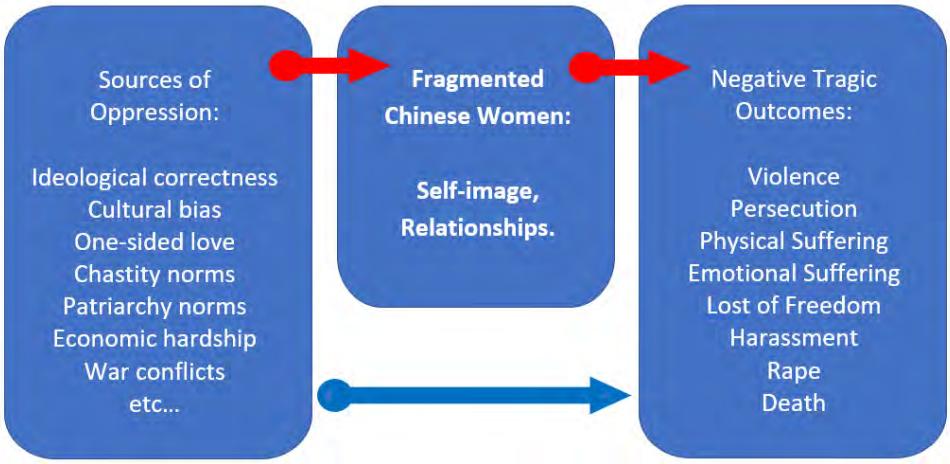
Yan Geling's early work *Female Grassland* 雌性的草地 describes how a group of female sent-down youth join in a local cow farm and form a women's wrangler group. They are determined to complete their assigned mission despite an extremely cold climate and a shortage of food. *Celestial Bath* is a short story about Wen Xiu, a tragic sent-down girl from Chengdu, who struggles to return to her hometown, but in the end dies in those grasslands, while many of female sent-down youths are finding their way back to the cities.

The author of the article hypothesizes that female fragmentation is caused by oppression and can lead to negative (even tragic) consequences (see Figure 1).

[1] There are two pivotal events concerning the Chinese youths during the Cultural Revolution: the Red Guard Movement and the Rustication Movement.

[2] Awards and nominations: Golden Horse Awards 1998 (Best Film awarded to Joan Chen), 48th Berlin International Film Festival 1998 (nominated for the Golden Bear).

Figure 1
Theory of Fragmentation



The term fragmentation has been used in this paper to highlight women's experiences, which entails the sense of being separated into strongly opposing parts that are severely disconnected. Many feminists think there should be solidarity between women, even unity and sisterhood, but this is far from the reality, both in China and the world generally; in this sense, the term fragmentation suggests that an outside force, such as patriarchy, might be dividing women or keeping them apart. This fragmentation also applies to the individual female consciousness and self-image, creating psychological conflict and split personalities (Kohut, 1977; Scott, 1999; and Tisssier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019).

This paper will discuss how the oppression of women was rampant within the sent-down youth movement, which resulted in severe physical, emotional, and psychological trauma on female sent-down youth and caused the fragmentation of female roles and images.

Gender Roles during the Sent-Down Youth Movement:The Oppression of Females

This section discusses a clearer distinction between officially sanctioned propaganda memoirs and "freer" accounts. Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 (1893–1976) statement is officially-sanctioned propaganda. Mao Zedong's said: "Young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed on you. The world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you." This call motivated millions of youths to energetically go to remote areas and to contribute to China and the world. Mao Zedong pointed out in his concluding speech to the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in June of 1945: "We must work persistently, work ceaselessly, and we too may be able to touch God's heart. This God is no other than the masses of the people throughout China" (我们一定要坚持下去，一定要不断地工作，我们也会感动上帝的。这个上帝不是别人，就是全中国的人民大众。) (Mao, 1965a, 1965b). This statement is nothing less than a call to sacrifice individuals' wants, needs, and desires, for the Party's higher truths. Women's public role as fighters and revolutionaries was glorified by the authorities, such as Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907), Xie Bingying 谢冰莹 (1906–2000) and Zhao Yiman 赵一曼 (1905–1936) and like Chinese female heroes (Brownell & Wasserstrom, 2002; Chen et al., 2001). In short, many writers attempt to portray sent-down girls as idealized female role models.

Thousands of sent-down youths share their eagerness to join the rustication. That is how the state tried to make them see themselves through intense propaganda. For example, Wang Anyi 王安忆 (born 1954), a female writer, insisted on going to the countryside during the sent-down youth movement, despite the dissuading of her mother (Leung, 2016). In Wang Anyi's *1969 Junior Middle School Students*, Wenwen 雯雯 is determined to join the rustication movement despite her parent's efforts to stop her (Wang, 2001). Deng Xian 邓贤 (born 1953), a well-known sent-down youth writer, notes that there has never been another community like the sent-down youth in Chinese history, who fanatically worshipped a holy goal and yearned to achieve spiritual transcendence through self-sacrifice (Deng, 1993).

The first Chinese soldier writer Xie Bingying 谢冰莹 (1906-2000) narrates her experiences as a female soldier fighting against the warlord Xia Douyin 夏斗寅 (1885-1951) in 1927 in her novel *War Diaries 从军日记* (Xie, 1933). She points out that the girls' team in the central military and political school are the real pioneers in China and beyond. She declares that "we have no home, and the Party is our home", and firmly becomes a party loyalist who ignores personal desires and ambitions in favor of the good of the whole. It demonstrates how an idealized sent-down youth image is.

Those heroic female figures are widely portrayed by Chinese writers. Liang Xiaosheng's 梁晓声 (born 1949) well-known novel *A Land of Wonder and Mystery (Zhe shi yipian shenqi de tudi* 这是一片神奇的土地*)* depicts three sent-down youths who died trying to open up the land beyond the Ghost Marsh (Liang, 2015). Liang portrays the trio as heroes instead of depicting them as victims of a terrible tragedy. The novel caused an immediate sensation after it was published in 1982. Liang Xiaosheng's *Snow Tonight 今夜有暴雪* depicts the protagonist Pei Xiaoyun 裴晓云 freezing to death in the snow while attempting to fulfil her duties (Liang, 2012). The authority sets forth a collective myth: "they should be selfless helpmates for the state's interest". Zhang Xinxin 张辛欣 (born 1953), a female Chinese writer, observes that hundreds and hundreds of sent-down youth went to rescue public lands, disregarding their safety during the rustication movement (Kinkley, 1990).

Gao Zongchi 高宗池 provides a literature review on the sent-down youth movement (Gao, 1995). His work shows that whether it is the early novels on sent-down youthwritten between 1977 and 1982 or the revival of sent-down youth novels after 1985, the focus has always been on the challenges of sent-down youth themselves. In the mature period of 1983 to 1984, these novels focus on the contributions made by sent-down youths to the rural society in their respective posts after returning to the city. In the typical portrayal of a sent-down girl, we find her struggling in during the initial turbulent years before finally mastering her rural life and receiving recognition. These writings depict the sent-down youth movement as a positive experience.

These idealized youths are widely considered heroic by the state during the Maoist era. This is how the state tried to make them see themselves through intense propaganda. People are not only inspired by a deep sense of purpose, but also burdened with self-imposed feelings of guilt and sin: a sent-down heroine must constantly employ "the weapon of self-criticism" to examine her own consciousness "for the presence of bad thoughts" and she must continually struggle against "shortcoming and mistakes". As Meisner Maurice (1931–2012) observes, the sin of selfishness and the virtue of self-denial, the ethical value of hard work, frugality, self-discipline,

diligence and honesty, are the moral maxims that are constantly imparted to the Chinese people, especially to Chinese youths (Meisner, 1968).

Officially sanctioned propaganda memoirs differ from "freer" accounts. Some people would view them as victims of a brainwashing campaign that leads to needless loss of life of wasteful vanity projects. This article is to contribute to filling in the gap of victimized women. Similar studies on Yan Geling's novel on *Flowers of War*, describing female youth's image during the Sino-Japan war, have been done by Li and Xu (Li & Xu, 2021). This paper is based Yan Geling's novel that's after the Sino-Japan war, and during the Cultural Revolution.

This understanding of marginalized female roles has been extensively explored in other countries and contexts. For example, Cheng explored the representation of prostitution and material desire (Cheng, 2018), and Ishida investigated female soldiers in naval cultures (Ishida, 2018). The women's roles from UK and Holland are westernized to meet their different desire, whereas Chinese women are widely expected to play a monotonous and heroic female role based on sanctioned propaganda. It shows that the political movement is decisive in affecting Chinese women's destinies and wellbeing. Those marginalized women in UK and Holland contrast to those in Chinese context.

The Compulsory Sent-Down Movement

Heroic propaganda became a significant reason for teenage youth to participate in the sent-down youth movement. Chinese youth were encouraged to participate in the sent-down movement as a matter of patriotic duty. The sent-down youth were inspired by a sincere and sacred mission to improve the backward conditions of rural areas and were filled with heroic patriotic fervor.

The teenage youths are easily induced to join the rustication. Some sent-down youth join the rustication out of sincerity, others join out of curiosity, as described in the words that "where there is a good horse riding, a good shot back, and a charming big wood, why not go?" (那里有骑马的好地方，有不错的打猎机会，还有迷人的大树林，为什么不去？). Yan's novel narrates Wen Xiu's ideas of teenage notions about how good the sent-down youth movement is, only to meet with life-threatening situations after arriving in the country. The novel describes that from the first day Wen Xiu arrived, she regretted her decision deeply and began to doubt whether she could meaningfully transform the countryside.

The authorities actively promote educated youth to develop "close relationships" with poor and lower-class peasants.[3] That is to say, the communist state requires that any choice of a spouse must take political and party considerations into account. This paper reveals the oppression of sent-down women resulting from this propaganda in the public sphere.

For sent-down youth students, there were usually three ways to return: first, being selected by a university to leave the countryside; second, being recruited by a public institution for work in the city; and third, as a last resort, returning to the city because of illness. Zhang Jie 张洁 (born 1937) expresses how frustrated youth became when they were able to go back to their cities. Without the expectation of returning home, some sent-down youth suffered breakdowns and fell into madness (Yan, 2008).

[3] *Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl* was directed by Joan Chen and starred Li Xiaolu and Lopsang Qunpei. The film was shown at the Berlinale in 1998.

Zhou and Hou indicate that all social groups were negatively impacted by sent-down policy, and that such policies had lasting effects throughout an individuals' life, reflected in the decline of personal income and the patterns of later life events (Zhou & You, 1999). Chen and Cheng describe their personal sent-down experience, reporting that life in the countryside represented a major challenge to the rusticated youth (Chen & Cheng, 1999). Their personal experience and research clearly show that the sent-down youth struggled with their experience in the countryside. Currently, several studies uncover the oppressive nature of the sent-down youth movement, including the negative impact the movement had on sent-down youth marriages. For example, Wang and Zhou conduct surveys with careful sample selection, and find that those who participated as sent-down youth had worse marriage outcomes, lower-quality social networks, and a lower level of happiness than those not involved in the program (Wang & Zhou, 2017). Compared to their non-sent-down counterparts, the sent-down generation were more likely to "marry down"; their spouses were less likely to communicate their troubles, and were also less likely to do housework. As indicated by Glaeser et al., sent-down experience tended to have severe negative impacts on sent-down youth's career and social network (Glaeser et al., 2002). As Michel Bonnin (born 1949) points out, the sent-down youth experience created all kinds of suffering in the countryside, ranging from the poverty-stricken conditions in which they lived and worked, to violent sexual and physical abuse, all while denying youth opportunities for education, and meaningful careers. Thus, they are aptly referred to as the "lost generation" (Bonnin, & Horko, 2013).

In sum, the rustication movement was, despite the illusion of freedom, politically compulsory; teenage youth were required to be re-educated by living in rural poverty, all to further the state's perceived but misguided interests. For example, Bonnin and Horko indicate that "the movement existed and lasted for a decade because Mao wanted it" (Bonnin & Horko, 2013, p. 443). He broadly links the movement to Mao's anti-intellectual populist attitude, which in turn can be traced back to Mao's adolescence.

Asceticism and Oppression

The Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) has been defined as a period of "gender erasure" (Yang, 1999, pp. 35–67). Chinese youths were encouraged to give up personal desire and sexual pleasure which were considered to be sins against the Communist political ethic and the goals of the utopian future. Social repression addresses the regulation of desire, particularly sexual desire. Meng Yue 孟悦, a critic of the re-education and rustication progress, argues that revolutionary discourse limited and repressed the private realm of desire, love, sexuality, emotion, and the inner self during the Mao years (Meisner, 1999).

The repression of sexual expression peaked during the Cultural Revolution, with sex differences eliminated in clothing, and romantic love despised as bourgeois sentimentalism. Premarital sex or cohabitation was regarded as degenerate, and homosexuality severely punished (Pan, 1994). During this period, ideology held that sex drive should be subjugated to the communist ideals. Repression of sexual desire transforms into extreme sexual persecution when it subjugates personal desire to universal political imperatives.

Yan Geling's work portrays how female sent-down youth attempt to celebrate their sexuality under the extreme control and domination of political discourse. In *Female Grassland,* Xiao Dian 小点, as a sexualized female character, does not repress her sexuality but rather celebrates her sensual passion. The novel narrates how she enjoys her sexuality with her uncle-in-law: "every time he held her in his arms, she pushed him away, at the same time, she does not let

him go and desperately wants him" (Yan, 1989). Likewise, in the 1990s, the novels about sent-down youth are closely connected with the female body and their sexual needs. For instance, in Wang Anyi's *The Century of The Hills*, the sent-down youth Li Xiaoqin 李小琴 enjoys sexual pleasure, although she trades her sexuality as a means to go back to the city (Wang, 2004).

Female Grassland also describes how Xiao Dian eventually pays a high price for her lascivious sins as set forth in the political ideal mandates of abstinence. When Xiao Dian falls in love with the battalion commander, she is conscious of her previous sensual passion, and how such actions were prohibited by party pronouncements. Seeing no way out, she commits suicide by burning herself in a fire. The battalion commander symbolizes the ascetic values of the communist party. Wen Xiu committed suicide due to the unbearable oppression that was rife within the political system of that era. The female sent-down youth subordinate all personal to random and artificial political imperatives. It shows how a forced woman to commit the propaganda poster.

Moreover, the novel *The Female Grassland* even describes how this political discourse applies to both animals and females, revealing the inhumanity of this type of sex-neutral political discourse:

To be a group of outstanding military horses, it has to get rid of its nature/instinct; to become a great dog it has to repress its nature; to be a loyal female soldier you have to get rid of her nature… She finally understands, the more honor she gets, the more she is not a person and woman (Yan, 1989, p. 5).

Stated differently, whether a horse, a dog or a female, all should get rid of their innate instinct on the altar of the "greater good". The inhumanity of this period arises in that the party believes that individual's pleasure and happiness are threats to socialist objectives (Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien, 1960, p. 2). *Female Grassland* describes Xiao Dian's strong sexuality to contrast with the ascetic values of the battalion commander. The novel portrays how women are violently forced to remove their sexuality. And the novel did not describe the similar language comparing males to animals, this metaphor of using animal to describe those females shows the disadvantage of women during the sent-down youth movement.

Patterns of Female Political Roles

The Recognition of the Female Fragmented Dual Roles and Self Image

Female sent-down youth. This section discusses the removal of femininity as a source of oppression and an obstacle to women's liberation. The sent-down youth movement was celebrated as "women's liberation", as large numbers of teenage girls are encouraged to go to the public arena to work. Under Mao's instructions, women were ordered to remove their femininity in order to better serve the public socialistic good. These mandates violated women's freedom of choice and are contrary to the physical and emotional natures of some women.

The gender norms governing women's involvement in social events were deliberately reshaped in Maoist China. Masculine female figures, such as Hua Mulan 花木兰, Mu Guiying 穆桂英 and Qin Liangyu 秦良玉 (1574–1648), are rare in traditional literature as women were always trained to be feminine. So masculine female figures are considered as positive in 20th century in China. However, Yan Geling's novel describes how female socialists were expected to

strictly transform themselves by adopting masculine traits and performing as men. In Maoist times, an increasing number of women warriors were produced.

However, masculine women became the ideal in the Maoist era. Under the banner of "men and women are the same", masculinity is greatly favored in name of advancing the country. Women were forcefully trained to act masculine throughout the Maoist reign. Women were asked to take upon themselves the new roles of soldiering, manufacturing, farming, and construction, all closely aligned with state interests.

The Oppressive Masculine Image and Qomen: *Female Grassland*

Chinese women in the 20th century attempted to achieve their equality during the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976). This period of history is marked by a governmental attempt in China to erase or cancel femininity and feminine traits. In the words of Mayfair Mei-hui Yang 楊美惠: "[t]here was a dearth of both public and private discussion of sex during the Cultural Revolution, particular to female sent-down youth" (Yang, 1999).

It must be noted that, in some respects, women did benefit from the communist movement. In traditional and historical China, women had no rights at all: they were the victims of a Confucian patriarchal family system in which the females were relegated to the status of inferior beings. This position did not change significantly until the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949. In the 1954 constitution, women were assured of "equal rights with men in all spheres-political, economic, cultural, social and domestic" (*Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, 1954, p. 96).

Women's masculinization under the leadership of Chairman Mao promoted "Chinese women in new China" and "women's liberation" that differentiated the feudal and socialist periods (Li, 2020). Mao's slogan, "Whatever male comrades can accomplish, female comrades can do too" (男同志能办的事情，女同志也能办到) was widely broadcast (Honig, 2000, pp. 97–110; Jin et al., 2006, pp. 613–634). This caused women to hide and suppress their true female identities, and in turn created fragmentation in their self-image. In the novel *Female Grassland*, a sent-down girl denies she is a woman and contends that, "for the sake of the revolution, I would rather be a man." Thus, women's public roles as fighters and revolutionaries were glorified by the revolutionary authority, resulting in the annihilation of their femininity (Yang & Yan, 2017).

Female Grassland narrates the tragic experiences of the humble but heroic Shen Hongxia. Shen Hongxia grows up in a military family where she cultivates virtues of heroism and obedience to the orders of superiors. She aims to fulfil the Maoist Utopian goals of an egalitarian society. As a female sent-down youth, Shen Hongxia has subordinated all personal pleasure to the duty of serving the Party and regards that as the only true source of joy and happiness. She does not even feel the pain of her traumatized body and continues to stay in the Northwest Steppe to look after the military horses for a decade after other girls and women have left the grasslands.

The idealized masculine woman Shen Hongxia represents the approved political expectation. However, the novel demonstrates that Shen Hongxia's efforts, ordered by the Communist Party, are a phony, ridiculous, and meaningless political construct. At the end of Yan Geling's *Female Grassland*, the conclusion reveals the uselessness of the sent-down movement to society. It demonstrates a great spot to work in an image of propaganda poster on this theme.

The novel narrates Shen Hongxia's failed destiny after the end of the sent-down movement. Everyone has left and she still works at the grassland. Her political mission and false beliefs

make Shen Hongxia ignore her bodily condition, ravaged by long years of hardship. However, her physical damage is soon forgotten by the authorities, thereby intensifying her tragedy. The tragedy of Shen Hongxia implicitly excoriates the sent-down movement. At the end of Yan Geling's *Female Grassland*, Shen Hongxia's heroism and idealism regarding the revolution comes down to this:

"I have remembered everything she [Shen Hongxia] gradually has dedicated: her leg is lost first, and then her throat and eyes are lost...I watched her pass away from me with a flock of horses, continuing on her long journey like a saint's expedition. Her thin and naked body contrasted by a dazzling red cotton bag that she wears, which makes the image even crueler" (Yang & Yan, 2017, p. 486).

Her traumatic labor effort does not result in any contribution to society. The sacrifices of youth are useless to the military. Yan Geling's *Female Grassland* is written to criticize sent-down youth heroism and idealism as naive, shallow, and illusory. The final insult is that the iron girls' wranglers are not even recognized by the authorities[4]:

"The local cadre said: where did those iron girls come from? We do not have that establishment…There is no existence of the iron girls' wrangler" (Yang & Yan, 2017, p. 475).

This novel directly criticizes the cruelty of the sent-down youth movement, which badly tortures Hongxia's body as a result of the conflicts between individual wellbeing and loyalty to an absurd and disorganized movement. The girls' wrangler project was not even officially registered publication. The novel examines the absurd and failure of the rustication movement, and it is deleterious effect on women's most basic human rights. Huang Guozhu notes that "*The Female Grassland* reveals a strong tendency towards political reflection and criticism. This is an absurd outcast legend of female sent-down youth in the grassland. It shows the distorted picture of human nature during turbulent times (Huang, p. 488). (《雌性的草地》十分明显的政治反思和批判倾向。这是一个关于流浪儿和女知青草原放牧生活的荒诞的传奇，这是遥远的文革年代过去之后悠长的回声，这是动乱时代中人心扭曲的变形的图画。)

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) discusses two factors that explain the change in women's condition: freedom from reproductive slavery and participation in production (Beauvoir, 2009, p. 139). Her articulate account of the oppressive effects of prevailing notions of femininity appeared in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*, 1949), which argues that women's biological factors lead to their disadvantage:

> Indeed, female adolescence is more vulnerable than before. Female organs are vulnerable and tender…It reveals the biological difference between genders in the physiological and the psychological reality of these adolescent girls (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 380).

Yan Geling's *Celestial Bath* portrays Wen Xiu's physical appearance at the meadow. Her "wasp-like body" (Yan, 2008, p. 66) is damaged by the cruelty of daily life on the steppes, where a tender teenage girl is exposed to the cruel natural environment and heavy labor. Even her new outfits quickly deteriorate to look like old outfits, with many tiny holes shot through them by sparks from the fire pit.

[4] A group of female sent-down youths and local cow women are assigned a mission of looking for horses.

Liu Zhonglu 刘中陆 details the experiences of 50 women's sent-down youth' stories in the novel *Youth Equation: Youth Equation: Self-reports of 50 Beijing female educated youths* 青春方程式: 五十个北京女知青的自述. She shows the hardship and severe environments encountered by these girls (Liu, 1995). The harsh environment causes many of the sent-down girls to be afflicted with gynecological diseases.

Although one of the aims of the sent-down movement was to eliminate old traditions, this paper shows that the inequality enshrined by centuries of traditions is still alive and well in China. The sent-down women were victims of far more severe oppression than their male counterparts because of discrimination inherent in the local customs of remote areas. For example, in the novel *Celestial Bath*, the heroine Wen Xiu suffers a series of sexual violence episodes, and finally is killed by Lao Jin. These events were the result of warped local customs and traditions that fragment Wen Xiu's self-image and relationships with others to the point she can no longer live.

Many sent-down youths were not permitted to go back to their cities, and they tried every means possible to gain permission to return. Michel Bonnin states that sent-down youth and their parents made a great effort to obtain the legal documents necessary to return to the city (p. 345) Less well-off young people tried other means: flattery, bribery, and providing all manner of service, including the sex trade (Bonnin & Horko, 2013, p. 346).

Lori Heise adopts an ecological framework to discuss the causes and the consequences of violence against women (Heise, 1998, pp. 262–290). Lori organizes the existing research into an integrated framework with results from international research across different cultural background, and promotes a theory-building method regarding gender violence. Peggy Reeves Sanday's book *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Sanday, 1981) also explores the origins of sexual inequality and answers basic questions regarding male and female power.

Wen Xiu in *Celestial Bath* finally realizes that her body is the only capital that she can rely upon, "for a girl with no money and no connections, isn't this her body the only asset she has got left?" (Yan, 2008, p. 78). The novel shows that Wen Xiu's quest to return home makes her a victim of sexual abuse.

This violence to teenage girls involves unknown men from the local Communist headquarters. However, during her plight, we see that the sex trade not only fails to help her to win a "way out" back to Chengdu, but also finally results in her needing an abortion. She falsely believed that "important people" will help her return, but in the end, she sees that they betray her. Wen Xiu feels abandoned and deceived as a result of her sexual encounter: at the beginning of winter, Wen Xiu lay in the infirmary having just received an abortion (Qiao & He, 2008, pp. 111–117). In addition to the cold weather and poor hygiene that resulted in her miscarriage, her body could not bear such frequent sexual violent acts.

In the infirmary, the public, especially the nurses openly referred to Wen Xiu as a "worn-out shoe" and "the wild nymphet". The nurses' taunts and sarcasm upheld and served the patriarchal hierarchy. As Kate Millett points out, women denigrate their own, thus the culture can be kept male, the patriarchy can be maintained and the power can always be obtained (Millet, 2016). It clearly reveals gender discrimination inherent in the rustication movement, which offers an opportunity to victimize teenaged girls.

The novels referred to above not only explore the sexual exploitation of women in the rustication movement, but also demonstrate the severe gender inequality and political marginalization of teenage girls who were victimized by the movement. The novel *Celestial Bath* describes Wen Xiu's lifestyle reflects her antagonism toward the Maoist ideology in vogue at that time. As Leung Laifong points out "this sense of betrayal by the revolution was intensified by the increasing bleak reality of poverty in rural China: the failure of the people's communes, the corruption of the local cadres, and above all, the futility of the many projects" (Leung, 1994).

This socially oppressive phenomenon is also set forth in Tiening's 铁凝 (1957-) novel *The Rose Door* 玫瑰门, where the female protagonist Si Qiwen 司猗纹 believes she can achieve liberty through participation in the sent-down movement. However, after participating in the program, she suffers a nervous breakdown with due to the fragmented self-image that results and becomes a psychopathic shell of a woman due to various persecutions (Tie, 1989, p. 26).

Within the rustication movement, Bonnin and Horko note that compared with class struggles, agricultural production, and political allegiance, gender equality was given a much lower priority for Chinese girls by local and national planners (Bonnin & Horko, 2013). As Gao Zongchi 高宗池 points out, "they [the girls] paid a heavy price including suffering and psychological trauma… much heavier than male sent-down youth" (Gao, 1995, pp. 18-23).

Yang and Yan (2017) argue that Mao's famous political slogan states: "The times have changed, men and women are the same" (时代不同了，男女都一样) conflated the concepts of equality and sameness (pp. 63-83). The slogan was utilized by the Chinese Communist Party to achieve its cultural and political aspirations. The phenomenon of "the body invisible" as a moral code oppressed the individual, especially women, making them the most oppressed group in the Maoist era.

To Kate Millett (1934-2019), women are sexually oppressed because of their powerlessness. These realities were brought to widespread attention with her publication *Sexual Politics.* The writing explores how power is misused by men to further their sexual privilege. Political corruption represents a barrier to women's access to key public services. This is particularly true regarding sent-down youth, the most vulnerable members of society (Swamy et al., 1999). The sent-down movement did not protect women in the public arena, but rather exposed them to sexual oppression.

Although Mao's political movement encouraged women to participate in the public arena, the movement did not foster gender equality. Even Mao Zedong admits that women had not yet attained full equality. In 1971, Mao explained this failing to Edgar Snow (1905-1972) in an interview that "it is not possible" to "achieve complete equality between men and women at present" (Snow, 1973, p. 171). The paper shows the patriarchal power of this era. It conveys the notion that although men and women are viewed as the same under the new sexless ideology, through it all is relentless patriarchal indoctrination. It kept women subjugated by permitting men to oppress women in the name of ignoring the difference between men and women.

Conclusion

Yan Geling beautifully captures these mixed and conflicted emotions of female sent-down youth. In particular, Yan Geling shows the tragedy of female sent-down youth during the rustication movement. It interprets the idealized sent-down youth and how they become 'loyal

soldiers' in the movement. This paper attempts to demonstrate the many ways this movement forcefully abrogated feminine characteristics and further reinforced gender discrimination, all in the name of equalizing and liberating women.

This paper explores the oppression of women through the sent-down political movement. It shows the physical, sexual, and psychological trauma to the girls of that movement that causes fragmentation of their self-image and relationships with others. Eli Zaretsky (1942-), a Marxist sociologist, theorizes that under communism, private ownerships would disappear in favor of public sharing, therefore resulting in gender equalities (Silvestri et al., 2013, pp. 61–73). However, in practice, Marxist feminism encountered obstacles: women did achieve equality in the public social arena, instead of experiencing inequality in these spaces (Huang, 2013). Yan Geling sheds light on the horrors of the Cultural Revolution in writing *Celestial Bath* (Zhuang, 2006). She also criticizes the exploitation of vulnerable girls during the rustication movement. She focuses special concern on women's human rights through the lens of girls swept up in the cruel and futile political movements.

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X-Raying the Million-Point Agenda of the Nigerian Government by Library and Information Professionals in the Country

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Abstract

This study investigated X-raying the million-point agenda of Nigerian government by library and information professionals in the country. Six objectives were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted using the online Google Form to collect data/responses from the library and information science (LIS) professionals in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised LIS professionals in all the states in Nigeria. The sampling technique used for the study was the total enumeration sampling technique (120) as the whole responses were used for the analysis using tables, frequencies percentages, mean and standard deviation for easy appreciation and comprehension. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was also deployed and it was found out that there appears to be some high level of corrupt practices in the country, Nigeria, insecurity as of today remains on the high side which is not only worrisome but disturbingly a threat to too many households. Respondents have rated the economy to be at its lowest ebb as the majority of the citizens now wallow in poverty and agony, education standard is quite low in the country, there are deliberate steps to take in order to save Nigerian country from war and disintegration. To this very end, the well-informed class including library and information professionals should deliberately rise up to their duty by not just studying the current situation but also proffer recommendations and solutions to disturbing problems; hence recommendations are all Nigerians, irrespective of position or social, status must resolve to live a corrupt-free life; Government and all security agencies must be on the alert and, if possible, request international assistance; economic policies must be reviewed as a matter of urgency in Nigeria; education must be made easily accessible and funds made adequately available for educational institutions at all levels as prescribed by UNESCO; library and information professionals should continue to put government officials on their toes by regularly exposing their inadequacies to the citizens amongst others.

Keywords: corrupt-free country, corruption in Nigeria, governance, librarians and government, LIS professionals, librarians' role, national development

The way authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development is referred to as good governance. It is a form of governance in which citizens' socio-economic conditions continue to improve. It is also a kind of government in which citizens' economic, political, educational, and social spheres continue to develop over time. It therefore, ensures that citizens' living standards are high, that creativity and intellectual development are encouraged, that human rights are maintained, that leaders are accountable and responsible, and that poverty and inequality are reduced greatly, and there is no longer any fear or oppression (Raffu and Sodiq, 2015). As a result, there is a growing recognition that sustainable development necessitates competent government.

As part of their broader goal to providing access to information, librarians and information professionals play a critical role in delivering this Good governance. Good governance creates an ideal atmosphere for information freedom to flourish. The government is obligated under freedom of information legislation to provide public information whenever it is requested. Zamir (2008) contends that individual freedom of information is not only a fundamental right, but also a means to power because once an individual gets the right information, he will be able to respond and make appropriately informed decisions about how he should be governed. Despite the fact that freedom of information is guaranteed by Kenya's Constitution, the government has yet to pass a Freedom of Information Act. Only Uganda, South Africa, Nigeria, and Ethiopia have passed such legislation in Africa. Citizens are unable to request information held by the government in the absence of legislation. According to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (2018), libraries and librarians can help improve policymaking, make it simpler for individuals to participate in government services and exercise their rights, and promote transparency and accountability. The Open Government Partnership is also mentioned by library and information professionals as an initiative that could allow libraries to better communicate their functions. There is no doubting the fact that libraries play a critical role in fostering bottom-up development (Idhalama, Igbinovia and Ezeabasili, 2021). They help citizens to gain access to information and develop the skills and confidence to use it to better their lives and the lives of their families. People can benefit much from information in terms of getting employed, staying healthy, boosting agricultural protection, and simply keeping in touch with family and friends. Individuals' awareness of their rights is also based on information. However, some issues must be addressed on a larger basis. Effective governments can accomplish what individuals cannot, such as keeping people safe and providing access to welfare, education, and social security. This includes building infrastructure, running health systems and schools, and encouraging residents to develop soft skills. Governments at all levels must be well-informed, capable of implementing policy goals, and accountable to the people in order to be effective. In terms of governments' own use of knowledge and citizens' ability to get the most out of eGovernment tools and hold those who rule them to account, information is critical.

Informing policymaking, promoting the use of eGovernment tools, and providing the public with access to information and the support they need are all areas where librarians and information workers may help. In a democracy like ours, librarians play a critical role in reawakening individuals' awareness so that they can analyze and scrutinize government activities. This is accomplished by library and information science (LIS) experts supplying appropriate information to all government entities. Another important function of libraries is to "promote and spread a political philosophy for national development and cohesion" (Anyika, 2005; p. 134). Effective citizen action, according to Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2014), is only achievable when citizens understand how to obtain all types of information and have the ability to become responsible and educated participants in democracies. This is particularly true as e-

government develops. Libraries provide both physical and virtual civic places where residents can freely express themselves, discuss common interests and concerns, and pursue what they believe is in the public interest. Finally, civil society is ensured by free speech among knowledgeable citizens, and civil society, in turn, provides the social capital required to realize common goals. "Perhaps no venue in any community is fully democratic as the town library," Lady Bird Johnson said, as recounted by Ogbonna (2013, p. 70). The only criterion for admission is that you are interested. Information, according to Wright (2001), fosters and empowers citizens' engagement in the democratic process; it upholds the rule of law and provides a viable avenue for the injection of public opinion, as quoted by Bhatti (2010). Information informs political leadership's policy-making process, all of which contributes to the establishment of long-term peace for the benefit of the state.

General Muhammadu Buhari is the man Nigerians demanded, wanted, and got; a man with an excellent record of service and experience in Africa. His personal life is already a model, and his public records will serve as a national curriculum for younger Nigerians to mimic and assimilate as the most important civic education they will ever receive. His selflessness and patriotism earned him the title of selfless and patriotic leader, and everyone must work hard to ensure his success. Buhari is without a doubt God's chosen, his political win is a form of remuneration, while it also serves as a summons to greater sacrifice (Muhammad, 2015). General Buhari restated his government's intention to battle corruption, insecurity, and unemployment in a TVC interview in April, according to Muhammed (2015). He outlined and emphasized these three points throughout his campaign. He neatly and wonderfully reduced all of the world's problems into these three fundamental issues. The economy would automatically stabilize, meet the demands of the citizens, and build the necessary resilience to endure international turbulence or pricing disorder if well-articulated and pursued. Designing his agenda in this manner is fulfilling his job, and using aggressive language to underline the magnitude and weight of the work before his government, as he was trained to fight for the country's unity and cohesiveness. President Muhammadu Buhari's three-point program, which included anti-corruption, restoring the economy, and securing the country, was so appealing since it encapsulated the country's current needs that Nigerians easily bought into it in 2015. Buhari's reputation as an "upright" and "no-nonsense" leader was the icing on the cake. Five years later, the economy appears to be the only source of hope, thanks in large part to the valiant efforts made by the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, under Godwin Emefiele, to lead the Federal Government's fiscal policy responses at every turn.

According to Thisday Newspaper (2020), President Muhammadu Buhari recently listed nine policy concerns that will occupy his attention for the duration of his term when welcoming some new ambassadors to Nigeria. The president stated that he will focus his efforts and resources on strengthening the economy, combating poverty, boosting access to excellent education, healthcare, and national security, as well as combating corruption. The unusual agenda has sparked a slew of concerns, as one might expect. What went wrong with the administration's three-pronged policy directions of safeguarding the country, reviving the economy, and combating corruption over the previous couple of years? What happened to the agenda that the president promised during his re-election campaign? Indeed, the main opposition, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), has slammed the president's new policy focus as an admission of failure, claiming that five years into his presidency, he is still campaigning and "reeling out hollow promises." In response, the presidency stated that the primary topics of an election campaign are not the same as the objectives that have been established, nor the policies that must be developed and implemented. As "no administration elected for two terms could ever justify continuing merely to deliver the agenda it set in the

first election campaign," it claims that governance is dynamic, just like society. As the situation of Nigeria is compared to sister countries, there are allegations and counter-accusations among political parties and individuals.

Some people believe that the current leadership has failed Nigerians miserably, while others disagree. LIS professionals are major stakeholders in the country due to the major role they play in dispensing information to the government and the governed. In this direction, the paper is focused on X-raying the million-point agenda of the Nigerian government by library and information professionals in the country.

Statement of Problem

It is very clear today that around the globe, there is a plethora of challenges that world leaders face which are not limited to economic downturn, corruption, terrorism, health issues just like the outbreak of the corona virus, the HIV, and Ebola diseases. What is central in times like this is the ability of various governments to take adequate and commendable steps in order to tackle the problems facing the countries. No doubt, there are developed, developing, and underdeveloped nations, but the zeal and zest to find solutions to a country's challenges are very paramount. Some world leaders appear to be proactive while others seem to be "preactive". In the case of the latter, citizens will not only be dissatisfied but feel neglected by their governments thereby leading to civil disobedience and frequent protests. If this is not properly checked, it could lead to the dethronement of constituted authorities and secession. African countries, especially Nigeria has its own fair share of the global challenges (Idhalama, 2020) which some opined are insecurity, economic meltdown, corruption, poor standard of education, and others. But this is not an outright opinion as other citizens are of the opinion that the current Nigerian government should be commended for rescuing the country from total collapse. This is therefore not too surprising as Nigeria runs a multi-party system where opposition parties may want to indulge in constructive criticism while the party in power tries to justify actions taken in repositioning the country. The Nigerian state is said to be made up of thirty six (36) states (and Federal Capital Territory), six geopolitical zones, and a population of over 200 million people. To this end therefore, one may not be taken aback if there are different perceptions about the government. The various recent agitations from different regions in Nigeria; demanding government to be more responsive have therefore prompted the researchers to embark on this study. The library and information professionals were deliberately selected as respondents based on the premise that they have more access to information of all kinds. This information may also relate to the activities of government and how satisfied are the people.

Objectives of the Study

The sole objective of this study is X-raying the million-point agenda of Nigerian government by library and information professionals in the country. The "million-point agenda" is just a concept developed by the researchers which is used to draw the attention of readers to too many agenda of government that are being introduced and a reasonable number of them not being prosecuted. The points of agenda listed in the objective of this study are just a few selected ones by the researchers compared to what is in the public domain. To this end, the article will specifically analyze the following points of agenda as observed by library and information professionals:

1. To determine the state of corruption in the country as observed by LIS professionals in Nigeria.
2. To evaluate the level of insecurity as assessed by LIS professionals in Nigeria.
3. To assess the present situation of the Nigerian economy from the standpoint of LIS professionals.
4. To find out the current standard of education in Nigeria as seen by LIS professionals.
5. To determine how rule of law is being handled in the country as perceived by LIS professionals.
6. To proffer tangible solutions in saving the Nigerian country from disintegration.
7.

State of Corruption in Nigeria Today

Corruption is without doubt one of the agenda items promised by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. As a result, library and information professionals, organizations, and other persons have differing perspectives on Mr. President's anti-corruption campaign. Pervasive corruption, according to Tade (2021), was a crucial straw that shattered the People's Democratic Party's 16-year hegemony in Nigeria. Nigerians expressed their dissatisfaction by voting for Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), in the 2015 general elections. Buhari campaigned on a platform of fighting corruption, defeating terrorism, and repairing the economy. Corruption remained unabated six years into Buhari's two-term presidency. Buhari's anti-corruption campaign is built on three pillars: the Treasury Single Account, the Biometric Verification Number (BVN), and the policy of "Whistle Blowing." These have been praised, as they are seen as instrumental for higher savings. However, factors like "politicization of the anti-corruption struggle" and the refusal to examine allegations have tainted the fight. Some examples include the suspension of Ibrahim Magu, the acting head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, on corruption accusations, and the alleged double standards in Buhari's treatment of his supporters. When anything goes wrong in a country, the elite are supposed to show concern and, if possible, propose a solution. This is a task that the Nigerian library profession has taken on, and it is hoped that it will bear fruits. Corruption has been acknowledged as a big concern worldwide, according to Adeleke, Alabede, Osayomi, and Iyanda (2021). Despite the fact that corruption is pervasive, its extent, kinds, and repercussions vary. Corruption is rampant in Nigeria, and it is to be blamed for the country's numerous socio-economic issues.

Level of Insecurity in Nigeria

Many Nigerians, particularly library and information science specialists, now fear that the country is sitting on a keg of gun powder. Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari is in the middle of the storm, according to Africanews (2021), as criticism grows around him over the level of insecurity under his watch as the country's leader. Multiple conflicts afflict Africa's most populous country, ranging from a jihadist insurgency in the northeast to attacks by criminal gangs carrying out large kidnappings in the Northwest to separatists attacking security forces in the Southeast. There hasn't been a day, or even an hour, that the press hasn't reported a murderous attack or a kidnapping. Buhari has been chastised from all sides for failing to address insecurity. On April 26 of 2021, the violence reached a peak, with numerous deaths. Some Nigerian internet users suggested renaming the day "Black Monday" on social media, while others countered, "In Nigeria, there is no longer a day that isn't a black day." As a result, the parliament requested that the president proclaim a state of emergency. At the same time, a flurry of declarations from members of Parliament, local governors, and even Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka urged President Buhari to keep the violence under control. "Our country is at

war. Those who have demonstrated their weakness and incapacity must learn to swallow their pride and seek assistance", Soyinka pleaded. Obi, on his part (2015), noted that insecurity and terrorism have been a significant challenge to the Nigerian government in recent years.

The operations of the Islamic sect Boko Haram have resulted in the loss of lives and property across Nigeria, particularly in the North. Bombings, suicide bomb attacks, random shootings of unarmed and innocent residents, burning of police stations and churches, kidnapping of schoolgirls and women, and other actions are among them. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, political crises, murder, and the damage of oil installations by Niger Delta militants, as well as attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on specific towns in the North and South, have all contributed to the country's instability and insecurity. Nigeria has been designated as one of the world's most dangerous countries. In contrast to the aforementioned viewpoints, Nigerian Defense Minister, Magashi (2020) stated emphatically that the security of lives and property has greatly improved in recent years. This is what he said on Channels TV, Nigeria's most popular national television station.

How the Rule of Law is Being Handled in The Country

The subject of taming the overwhelming impulses of rulers or powerful members of society has troubled legal philosophers and political theoreticians for decades, dating back to the dawn of human society. Rule of law has been directed on ensuring that the rulers and powerful members of society operate in a manner that is not only rational but also humane. This is to ensure that power is not wielded at the expense of society's weakest members. The rule of law, according to the United Nations (UN) system, is a principle of governance in which all public and private persons, institutions, and entities, including the state itself, are held accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It necessitates measures to ensure that the supremacy of the law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency are all adhered to. According to Kolawole (2019), Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has demonstrated a startling disrespect for the rule of law and human rights since taking office on May 29, 2015, disobeying judges on at least 40 instances. His rhetoric has emphasized the fight against corruption, but his repeated disobedience of court decisions, contempt for courts, and egregious breaches of human rights while in office call into question his dedication to eliminate fraud. It is difficult to stress the importance of this disrespect for court rulings, not just for the rule of law, but also for effective respect for constitutional and international human rights including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and information access. Abubakar Malami, Buhari's attorney general, once claimed that the rule of law is defined by the authorities. But contrary to that standpoint, only an independent and impartial body, not the attorney general, has the authority to address any alleged legal errors in subordinate courts. Human rights lawyer Femi Falana obtained court decisions that have yet to be implemented, including a verdict by Nigerian courts demanding the release of Islamic Movement of Nigeria leader Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and his wife, Zeenah, from wrongful confinement (Kolawole, 2019). According to Akhabue (2013), one of the major problems in the Nigerian polity is the "holy cows" attitude. Those who believe they are a member of the "holy cows" believe they are above the law, or, to put it another way, they believe they are not subject to the law. On this score, the majority of Nigeria's powerful people can do whatever they want and get away with it. These high-ranking officials cut across the political spectrum. They could be involved in politics or the business world. The aforementioned is known as the culture of

impunity. The government is the primary perpetrator of this culture of impunity. Since the inception of the current democratic dispensation, which was initiated by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, there has been a complete disdain for the concepts of separation of powers and the rule of law. The recent events in Nigeria represent an internally driven massive assault on the constitution, a deflation of the rule of law, and the entrenchment of impunity.

Saving Nigeria from Disintegration

The problem of underdevelopment, high poverty, inequality in resource distribution and wealth control, as well as the socio-political composition of the Nigerian state, creates tension, instability, and insecurity, as well as countless agitations for restructuring, fairness, justice, and equity, including the Biafra agitation. According to Adibe (2017), agitations surrounding Biafra have drowned out other separatist agitations, producing the false impression that Biafra is the country's lone separatist threat. The truth is that separatist movement can be found in almost every part of the country, indicating that Nigeria's nationhood is still on precarious ground. Separatism is heard among the Yoruba in several forms, from a direct call for the Oduduwa Republic to those advocating for a Sovereign National Conference to determine whether the country's federating units still wish to remain together and, if so, under what conditions. There are occasional aspirations for Arewa Republic in the north, and some refer to the "north" as if it were "a country within a country." Apart from the call for the Niger Delta Republic, regional activists' demands for "resource control" have shades of separatism ingrained in them. In essence, there is a widespread sense of alienation and dissatisfaction among the Nigerian federation's many parts, a scenario that has exacerbated mistrust and fueled separatist activity. However, because no referendum has ever been held in any of the districts advocating for independence, it is difficult to tell whether the leaders of the various separatist parties truly represent the interests of the people in those areas or if the agitations are just a front to pursue other agendas. Many Nigerians, especially librarians and information professionals, are concerned about the country's future, which is why many stakeholders have spoken out about the country's fragmentation. Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba socio-political party, has urged President Muhammadu Buhari to save the country from disintegration by heeding calls for restructuring, according to Adebanjo (2021). According to the group, this is the only way to prevent the country from disintegrating further. Ayo Adebanjo, the group's acting National Leader, made the announcement following a meeting at his country residence in Ogbo Ijebu, Odogbolu Local Government Area, Ogun State. He also recommended President Buhari to put the idea of general elections in 2023 to rest unless the country is restructured to a federalist course. Good administration, the provision of basic facilities, and national debate, according to certain librarians in the country, are the only things that can keep the country from seceding… So many people in the country today, are concerned about disproportionate federal government selections, as well as the country's ongoing security issues. Economic hardship has been a major source of concern too for many residents since it has become difficult to meet basic demands.

Methodology

The research was conducted using a descriptive survey research approach. This approach was chosen for the study because it used data to define library and information professionals in the context of assessing the Nigerian government's million-point plan. The study's participants were librarians and information specialists who were members of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) Google group (official online platform for librarians in Nigeria). The presence of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection influenced the choice of this population group, which imposed social separation and made it impossible to physically gather

data from the study's respondents. The strength of this population group is that it is made up of library and information professionals from all walks of life, regardless of demographics, geographic distribution, library affiliation, or career level. The structured questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool. There were seven sections to the questionnaire. The first section dealt with the respondents' demographic data, such as their gender, age range, institutional affiliation, and highest educational qualification.

Sections two through seven elicited information from respondents in accordance with the study's objectives. Items for each section were created based on a review of the literature and the researchers' prior knowledge of the situation of Nigeria. The replies were based on a four-point Likert scale with scoring points ranging from four to one for each concept. This means that for each concept, the criterion mean was 2.5. Using Google Forms, the instrument was transformed into an online survey. The survey's initial section includes a letter to respondents that satisfies the ethical requirement of telling respondents that participation in the study is voluntary and assuring them that the results would be used solely for research purposes. The web link was put on the NLA platform, and members of the platform were asked to respond. To ensure optimum participation, a reminder message was issued after three weeks. The online poll was closed to new responses after the four weeks allotted for data collecting were up. The study drew 120 library and information professionals, according to the survey response summary. Table, frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation descriptive statistics were used to retrieve and analyze the data (SPSS version 23). The researchers calculated the mean by adding the sum of each item's scores and dividing by the sample size (n). The standard deviation, on the other hand, is a measurement of the spread of scores over a collection of data.

Analysis of Data

Table 1
Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	43.4
Female	68	56.7

Table 1 above shows that 43.4 percent of the respondents are male while 56.7 percent are females. This indicates that the female respondents are more than their male counterparts. This may be due to the fact that in Nigeria for instance, more ladies are into librarianship than men.

Table 2
What is the State of Corruption in Nigeria?

S/N	Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Nigerian government is free from corruption.	2	1.7%	1	0.8%	64	53.3%	53	44.2%	1.6	0.59
2.	Government is highly corrupt.	82	68.3%	25	20.8%	9	7.5%	4	3.3%	3.54	0.77
3.	Anti-corruption officials are also corrupt.	71	59.2%	36	30%	9	7.5%	4	3.3%	3.45	0.77
4.	There is corruption in every sector, including my office.	56	46.7%	42	35%	18	15%	4	3.3%	3.25	0.83
5.	Fight against corruption in the country is genuine.	9	7.5%	15	12.5%	66	55%	30	25%	2.03	0.82
	Grand Mean	2.77									

Source: Online Survey (2021)

Table 2 looks at the state of corruption in Nigeria as a country. Topping the table, 53.3% and 42.2% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that Nigeria is free from corruption. Furthermore, 68.3 percent affirmed that the Nigerian government is highly corrupt and 59.2 percent of the responses are of the view that even anti-corruption officials are also corrupt. 46.7 percent believe that there is corruption in every sector, including their individual offices and finally, 55 percent of respondents disagreed that the fight against corruption in Nigeria is genuine. This simply indicates that there is massive corruption in Nigeria currently.

Table 3:
What is the Level of Insecurity in the Country?

S/N	Question	Insecurity in Nigeria is currently very high.		Insecurity in Nigeria is high.		Insecurity in Nigeria is low.		Insecurity in Nigeria is very low.		Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	What is the level of insecurity in the country today?	106	88.3%	9	7.5%	1	0.8%	4	3.3%	3.81	0.61

Source: Online Survey (2021)

Table 3 has shown us that the level of insecurity in Nigeria today is painfully on the high side and this is indicated by the 88.3 percent of the respondents who noted with concern that the insecurity in Nigeria today is very high.

Table 4
What is the State of the Economy?

S/N	Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	It is difficult for me to meet up with family needs.	59	49.2%	51	42.5%	8	6.7%	2	1.7%	3.39	0.67
2.	I no longer have savings.	53	44.2%	47	39.2%	18	15%	2	1.7%	3.26	0.77
3.	The Nigerian GDP is now high.	25	20.8%	26	21.7%	53	44.2%	16	13.3%	2.5	0.97
4.	There is good standard of living in Nigeria.	7	5.8%	3	2.5%	74	61.7%	36	30%	1.84	0.73
5.	There are good economic policies by government.	7	5.8%	22	18.3%	57	47.5%	34	28.3%	2.03	0.83
	Grand Mean	2.60									

Source: Online Survey (2021)

Table 4 studies the current state of the economy in Nigeria and the finding was that 49.2 percent of the respondents noted that they can no longer find it easy to meet up with their family responsibilities. Also, 44.2 percent affirmed that they no longer have savings of their own and 44.2 percent disagreed that the Nigerian GDP is now high. Meanwhile, 61.7 percent of people disagreed that there is a good standard of living in Nigeria and finally, 47.5 percent disagreed that there are good economic policies enacted by the government. In the final analysis, it is clear that Nigerian country lacks good economic policies.

Table 5
How is the Standard of Education in Nigeria?

S/N	Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Nigerian educational standard is higher than sister African countries.	4	3.3%	16	13.3	74	61.7%	26	21.7%	1.98	0.69
	Education is being deliberately neglected by government.	65	54.2%	34	28.3%	15	12.5%	6	5%	3.32	0.88
	Teachers at all levels are being motivated in Nigeria.	3	2.5%	6	5%	74	61.7%	37	30.8%	1.79	0.64
	Budgetary allocation for education is above average.	5	4.2%	7	5.8%	75	62.5%	33	27.5%	1.87	0.69
	Researchers in Nigeria are encouraged by government.	5	4.2%	18	15%	65	54.2%	32	26.7%	1.97	0.76
	Grand Mean	2.19									

Source: Online Survey (2021)

Table 5 which is on the standard of education in Nigeria showed that 61.7 percent disagreed that Nigerian educational standard is higher than that of sister African countries. 54.2 percent agreed that education is deliberately being neglected by the government and 61.7 percent disagreed that teachers at all levels are being motivated in Nigeria. Again, 62.5 percent disagreed that budgetary allocation for education is above average and finally, 54.2 percent disagreed that researchers in Nigeria are being encouraged by their government. This has gone to show that the standard of education in Nigeria is sadly appalling. This is highly corresponded with the grand mean of 2.19 which is not up to 2.5.

Table 6
How effective is the practice of the rule of law?

S/N	Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Deviation
	There is fairness in the application of law in the country.	2	1.7%	9	7.5%	75	62.5%	34	28.3%	1.83	0.63
	Separation of power is adhered to.	4	3.3%	15	12.5%	74	61.7%	27	22.5%	1.97	0.69
	Governmen t officials are thoroughly punished when they break the law.	1	0.8%	4	3.3%	71	59.2%	44	36.7%	1.68	0.58
	Court orders are obeyed by government .	3	2.5%	9	7.5%	72	60%	36	30%	1.83	0.67
	Human rights are being violated by people in authority.	68	56.7%	23	19.2%	18	15%	11	9.2%	3.23	1.01
	Grand Mean	2.11									

Source: Online Survey (2021)

From table 6, it is quite obvious that there is no practice of rule of law in Nigeria today. This was substantiated by 62.5 percent of the respondents who disagreed that there is fairness in the application of the rule of law. This was also followed by 61.7 percent of the respondents who disagreed that there is separation of powers among organs of government. 59. 2 percent of the responses disagreed that government officials are thoroughly punished when they break the laws of the land. In all, it is obvious that the practice of rule of law which is an important feature of any democratic nation has been relegated to the dustbin.

Table 7
How can Nigeria be saved from Disintegration?

S/N	Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Respect for rule of law.	89	74.2%	27	22.5%	4	3.3%	-	-	3.71	0.52
	Equality of all states and individuals.	81	67.5%	35	29.2%	3	2.5%	1	0.8%	3.63	0.58
	Poverty reduction.	89	74.2%	27	22.5%	3	2.5%	1	0.8%	3.7	0.56
	Fairness in political appointments.	89	74.2%	28	23.3%	2	1.7%	1	0.8%	3.81	0.54
	Massive infrastructural development.	95	79.2%	22	18.3%	2	1.7%	1	0.8%	3.76	0.52
	Call for a national dialogue/conference.	75	62.5%	34	28.3%	6	5%	5	4.2%	3.49	0.77
	Adoption of former President, Goodluck Jonathan's national conference.	51	42.5%	48	40%	14	11.7%	7	5.8%	3.19	0.89
	Grand Mean	3.61									

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 7 is on recommendations for saving Nigeria from disintegrating and some of the recommendations outlined are: respect for rule of law, equality of all states and individuals, poverty reduction, fairness in political appointments, massive infrastructural development and adoption of former President, and Goodluck Jonathan's national conference report with 74.2, 67.5, 74.2, 74.2, 79.2, 62.5 and 42.5 respective percentage responses.

Discussion of Findings

Objective one is on the state of corruption in the most populous country in Africa which is Nigeria. Findings to objective one therefore showed that there appears to be some high level of corrupt practices in the country, Nigeria. In line with the findings of this study, Adeleke et al (2021) noted thus: In the world today, corruption is being identified as a terrible problem. Despite the fact that corruption is known to be widespread, it therefore varies in magnitude, also in types and consequences. Today in Nigeria, corruption is highly endemic, and it is said to be responsible for so many socio-economic problems in the Nigerian state. For objective two which is on the level of insecurity in Nigeria, it was found that insecurity as at today remains on the high side which is not only worrisome but disturbingly a threat to too many households. This is in sync with the position of Africanews (2021) when it was opined that Nigeria's President who is Muhammadu Buhari is currently in the eye of the storm as criticism and counter-criticism swells around his administration over the state of insecurity and terrorism under his watch as Nigeria's foremost leader. Africa's most populous country is now plagued by multiple conflicts, from a jihadist insurgency in the northeast to operations by criminal

elements carrying out massive kidnappings in the northwest of the country and separatists targeting security agents in the southeast.

Objective three's findings highlight the state of the Nigerian economy which is rated to be at its lowest ebb as the majority of the citizens now suffer poverty. This outcome corresponds with Imhonopi (2007) when he noted that Nigeria's economic story and history has been terribly characterized by frequent degradation and inconsistency, laced with increasing unemployment, inadequate social facilities, poverty, inadequate health care facilities, to mention just a few. This ugly state has, for the past many years, engaged the focus and attention of scholars who in turn, have shared their opinions on these unhealthy and negative trends which prove too complicated for a successful holistic study.

The fourth objective is on the current standard of education in Nigeria which indicated that education standard is quite low in the country. This, Ekundayo (2019) noted that Nigeria's system of education is in assorted mess of infrastructural decay, waste of resources, neglect and sordid conditions of service. The African country has above 10 million out-of-the-school children. That's known to be the highest in the world. Another 27 million of children in school are said to be performing poorly. Millions of the Nigerian citizens are half-educated, also, over 60 million – or 30% – are said to be illiterate.

The fifth objective is on how effective is the practice of rule of law. It was discovered that the concept of the rule of law is being undermined. This aligns with the opinion of Kolawole (2019) when he revealed that since assuming power on May 29, 2015, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has shown a stunning neglect for the rule of law and rights of citizens, ignoring judges on at least 40 occasions. The fight against graft has been an important facet of his rhetoric but his persistent violation of court orders, disdain for judges and flagrant disregard of human rights under his watch now puts into question his true commitment to ending fraud in Nigeria.

The last objective looks at how the Nigerian government can take requisite and deliberate steps in saving Nigeria from war and disintegration. Some of the issues noted by respondents are: problems of respect for the rule of law, equality of all states and individuals, poverty reduction, fairness in political appointments, massive infrastructural development, and the adoption of former President, Goodluck Jonathan's national conference report.

Conclusion

In rounding off this research, effective government and governance are said to be a very important aspects of man's life without which life could be meaningless or end up in fiasco. When governance and politics are not well managed, the citizens including library and information professionals will no doubt, be at the receiving end. To this very end, the well-informed elite should deliberately rise up to their duty by not just studying the current situation but also proffer recommendations and solutions to disturbing problems. The librarians and other information professionals belong to this learned class and as a matter of responsibility; they should be ready to provide answers to unanswered national questions. This they could do by constructive criticisms, lobbying and publishing research findings for those in government to be abreast of the lapses that are needed to be bridged. The outcome of this particular research could help in stabilizing the governance of developing countries especially Nigeria if keenly reviewed and adopted by various governments. It is therefore the expectation of the researchers that these findings will not end up in the government archives as has been commonly seen in

many African countries. For the avoidance of doubt, some of the findings are: there appears to be some high level of corrupt practices in the country, Nigeria, insecurity as of today remains on the high side which is not only worrisome but disturbingly a threat to too many households, respondents have rated the economy to be at its lowest ebb as the majority of the citizens now wallow in poverty and agony, education standard is quite low in the country, the concept of rule of law is being undermined and finally, there are obviously deliberate steps to take in order to save Nigeria country from war and disintegration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the study based on the findings:

1. All Nigerians, irrespective of position or social status must resolve to live a corrupt-free life.
2. Government and all security agencies must be on the alert and if possible, request international assistance.
3. Economic policies must be reviewed as a matter of urgency in Nigeria.
4. Education must be made easily accessible and funds made adequately available for educational institutions at all levels as prescribed by UNESCO.
5. Government must retrace its steps in order to respect rule of law and ensure that no citizen is above the law.
6. Library and information professionals should continue to keep government officials on their toes by regularly exposing their inadequacies to the citizens.

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Cebuano Poetics: Deciphering the Advice of Maria Kabigon's Column in *Bisaya*

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Abstract

Maria Alcordo Kabigon's column "Ang Panid ni Manding Karya" in *Bisaya* from the late 1940s to the 1950s is considered as one of the momentous contributions of the Philippines' oldest Cebuano language magazine. Kabigon used the pen name Manding Karya to advise letter senders, and the letter and advice were published after the war in *Bisaya*. On average, she received 20 letters per day for her column, with most letter senders being men. This article aims to expand the scope of Kabigon's creative abilities by demonstrating her metaphorical language in her advice column, providing a variety of approaches to experience her poetic genius, and allowing her to connect more with her readers, particularly those from Visayas and Mindanao. By examining Kabigon's writing style, it can answer how she epitomizes the popularity of her column as she is recognized as a professional adviser as well as a writer in Cebuano literature. The article investigates Kabigon's *pasumbingay* or Cebuano poetics. Also, the advice of Kabigon was examined to convey its integration into Edith Tiempo's restoration context: preserving the individual's integrity, confirming ultimate values, defining significant purpose, and developing a reasonable worldview. This article used a qualitative research method that included descriptive research that conveyed a content analysis. The main source of the study, Kabigon's "Panid ni Manding Karya," can be found at the University of San Carlos, specifically at the Cebuano Studies Center. Kabigon makes use of nature to improve the poetic quality of her advice. When responding to a letter, she employs metaphors and symbolism to provide a brief but profound response. However, due to the limited space in her advice column, her responses are short. Despite the magazine's limited space, her use of figurative language and symbolism suggests her solution to continue providing effective advice. As a result, her writing style promotes critical thinking as well as imagination.

Keywords: Cebuano literature, Maria Alcordo Kabigon, *Ang Panid ni Manding Karya*, Edith Tiempo

Numerous authors in the Philippines have used the Cebuano language in their literary works to portray Filipino culture and identity. In 1988, the Cebuano-based National Artist for Literature, Resil Mojares explained the origin of *balak* or poetry in the Cebuano language in his essay entitled "Cebuano Poetry Until 1940: An Introduction," the literary text serves also as a preface of the first volume of *Cebuano Poetry, Sugboanong Balak*. Mojares introduces Cebuano poetry:

> *Balak* is the term that has survived to this day to refer to poetry in general although it is often reserved for the more elevated creations, with *garay* used for more informal, less accomplished 'versifying'…Cebuano poetic forms include gnomic verses, like proverbs (*sanglitanan*, and perhaps the earlier *guyo*) and riddles (*tigmo*), expressed in a single metaphor or couplet; religious chants and invocations (like the *harito*); songs of various types (*awit*); and the popular forms of colloquy of wit (*duplo*) which may involve two persons (as in the *balitaw* or *oyayi*) or many (as in the *kulilisi*) and social rituals (p. 3).

The forging of the Cebuano verses, crucial to the everyday discourse and the imaginative language, takes on a variety of literary forms. In practice, traditional poetry served different functions depending on its intended audience. Also, some poems were performed not only by one person but by a group of people. The nature of the oral Cebuano literature implies the strength of poetry in the formation of a community, particularly during an important occasion.

As time progressed, more Cebuano writers emerged. On the other hand, works by women were slowly making an impact. Erlinda Alburo (2015), the former director of the Cebuano Studies Center and a pioneering member of Women in Literary Arts, Inc. (WILA), admits that in her study of Cebuano literature written by women, she "discovered that within 26 years duration of the most popular prewar Cebuano periodical *Bag-ong Kusog* from 1915-1941, only 41 out of 461 short stories were written by women (that 8.8%), and only 106 out of 2,081 poems (that's .05%)" (p. 117). It took time for women writers to express their voices, especially in poetry. In the first volume of *Cebuano Poetry, Sugbuanong Balak,* which was published in 1988, there is just one female poet among thirty-two male poets (p. 208). Gardeopatra Quijano's "Kon" represents women writing in Cebuano until 1940. The place of poetry for women before was almost non-existent in an abode of men writers. In the continuous years of silence, slowly the voices of women were recognized. In the preface written by Erma Cuizon (2014) for the anthology *Femi.Nest: History and Poems of the Women in Literary Arts*, she states the transformation of Cebuano women writers in the current time through Maria Kabigon: "It wasn't usual that a woman wrote the way Cebuano *Bisaya* advice columnist Maria Kabigon did in the early 1900s, having been also a journalist. She wrote literary pieces, including plays. In sum, her life was so different from the woman's life in her era" (p. 1).

On the other hand, regional literature provides a huge impact on building Filipino identity. The Cebuano-Visayan language is widely spoken and used in Visayas and Mindanao. Moreover, *Bisaya* magazine continues to publish writers from these regions. In "Song and Substance: Women Writing Poetry in Cebuano," Majorie Evasco (2002) articulates that, "the nation itself is still caught up in the process of formation, then its kinds of literature are part of these processes. What would matter then is that the regional members of the nation-state assert the place of imaginative writing from the region" (p. 60). Moreover, Mojares (2009) mentions the significance of art criticism and local writing in the foreword of *Pasumbingay: Antolohiya sa Sugbuanong Balak (Anthology of Cebuano Poetry)*:

> The future of Cebuano poetry lies with its poets. The imperative is for Cebuano poetry to make itself heard, first in the community that speaks the language and then the other communities into which it enters by force of reputation or virtue of translation. What this requires is not easy. Conditions of production, publishing, and promotion need to be improved. A culture of criticism must be encouraged (p. ix).

Writing using regional languages is linked with the culture of the rural areas and their traditional practices. These writings revolve around the authenticity of Filipino identity, providing the closest examples of folk wisdom, stories on nature, and even the emergence of women writers. This study explores to analyze the poetic language in the selected advice of Maria Alcordo Kabigon's "Ang Panid ni Manding Karya" in *Bisaya* magazine.

Consequently, Cebuano literature is historically associated with its pastoral writing. The human-nature relationship implies the need to reconnect with the environment as one of the ways to maintain the moral sensitivity of people towards the other creations of God. Moreover, Greg Gerrard (2004) believes that "classical pastoral was disposed of, then, to distort or mystify social and environmental history, whilst at the same time providing a locus, legitimated by tradition, for the feeling of loss and alienation from nature to be produced by the Industrial Revolution" (p. 39). Kabigon's advice is closely related to using metaphors from nature, particularly describing or using concepts from the local areas, her strategy is to allow its readers to read her advice like a traditional Cebuano poem while incorporating the environment.

Furthermore, Mojares (1988) also states another element of Cebuano poetry: "the overcultivation of certain kinds of diction and sentiment" (p. 6). An indication that a poem is meant to teach, but at the same time, it also targets one's emotion. Indeed, it is an eloquently way of a region's consciousness that is still companionable even until now. Moreover, according to Chua (2017), she explains that "the writer's understanding of the local environment or place, including our folk wisdom and beliefs, and the stories we have been told and have known all our lives about our islands" (p. xxxvvii). All these qualities of sentimentality and local knowledge of one's environment are identified in Kabigon's advice column in *Bisaya*. Also, studying Cebuano poetry requires the skill to decipher the ambiguity and suggestiveness of the words. Mojares (1988) states the following observations the need to reclaim the power of Cebuano language and poetry:

> Today, however, much of the richness of Cebuano language and poetry has been depleted through disuse (the language is not studied in the universities; it is, if at all, marginally used as medium of instruction; and outlets for Cebuano writing are sorely lacking) or because of the dominating influence of a foreign language that has created imperfectly literate Cebuano inhabiting the inarticulate spaces between the world of Cebuano and that of English. For many Cebuanos today, to read Cebuano poetry is to experience something both intimate and strange. In a sense, this is the experience of poetry itself (p. 6).

The influence of English on Cebuano has resulted in a subtle and hybrid language. Most importantly, given the diversity and complexity of the two languages, it continues to seek ways to achieve harmony. To study Kabigon's writing style is not just to signify women writers and their contribution to the national literature of the Philippines because Kabigon was one of few female Cebuano-Visayan authors who emerged in a period of male-dominant writers. Also, this study attempts to promote Filipino literature and nationalism through local languages

The Cebuano Poetics

Figurative language in Cebuano poetry is related to *pasumbingay*, it is defined as "a parable, allegory, fable or apologue, depending on the context. It can even be any literal or rhetoric device (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony) that consists in the use of words other than their literal sense." (Beltran, Durado, and Kintanar, 2009, p. 1). According to Victor Sugbo (2016), writers radiate the ethnic mother tongues in the Visayas region, "*Pasumbingay* or *paaliday* – these terms aptly describe Visayan poetry in that in the poets' attempt to explain clearly a point, their language becomes lush and figurative as they try, with a tinge of humor, to make a semantic approximation of their truth" (p. 205). Cebuano poetry concretizes a new kind of reality to ponder on, forming a language that dwells and enriches the writer's voice. As Mojares states, "the Cebuano poet today does not come upon a language that is already there, ready to use; he has to recreate it not only out of the rawness of daily speech but summon out of language that which has already fallen away from common consciousness and use" (p. 6). The first responsibility of a Cebuano poet is to inhabit the Cebuano language as he speaks of his veracity, where he navigates the immense challenge to resolve the issues of language and identity in the country.

> The problem of language and identity continues to be relevant to the Filipino writer in English and in particular, the Cebuano writer…suffers two levels of marginalization: the dominance of a colonial language, English, and the dominance of a Tagalog-influenced national language, Filipino (Camacho, 2012, p.6).

Simple text is given new meaning using figurative language or symbolism. Furthermore, symbolism is used in this study to analyze the poetic text. A symbol is defined as "when an incident, object, or person is used both literally (as itself) and figuratively (as something else), it becomes a symbol...to expand the meaning of the text and provide additional possibilities for meaning discovery" (Dobie, 2012, p. 43). Thus, human experiences and cultural practices play a role in symbol analysis. Another definition of symbolism is "the process by which a person, place, object, or event comes to stand for some abstract idea or condition." Symbol, as it is commonly used in literary studies, suggests a link between ordinary sense of reality and moral or spiritual order" (Quinn, 2006, p. 408). To study symbols, you must start with a literal meaning and work your way up to a metaphorical or even spiritual meaning. Furthermore, Sussane Langer, an American philosopher, writer, and educator, asserts that when readers conceive of symbols, they can perceive their interpretations. On the other hand, signs allow us to react to our surroundings, whereas symbols allow us to create imagery and ideas that are not directly related to the real world. The only distinction between a sign and a symbol is that a sign causes us to think or act, whereas a symbol causes us to think about the things being symbolized.

Contemporary Philippine fiction authors and poets, on the other hand, address prevalent themes and issues in their writings. These are as follows: maintaining one's integrity, confirming ultimate ideals, identifying important purpose, and establishing a rational worldview. These concepts that shape Filipino literature are based on Edith Tiempo's "Philippine Literature as an Instrument" (Edith Lopez-Tiempo, 1919-2011, poet, fiction writer, teacher and literary critic). Valuing morality is a prodigious element that humanity needs to reclaim. "Foremost among the concerns of the Philippine writers today is the theme of individual's integrity, his human rights, the sanctity of his beliefs and his personal experience" (Tiempo, 2008, p. 4). As a citizen of a country with a long history of colonialism, numerous literary works have encompassed human integrity which resonates with the country's national literature as well as

its contemporary themes that geographically connect the Filipinos. This reality manifests the integration of identity. The importance of freedom and preserving the individual's integrity is one of the themes in the works of contemporary Filipino writers. Also, Tiempo (2008) emphasizes that "the theme of individual integrity, his human rights, the sanctity of his beliefs, and his personal experience is foremost among the concerns of Philippine writers today" (p. 4).

Literature serves as one of the moral compasses. The soul of the nation can be found in confirming its values and morality. Within a nation where corruption abounds, and values are loosely defined. There is a kind of neglect to prioritize morality in a troubled time. Tiempo discusses the next issue or problem that is commonly found in contemporary Philippine literature, which is restoring one's principles and values (p. 5). Furthermore, Tiempo discusses defining significant purpose, which is another theme that is often used by Filipino authors: "In much of the poetry and fictional works we see the attempt to expose a view of significant human purpose into the midst of complexity and the external confusion ever going into our world" (p. 6).

Finally, Tiempo discusses responsibilities as a global citizen by developing a reasonable worldview that goes beyond narrow nationalistic consciousness. Literature and culture are intertwined. Unlike journalism, literary works attempt to broaden an artistic discussion by presenting an unbiased viewpoint: "Creative writers, unlike journalists, have their way of addressing the problem of creating a just and workable world-view for the individual and the nations" (p. 9).

Literature broadens one's perspectives. Also, it allows more writers to master the craft of living. As a result, it allows people to unlearn things and properly filter the information around them. The formation of these ideas is motivated by the desire to broaden human interactions with the rest of the world.

Deciphering the Poetic Contributions of Kabigon in Cebuano Literature

In her column, Maria Kabigon reflected on local life while revealing her literary consciousness. She does this by choosing the words that are easily applicable to the various situations of her readers. Also, she has included poetic presence that assists the readers in navigating the meaning of her advice. Kabigon, born in Carcar in 1878, had little formal education, as did all women of her time. An aunt taught her reading, writing, and basic Spanish. Her first story, "Ang Gugma sa Inahan," was written under a pseudonym when she was 16 years old. Her initials "MAK" accompanied a body of works carried by numerous Cebuano publications, including plays, poems, stories, and essays, when she began using her real name in 1912. Kabigon helped pave the way for subsequent generations of women writers at a time when men writers dominated the literary and journalistic scene ("Top 100 Cebuano Personalities: Maria Kabigon Everybody's Manding Karya," 2019).

The sea is the soul of the earth. The sea has served as a storyteller of the past, influencing and even shaping future narrations. Cebuanos have a strong relationship with the sea. The sea is, without a doubt, an essential component of Cebuano writers' imagination, memory, and literary consciousness. Here is an example of the sea as a metaphor by Dodong Mercado for the first section:

Aniay akong hinigugma nga gipangasawa ko na. Apan napakyas,
kay dili ako mautlon sa iyang ginikanan. Ang tagayan sa among

> *pagbati, sibo gayud. Maayo ba nga manlakaw lang kami?* (Kabigon, 1952, p. 40)
>
> I have a beloved that I already married. But our love failed because her parents dislike me. The cup of our passion fits perfectly. Do you think we shall leave her parents' house?

According to Dodong Mercado, his sentiments are about his new wife's parents. Manding Karya's response:

> *Hulata nga molantong na ang dagat, basin inig hunas, hikinhasan mo ang mga isda nga ginganlag palad. Ayaw dalia ang paglakaw, kay matunok unya kamo* (Kabigon, 1952, p. 40)
>
> Wait for the tide to come in, perhaps during low tide, you can see the fish which is like fate. Do not rush to leave/Your feet may be injured.

Kabigon compares Dodong's current situation to the sea. Shells, sea urchins, stones, and other sea creatures can be found more easily at low tide. A person can easily take note of one's path in this manner for safety. Kabigon mentions waiting for the seawater to come ashore. In this scenario, Kabigon articulates the importance of allowing his in-laws and himself enough time to get to know each other. This may be a viable option for resolving the conflict. The fish suggests a path to his fate. It implies a decision, a choice, or perhaps his destiny concerning whatever happens in his new family. Kabigon concludes her advice by emphasizing the significance of patience and perfect timing. The tide, too, has its parables and depths as this life comes and goes. Kabigon wants Dodong to take it easy and wait because if he goes, he will be saddled with the enormous responsibility of raising a family, especially in the early stages of marriage.

Another example is from Antonio Casas from Cebu City who is confused about his situation:

> *Ako usa ka ulitawo nga may igo nang panuigon sa pagminyo. Dunay pila ka babaye nga daw may gusto kanako, apan wala ko sila hinigugma. Aniay akong gihigugma wala mosugot kanako. Unsaon na niini, Manding?* (Kabigon, 1953, p. 42)
>
> I'm a bachelor of marriageable age. Several women like me, but I don't love any of them. I have someone I love, but she doesn't like me. How are you going to solve this, Manding?

And here is Kabigon's reply to Mr. Casas:

> *Mao gayud kining kinabuhi. Usahay makalagot, apan inigkaalinggat ta nga ang panahon maoy naghari kanato, ang atong kalagut, pulihan sa kadasig. Hulata nga molantong ang dagat basin dunay laing nitabo nga kubiton na ang imong pasol* (Kabigon, 1953, p. 42).

> This is life. Sometimes, it is irritating, though time truly possesses us, our anxiety is transformed to optimism. Wait for the sea to come down, perhaps there is someone who crosses to take your fishing pole.

Kabigon mentions the meaning of time and the significance of waiting patiently. Perseverance to wait on for the low tide connotes a better chance of finding love. In this case, Kabigon recommends Mr. Casas for the right moment and hopefully, the right person will arrive. With this, the fishing pole implies the "big catch" that can be associated with a new lover.

The second part involves defining values by utilizing nature's cycle and reality. Another letter requesting advice reads as follows from Mandaue City's Marcelino Dabon:

> *26 na ang akong panuigon. May giulitawhan ako, apan naminyo sa usa ka higala ko ra usab. Tungod sa kawala nila magsinabtanay, nagkabunlag nga wala dangtig usa ka tuig ang ilang panag-ipon. Nakahunahuna ako nga akong siyang balikan pagpangulitawo, kay naluoy ako kaniya. Maayo ba kaha Manding, nga akong isubli kaniya pagsugilon ang gugma nga kaniadto iyang gisalikway?* (Kabigon, 1948, p. 42)
>
> I'm 26. I had courted a woman, but she got married to my friend. And because they did not understand each other, after a year, they broke up. I'm thinking if I can court her again because I feel pity for her. Do you think Manding I should offer the love that she once rejected?

And she responds to him about true love and the proper timing for love:

> *Ayaw pagtanduga ang samad aron dili mosidlit ang dugo. Siya samdan karon og kasingkasing tungod sa ilang panagbulag. Labing maayo hinoon nga magpalayo ka kaniya aron dili ka katahap sa iyang bana* (Kabigon, 1948, p. 42).
>
> Do not touch the wound, so it does not transpire blood. She has a grieved heart because of the separation. It is better if you distant yourself to her so her husband will not be angry at you.

The ability to heal oneself physically or psychologically is the most enduring stage of a person's life, but the entire process takes time. The advice expresses a broken heart, Kabigon acknowledges the existence of time. A wound will heal on its own over time. She also mentions distance as an important factor in the healing process. For a person to heal, there must be enough solitude and time to forget. This process aids in the act of letting go of the past's pain. As a result, the act of grieving will be completed and satisfied. For example, consider the following entry from *Bisaya* on January 14, 1948, from Eling of Subang Daku in Mandaue City:

> *Aniay akong gihigugma nga dii masabut. Kay kon akong amoralon, motubag lang nga unya na siya motangdo inigka 40*

> *ang iyang panuigon. Karon 20 pa siya. Kadugay 'sab nakong hulat!* (Kabigon, p. 34)
>
> I have a beloved that I don't understand. It is because if I express my love with flowery words, she just replies that she will marry me when she reaches 40. Now, she is 20. I will wait too much!

Here is the reply of Kabigon that uses both *pasumbingay* and *bugal-bugal*:

> *Pasagdi siya nga malagas. Ang bunga sa kahoy kon imo lang pasagdan, mobulag man gayud sa iyang pungango busa nganong lugson man nimo pagpupo. Inigkagulang niana tingalig magpanawagna kanimo.* (Kabigon, 1948, p. 34)
>
> Let her wither. If you don't bother the fruit of the tree, it will just fall off from the branch so why will you force it to harvest. When it will ripe perhaps it will allure you.

The presence of the fruit reflects the imagery of a woman's body. Simply because it is a seed-bearing of a flowering plant, it is often connected with the ability of a woman to conceive. And like the nature of the fruits, when it ripens over time, it will just eventually fall. This is what Kabigon wants to express, she uses nature to manifest the notion of waiting for the beloved (the woman) as she also includes the cycle of a woman's body. When fruit is very ripe, nobody will notice it. Eventually, it becomes useless.

Moreover, Kabigon's advice highlights *bugal-bugal*, it is an ironic and sarcastic speech intended to insult or demean its subject or the addressee (Alunan, 2004). The presence of *bugal-bugal* tradition has been part of the Cebuano verses to capture humor. Nevertheless, Kabigon has the talent to camouflage this through applying metaphors, she has attempted to offend vaguely to let the readers realize how nature can teach people how to live, most especially in understanding oneself and others. Conceding *bugal-bugal* can be a way to have a hint of awareness of reality.

The last characteristic is using animals and plants in confirming an individual's rights, personal experience, and beliefs. To widen the social presence of values, Kabigon uses nature to recognize them. Here is an example, a sentiment from Neno Pelayre of Tagbilaran Bohol:

> *Kining akong trato, kaipon nakog balangay. Upat na ka alibangbang ang na trato niya. Wala ba kaha katak-takig gihayang iyang pagkabulak sa mga kamut niadtong mga alibangbang? Unsay ikasulti mo niini Manding?* (Kabigon, 1948, p. 33)
>
> My beloved, who is with me in my home. There were already four butterflies that she had with. Were her pollens had been taken away from her flower through the hands of these butterflies? What do you think about this Manding?

Kabigon replies with straight conviction about this situation:

> *Dili kahukman ang bulak kon naunsa na ang iyang gihay tungod lamang kay daghan nang alibangbang nga misangkop. May hiilhan akong dalaga nga kapito na makatrato. Apan wala ka taktakig gihay ang iyang pagka bulak kay molikay man sa masipad nga alibangbang* (Kabigon, 1948, p. 33).
>
> You can't judge a flower's petal simply because of the butterflies that have conquered her. I know a maiden who had seven boyfriends. Yet none of them had taken the pollens of her flower because she isolates herself to the wicked butterfly.

In this instance, the flower or a petal represents the female's chastity. And the butterflies represent men or even boyfriends. In this case, Kabigon follows the symbols provided by the letter writer (Neno). She responds in the same way, but instead of referring to the entire flower, she utilizes the presence of the petal to demonstrate the woman's chastity. Perhaps the entire flower represents the woman for Kabigon, and that the petal is only a part of it which denotes her purity. Kabigon emphasizes that a woman's identity is not based solely on the image of one petal; rather, the flower's oneness is the entire depiction of a woman. This scenario implies that to appreciate womanhood, one must look at the flower as a whole rather than at its parts.

Another example that confirms morals using animals and plants is from Mersy Ganar of Kibaghot Alubid in Misamis Oriental:

> *Dalaga ako, batanon pa. Daghan nagtrato apan walay usa kanila nga nakaangkon sa tinuod kong gugma. Aniay duroha, ang una gradwado sa high school, ang lain dili. Maorag tinuoray na ako ning nahiuna, apan may kaluoy ako ning ulahi, kay kugihan. Hay, kinsay maayo kanila?* (Kabigon, 1952, p. 32)
>
> I'm still a maiden. Many men like to have me as their beloved yet none of them have conquered the genuineness of my love. Two men are courting me, the first is a graduate student in high school, and the other is not. I'm true to the first one, however, I feel pity for the second, because he is hardworking. *Hay*, who is better between them?

And this is the answer of Kabigon to this young lady:

> *Nganong paghigut kag daghan langgam? Maayo gani kay wala ka hituhiki sa ilang mga sungo. Ay kanimo babaye! Pagpili sa lain, bulagi kanang duroha aron walay masilo kanila* (Kabigon, 1952, p. 32).
>
> Why do you tie so many birds? Thankfully none of them have pierced you with their bill. Ay you woman! Choose among others, let go of those two men so they will not be broken.

Kabigon's advice articulates the significance of the "collect and select" attitude in dating. The woman collects suitors and then dates them all. And when one stands out the most, the woman can finally make her choice. The birds that she gathers symbolize the men. Kabigon even reacts

in a form of a *bugal-bugal* about Miss Ganar's mindset by saying that she is grateful that none of them have decided to revenge on her. Moreover, Kabigon's reaction: *"Ay kanimo babaye!"* (Ay you woman!) echoes her dominant presence as a mother giving guidance to her child. The command of Kabigon's advice is strongly illustrated particularly in the last part.

Kabigon incorporated nature to expand the literariness of her column. It was also found that Kabigon used the sea as a direct comparison in preserving the integrity and encompassed nature's cycle and reality in defining values. Kabigon illustrated nature through animals and plants in confirming individuals' rights, personal experience, and beliefs. Also, Kabigon's advice tends to sound pastoral and romantic. Lastly, she articulates two significant matters: using nature as *pasumbingay* and describing nature. This observation suggests that the advice of Kabigon is intertwined with the pastoral tradition, continuing the practice of Cebuano poetry.

Conclusion

Through her distinct literariness and the use of pastoral characteristics, Kabigon has a definite way of responding to her readers. Kabigon's poetic style presents itself as aesthetically and critically different. Aside from her other literary works, her imaginative presence in her column in *Bisaya* elevates her contributions to Cebuano literature. Her advice resonates with the following characteristics: preserving the individual's integrity, confirming ultimate values, defining significant purpose, and developing a reasonable worldview. Also, reading Kabigon's advice is like analyzing a poem. Rather than simply reading her advice, Kabigon appears to present her readers with the task of deciphering the unspoken and subtext. With this, her style allows for opportunities to develop critical thinking and poetic appreciation.

Kabigon has become well-known for her column, which offers practical solutions to life's challenges and complexities. She demonstrated a woman's great voice among men writing during her time, solidifying the hallmark of her advocacy, which is to use her literary gifts to make more people aware of the truth of life and learn a different worldview by providing another perspective. When responding to a letter, she employs metaphors and symbolism to provide a brief but profound response. However, due to the limited space in her advice column, her responses are short. The use of figurative language and symbolism suggests her solution to still provide effective advice despite the magazine's limited space. As a result, her writing style encourages both critical thinking and creative appreciation of the Cebuano language. With this, the readers can have various ways of deciphering Kabigon's advice. Furthermore, most of the letter-senders were young adults seeking advice, particularly on love and life, implying that the advice column signifies how the senders can empower themselves through Kabigon's wisdom. Also, the use of local color demonstrates the richness of Cebuano poetry or Cebuano literature in general, both of which continue to contribute to the Philippines' current national literature.

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