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Editor's Introduction

It is our great pleasure and my personal honour as the editor-in-chief to introduce Volume 11 Issue 1 of the *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*. This issue is a selection of papers received through open submissions directly to our journal.

This is the sixth issue of the journal under my editorship, this time, with the precious help of our new Co-Editor, Dr Alyson Miller (Deakin University, Australia), and our two Associate Editors, Dr Murielle El Hajj (Lusail University, Qatar) and Dr Fernando Darío González Grueso (Tamkang University, Taiwan). I would like to offer my sincere thanks for all their hard work in putting the issue together.

We are now 33 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 [LinkedIn](#) to help us promote our journal.

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 to six members of our team, resulting in eight being accepted for this issue.

Please 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. Authors are welcome to submit a paper for our May 2023 Themed Issue (World Fairy Tales and Folklore).

Please see the journal website for the latest information and to read past issues: <https://iafor.org/journal/iafor-journal-of-literature-and-librarianship>. Issues are freely available to read online, and 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

Editor

IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship

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Article 1

Confronting Coming of Age and War in Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004)

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Article 3

Reframing the Pillars of Power: The Incarnation of Language and Pleasure in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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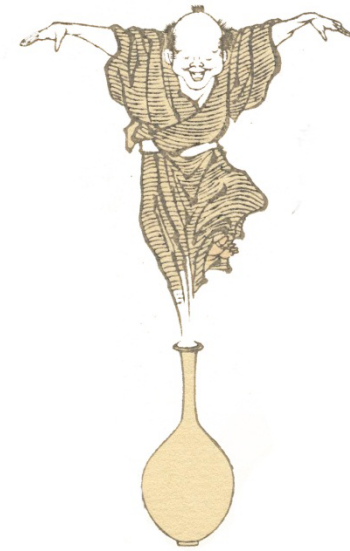
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**Confronting Coming of Age and War in Hayao Miyazaki's
Howl's Moving Castle (2004)**

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Abstract

This research paper evaluates how Hayao Miyazaki's film *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) does not reaffirm or condone the celebration of the kidult but rather solemnizes confronting reality and growing up by the infantilized adult. By placing the narrative of war as a major subject matter within the film, Miyazaki allows the child to step outside their safe space while also contextualizing the actions of the characters Howl and Sophie. On one hand, Howl acts as a vain and powerful wizard who avoids choosing sides in the war and attempts to protect civilians. His maturation is explored through several symbols such as the castle, his hair and appearance, his heart, and the concept of staying human. Simultaneously, Sophie who skips the awkwardness of maturation and acts as a wise and heroic figure with agency and intellect becomes an active agent in ending the war. The characters thus echo Miyazaki's other narratives of psycho-social maturation, combining elements of both Western and Japanese traditions in animation, and fashioning a transnational piece of work that appeals to a diverse audience.

Keywords: coming of age, *kawaii*, kidult, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *shojo*, young adult fiction

Although it is a relatively new market that has developed over the last 50 years, Young Adult fiction has proliferated in consumption and success. According to a 2012 survey, 55 percent of today's Young Adult readers and consumers are over the age of 18 (Howlett, 2015) despite its target market being much younger. The reasons for the popularity of Young Adult fiction lie in its escapist appeal as avid readers claim that it “distracts [them] from the horrors of the real world”, fulfills the purpose of “evoking nostalgia”, and acts as a comforting and hopeful presence for “those who just refuse to grow up” (Hay, 2019, p. 6).

Some critics argue that the infantilization of adults or the emergence of the kidult has been marked by immaturity, avoidance of responsibility, and attempts to escape from adult identity. Maturation constitutes forming human relationships and being conscious of the sociopolitical climate that a kidult usually struggles with (Dvornyk, 2016). A similar rise of the kidult can be observed in the Japanese post-1960s youth subculture or *kawaii* (cute culture) with the introduction of *shojo* (young women) and *shounen* (young men) characters who commodified a longing for childhood and an idealization of infantilized behavior (Daliot-Bul, 2014).

In many ways, *kawaii* culture in visual media reflects Japan's shift from political idealism to postindustrial consumerism after its defeat in World War II. The formation of a subservient political and economic relationship with the United States as a means to success nurtured its “childish” popular culture (Sato, 2009). In terms of gender, studies have found that *kawaii* culture is reserved more for female characters, especially in the fantasy genre. One reason for its association with female characters is because, since the 60s, *shojo* is a genre that is more popular amongst a young female readership. For these adolescent readers, youth was the only interim in which they could enjoy freedom from traditionally gendered obligations of work and marriage at the time. However, *shojo* in the next decades reduced the image of youth to represent cuteness and lovability, hence the visual enjoyability for the consuming eye took preeminence over the freedom this age represented in the 60s, no longer adhering to the original intent of *shojo* culture (Saito, 2014).

Meanwhile, the alternative genre of *shounen* adventures privileged the idea of friendship, featured the hero's journey motif, and was saturated with scenes of combat or training for combat. The genre explored the male identity that existed between the liminal realm of boyhood and manhood (Monden, 2018). It differs from the Western ideal of rugged masculinity as heroic and the tender *bishounen* (beautiful boy) as the victim in need of protection (Gateward, 2005). In comparison, the shounen-like (boyish) and *kawaii* (cute) figure of a male protagonist is not bound by any detractions of adult responsibility within the Japanese texts. This marks the privileging of youth, its preservation, and its celebration as the ideal form of being for the characters before they have to take on the grueling and lifeless task of being an adult.

Hayao Miyazaki, the co-founder of Studio Ghibli (a Japanese animation studio) and the director of the film adaptation of Diana Wynne Jones' young adult fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), is known for his discerning representations of the profound experience of being at the cusp of adulthood. Similar to the fairytales of Walt Disney, his films have mythological and emotional resonances, but unlike Disney films, they have “reinterpreted the most important Western concepts: war, peace, harmony, beauty, and humanity” (Kuzmina, 2018).

As a result, Clare Bradford (2011) argues, that his work has become transnational. His style and representation strategies travel across cultures. *Howl's Moving Castle* is an example of a fantasy narrative, telling the story of a shy, young woman, Sophie Hatter, who is cursed by a spiteful witch that turns her into an elderly woman. In her quest to return to normalcy and to

find herself in the process, her only hope lies in the hands of a self-indulgent and vain wizard, Howl Pendragon. Miyazaki's treatment of the protagonist blends British traditions of illustration with the Japanese attention to cuteness (*kawaii*). He also draws both on American cartoon traditions and early Disney animations to introduce "fantasy figures evocative of American pop culture" (Bradford, 2011, p. 10). While his depiction of the natural world, the *ukiyo* or "floating world" is reminiscent of Japanese landscape painting, the idealized setting is disrupted by the "Zeppelin-like" World War I aircraft and destruction of the idyllic countryside. The impersonal machinery is countered by the love that grows between Sophie and Howl which restores peace and order. While Bradford (2011) examines Miyazaki stylistically, my research analyzes the film as a coming-of-age narrative that negotiates Japanese anime and manga culture and Western young adult literature conventions.

Although Miyazaki has loosely interpreted several elements from the text, his most innovative streak is the construction of a war narrative, Sophie's fate as an old woman, and Howl's more heroic characterization, which allows the central characters to come of age. Miyazaki through *Howl's Moving Castle* is writing a treatise on the painful and disillusioning process of maturation while addressing contemporary sociopolitical and cultural concerns. He questions whether youth can ever escape social responsibility and whether growing older comes at the cost of losing one's freedom. In this paper, I critically analyze *Howl's Moving Castle* to understand the way Miyazaki creates a dialogue between the kidult and its opposite, the precocious, to show that they are both equally subversive because they are out of sync with the normal trajectory of growth.

Diana Jones's novel version creates more of a safe space for the kidult in a conventional comforting fantasy world as compared to Miyazaki with the involvement of war and the effects of industrialization in the narrative. Miyazaki forces his representative kidult Howl into confronting reality and growing up. Additionally, Sophie's journey is a subversion of a conventional *shojo* character. Even though the temporal trajectory of both the characters has been reversed in the narrative, as their journeys overlap, they become a part of the bigger social and political narrative. Miyazaki's reworking of *Howl's Moving Castle* can be seen as a continuation of his previous film's treatments of psycho-social maturation.

Tracing Miyazaki's Filmography

Hayao Miyazaki's filmography ranges from fantasy fiction in *Spirited Away* (2001) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), to *Castle in the Sky* (1986), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997) hybrids similar to *Howl's Moving Castle* in their focus on war, and then his last film before retiring from filmmaking, *The Wind Rises* (2013), is fully grounded in the reality of Japan's involvement in World War II.

The topic of psycho-social maturation is a recurring element in all of his films. For example, *Spirited Away* (2001) features a young girl Chihiro, who confronts one of the biggest fears a child could face – being separated from their parents. It is conquering that fear of separation through her journey into an unknown spirit world, finding and being the savior of her parents that spurs her into adulthood. Through the narrative, she is also able to confront her apprehension and doubts about moving to a new town by using her wits and compassion to find a way out of the spirit world and come to terms with the changes in her family life. Bergstrom (2016) contends that her youth gives her access to the fantastic and the fantastic, in turn, aids her growth. Critics like Harold Bloom categorize crossover fiction as low literature and criticize fantasy literature for taking readers away from realistic scenarios because this

escapism leaves them unprepared for the harsh world outside (Stengel, 2019). Miyazaki on the contrary shows that the real and the magical are equally essential for children to become mature individuals.

Howl's Moving Castle juxtaposes the fantastic and the real when it opens with a steampunk, industrial traveling castle flying over green pastures. Copious amounts of smoke are seen rising from the homes of a small town and a coal-powered train, while images of fighter jets and war parades color the town grey (0:01:30). It seems as if Hayao Miyazaki's fantasy world has been infiltrated by the real world. Here witches, wizards, and magical spells coexist with a cold mechanical world of industrial progress and mindless war.

Wynne Jones's original novel version rarely mentions an impending war, focusing more on character development and subverting fairy-tale-like elements of the genre. Additionally, it begins with the conventional setting of a fairy tale in a far-off land with a protagonist who is an outcast in her own life: "In the land of Ingary, where such things as seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility exist, it is quite a misfortune to be born the eldest of three" (Jones, 1986, p. 8). This allows the novel to become a conventional young adult text that discusses serious themes in the safety of a far-off land as compared to Miyazaki who makes the war and its impact an unchanging reality.

Confronting War

Howl is forced to confront the war despite his unwillingness to pick either side, transforming into a monstrous bird while battling to protect civilians. Cavallaro (2014) observes that in the animation even characters like the Wicked Witch of the Waste are "no less critical of the war than Howl – even though she is too selfish to do anything about it – and is likewise unwilling to lend her magical powers to the cause" (p. 17). Unlike her, Howl is desperate to protect his loved ones, including Sophie. It is a marker of Howl's growth that he finds something precious enough to him to spur him into action: "I've had enough of running away, Sophie. I've got something I want to protect. It's you" (1:34:07). Miyazaki's animation suggests that sympathy and love can preserve humanity by countering the destructive impulses of modern man.

Howl's position recalls *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Porco Rosso* (1992) with the protagonists "caught between warring factions, and the brutalizing effects of war, even if one were to endeavor for peace" (Kimmich, 2007, p. 134). Osmond (2012) also argues that Howl and Porco are "reflection[s] on the limits of masculinity, portrayed as both nobly idealist and incorrigibly childish, except when redeemed by love" (p. 135). Thus, when Howl comes to see war as a threatening, non-discriminating agent in damaging the lives of both civilians and his loved ones, he realizes his shortcomings: "I'm such a big coward, all I do is hide. And all of this magic is just to keep everybody away. I can't stand how scared I am" (1:09:28). Sophie also acts to penetrate Howl's self-involvement by opposing him with her maturity, pushing him to confront Madame Suliman, and forcing him to understand that true self-recognition can only come with the help of others.

As stated by the Producer Toshio Suzuki, this serves Miyazaki's purpose to portray "romance under the fire of war" which he does in his later film *The Wind Rises* (2013) as well. However, weaving in war serves a deeper purpose which is to declare war as a pointless endeavor humanity goes through (Yazbek, 2015) while being a supplement to the restoration of peace. In an interview with contemporary artist Takashi Murakami (2005), Miyazaki reveals that Howl's dilemma related to war is tied to his encounters as a child growing up during World

War II. He comments on his guilt and trauma as his family left Tokyo by a truck while refusing to help other families begging them to let their children escape too. Seeing the senseless violence himself, he deems war as unnecessary even through war advocates like Madame Suliman who admits “it’s time to put an end to this idiotic war” (1:54:17) by the end of the film. *Princess Mononoke* (1997) too features opposing sides, with human settlement destroying a forest for its gains. Despite the clearly defined opposing forces, both sides have justifiable grievances and work to protect their groups. In this way, Christine Hoff Kraemer (2004) also arrives at a similar conclusion when she observes, “Miyazaki avoids the cliched Western trope of good vs. evil” (p. 5) and relays a nuanced outlook on the conflict.

The Castle as an Escape

The backdrop of war contextualizes the coming of age of the kidult Howl Pendragon. It may seem that Howl is painted solely as a heroic figure and romanticized by Miyazaki despite his vanity, flamboyancy, and irresponsible attitude. Miyazaki, however, criticizes him for his neglect and childishness by having him confront his shortcomings and allowing the kidult to grow up. When we meet Howl, he is being chased by black sludge-like creatures used by the Wicked Witch of the Waste to get him to join the war effort (0:06:00). Even inside his Moving Castle, he is constantly being sent messages from the monarch to achieve the same purpose: “Wizard Jenkins must report to the palace immediately” (0:24:29). Howl, instead, engages in escapism. As if to emphasize the flightiness of his character, he is often flying away from his pursuers both literally and figuratively as his castle also functions as a portal that allows him to change locations at a turn of the wheel. One of his escapes includes the secret garden he reveals as a gift to Sophie: “That was my secret hideaway. I spent a lot of time here by myself when I was young” (1:21:26). The fact that he reveals it to Sophie underlines his growth since a secret hideout becomes a gift to keep a loved one safe from harm.

The castle itself is a metaphor for Howl’s growth from a kidult to an actual adult. Like Howl it is obscure, can escape sticky situations at any given moment, remains in the background, and can transport Howl to idyllic, peaceful pastures where he can remain separated from humanity. It is a structure that Howl has constructed to remain hidden and one in which he can neglect his duties. But as the film progresses and Howl battles harder and harder to deflect what comes at him, and starts to lose control of his fantasy, the castle itself starts to crumble and collapse. The completion of his maturation is reflected in the rebuilding of the castle which was previously referred to as a “dilapidated heap” by Sophie. It is greener, with wings that allow it to fly above the battleships that terrorized the skies, and more functional, symbolizing how Howl himself has risen triumphant and above the immorality of war (1:54:40).

Keeping Up Appearances

Madame Suliman surmises at the Palace that Howl has “been using his magic for entirely selfish reasons” (1:02:10) implying that he is neither brave, humble, nor proactive. Howl’s reputation as a villainous, heart-eating sorcerer only precedes him when Sophie meets him not because he lives up to his image but as someone who does not do much at all and wishes to be left alone. Moreover, he is someone who takes on various aliases and disguises to fool those who seek him as both Pendragon and Jenkins.

When Sophie asks him how many aliases he has, he answers “As many as I need to keep my freedom” (0:51:02). His desire to isolate himself from the reality and burden of responsibility as a powerful wizard capable of doing good comes from his desire to not grow up and confront

the rot that surrounds him. This desire is not just rooted in selfish reasons but in an attempt to prevent his powers from being misused by Madame Suliman, displaying his understanding of its consequences. While disguised as the King of Ingary, he says, “We have tried using Madame Suliman’s magic to shield our palace from the enemy’s bombs. But the bombs fall on civilian homes instead” (1:04:39). It becomes obvious then that Howl does have a sense of duty to not become a cog in Suliman’s war machine.

Several symbols and motifs in the narrative signify Howl’s progression from kidult to adult. The first is the change in his hair and appearance. Howl adheres to the *shounen* appearance with his effeminate, delicate features and ostentatious robes. At the beginning of the film, his frivolity is depicted through the long, dyed blonde hair that he immediately cuts into bangs, and then proceeds to dye again, this time turning red, going awry due to Sophie’s intervention. The breakdown over his beauty seems to be a juvenile concern as he laments “I see no point in living if I can’t be beautiful” (0:46:50). Swinnen (2009) discusses how Howl’s effeminate appearance and passivity in contrast to a masculine exercise of brute force against warships acts as a manifestation of his two warring, split selves. While his appearance is befitting that of a *bishounen*, the *shounen* hero described by Monden (2018), the training for combat stages or facing combat, is abhorred not just for the sake of avoiding maturation but due to the grave nature of violent combat.

His maturation is marked by a less ostentatious, shorter, and darker hairstyle (1:19:06). His costume also changes from a long white and colorful wizard’s robe to a less flamboyant white shirt and dark pants, thus completing his coming of age. This implies that he has also shed the child-like ignorance and the camouflage behind which he sought shelter. Despite finding the war’s machination too large for him to handle on his own, he is no longer incapacitated by his helplessness.

His change in appearances is also tied to his transformation into a giant, monstrous black bird to save the civilians from shelling and some other wizards who have joined the war effort (1:26:17). Unlike the novel where Howl does not express any sentiments towards the war, in Miyazaki’s adaptation he takes on the role of a “pacifist wizard” (Yazbek, 2015). When he returns as a bird-transformed being after one of his battles, he comments bitterly to Calcifer that “this war is terrible” and the wizards who have turned themselves into monsters for it “won’t ever recall they were human” (0:42:36). Howl’s reluctance to join the war and give into this metamorphosis is of significance due not only to his fear of death but perhaps more so to the fear of losing his soul. Participation in this mindless war may turn him into an aberration, something subhuman. Howl’s reluctance is also linked to his fear of commitment. He can neither commit to relationships nor his purpose as a wizard because both make him encounter his shortcomings.

By taking a clear either/or stance, he will have to shoulder the responsibilities that come with his choice. Howl’s real fear is to take on a decisive identity as a hero or a villain. Here Howl echoes 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s characterization of children as “angelic, innocent and untainted by the world which they have recently entered” (Duschinsky, 2010, p. 3). Adulthood, on the other hand, is a transition into a disillusioned and corrupted self. Pastoral isolation will keep him blissfully human while war will bring out his base self in an increasingly industrial world (Saleem, 2016). As a counterargument, Miyazaki here is not criticizing adulthood itself, but the enormity of the stakes in Howl’s world. If Howl takes a wrong decision, then not only his soul but the lives of others would be at risk, and for a conscientious character like Howl, the thought is debilitating. Miyazaki here is sympathizing

with the kidult standing on the threshold of adulthood. Maturity and growth signify an individual's confrontation with the ultimate loss; that is to say, a loss of innocence. For Howl, knowing is painful and instigates action that has consequences.

The Burden of a Heart

Another recurring motif is that of his heart. It is revealed that his "heartlessness" is not a result of choice but of circumstance – he gave up his own heart to save a dying falling star, consequently giving birth to Calcifer, the fire demon. This is apparent in the curse the Witch sends to Howl: "You who swallowed a falling star, oh, heartless man, your heart shall soon belong to me" (0:32:33). Howl is as much a victim of circumstances and exploitation by Madame Suliman. Vieira & Kunz (2018) agree that Howl in the adaptation is less flamboyant and flirty "drama queen" and more concerned with helping the victims of the war while still being vain and immature. Howl's representation reflects Miyazaki's exposure to European children's literature during his higher education. He was a part of a children's literature research society which shaped "his views of storytelling and character development" (McCarthy, 1999, p. 44). Consciously aware of the Western fairy-tale tradition, Miyazaki makes Howl into more of a romantic hero figure who is far more sympathetic and wrestles with morality (Navas, 2021).

Once Sophie recovers Howl's heart from the Witch, she remarks that "it's so warm and fluttering like a bird" and recognizes that "it's still just the heart of a child", implying that Howl had been unable to grow up. Upon its return, he feels the full weight of his conscience: "I feel terrible like there's a weight on my chest" to which Sophie responds "a heart's a heavy burden" that he must bear to live responsibly (1:53:04).

Sophie – The Unconventional "*Shojo*"

One of the themes unlikely to have been anticipated by Jones who was writing the novel in 1984 was the emerging popularity of the *shojo* and *kawaii* in Japanese anime productions which objectified and commodified a longing for childhood and had the female protagonists characterized by their weakness and dependence on others (Yazbek, 2015). Miyazaki's *shojo*, on the other hand, is independent, secure, and autonomous. In Napier's (2005) opinion, such a portrayal is targeted directly to a Japanese audience aiming to empower the aging population not to yearn for youth to embrace the fact that "all *shojo* will eventually disappear" as Sophie's youth does (p. 193). Gwynne (2013), however, argues that Sophie's representation can be owed to the aftermath of second-wave or post-feminism gaining popularity in modern, neoliberal Japan which is increasingly accepting of "individualism, choice, and empowerment, particularly conceived through commodification and consumerism" (Dales and Bulbeck, 2013, p. 178).

Sophie Hatter starts her coming-of-age journey when cursed by the Wicked Witch of the Waste and turned into an old woman. However, after the initial moments of panic, it is no longer a curse for Sophie. Before the curse she is secluded in her father's shop, making hats to keep her father's legacy alive rather than doing something she wants to do, and has no ambition of her own, which we see when she is asked by her sister, "Now Sophie, do you really want to spend the rest of your life in that hat shop? (0:08:54). Her curse becomes a form of liberation as she finally leaves the house in search of finding a way to break it. Unlike Howl, growing up opens up new avenues for Sophie to take on a journey to explore her real potential. Sophie quickly adjusts to old age and appreciates the invisibility that it gives her and the mobility that she did

not have before when portrayed as a young woman cornered by soldiers whose unsolicited advances make her uncomfortable (0:05:09). Here Miyazaki's character is highlighting the social paradox that is attached to a woman's age. Even though youth is admirable in women, at the same time youth when seen through a male gaze reduces women to an object of desire. Society reduces a woman to a mere body while old age finally opens up the world to her gaze. Sophie as an old woman becomes the observer who sees the outside world with her questioning gaze and grants her the wisdom to make it better. She is the precocious child who has made an early venture into the real world – a world that Howl finds burdensome.

Elizabeth Parsons (2007) posits that Sophie's representation challenges the "grandma trope" by examining the sociocultural locations in which she is positioned. Sophie also in many ways appreciates her old age by remarking to herself in the mirror: "This isn't so bad now, is it? You're still in pretty good shape. And your clothes finally suit you" (0:12:17), showing that she has gained confidence and self-esteem. As an old woman, she is not restricted in her position but possesses agency and assertiveness. She finds Howl's Castle on her own by searching for tools, discovering the living scarecrow she calls Turnip Head, commenting that one should never underestimate a grandma, and claiming that she is "sick of being treated like some timid little old lady" (0:33:30). Her age gives her a newfound sense of intellect and peace that she did not possess before as she remarks: "it's so strange, I've never felt so peaceful before" (0:40:09).

Parsons adds that children's fantasy texts like *Harry Potter* usually have the issue of agency resolved by bestowing the weaker child protagonist with special powers that allow them to transcend their limitations in adult-led societies. *Howl's Moving Castle* subverts this notion by elevating the already existing status and power associated with real old women by positing nurturing and protecting as heroic and powerful acts. Miyazaki's old women cannot be categorized or stereotyped, nor are they invisible, meaningless, existing beings without any sort of agency.

Swinnen (2009) observes that, unlike the novel, Sophie's appearance as an old woman is not glossed over as she has a non-slender body, wrinkles, and an enlarged nose, a deliberate decision made by the color design director Michiyo Yashuda. As a result, Miyazaki also contests another binary, that of youthful beauty as opposed to aged unattractiveness. The binary is evoked to break the *shojo* trope of a sexualized youthful female. The manga and anime industry usually sees this youthful, sexualized female characterization as a sign of empowerment. Others find this transformation more of a "make-over than a "power-up" because the protagonist sees themselves as consumers rather than having actual agency, hence the creators of manga and anime only "aestheticize girl power" (Tran, 2018, p. 19). In contrast, Sophie's reverse metamorphosis depicts a shift for *shojo* sexuality which celebrates old age and its accompanying wisdom as a sign of true empowerment.

Agency as an Old Woman

Sophie possesses agency and her presence changes the trajectory of Howl's life. She takes control of Howl's Castle (which as I have discussed earlier is symbolically linked with Howl's persona) posing as the cleaning lady, and taking care of its mess through her will and determination: "I've become quite cunning in my old age" (0:18:01). Even then, she is never cast in a biologically essentialist role as a nurturer. We see Calcifer run the castle and Howl take over cooking breakfast during their first meeting, while Sophie becomes an active participant in protecting the castle (0:29:50). She emerges as the hero figure, seeing as how she

figures that the secret to fixing Howl's condition is directing his younger self to "find me [her] in the future!" (1:47:49). She subsequently saves the nation too when she kisses Turnip Head and he transforms back into the lost prince, whose disappearance caused the war between the two kingdoms. Howl's identity crisis and the political crisis are resolved through Sophie's help.

Yara Yazbek (2015) argues that Sophie "exemplifies the qualities that sharply define all the *shojo* protagonists that are seen in almost every Miyazaki film" (p. 17). By allowing Sophie to fly, Miyazaki uses flight to depict the feeling of falling in love and as a possibility of escaping from the past and its traditions. Flying is usually associated with confidence and competence, something that can be seen in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989) as well. When Kiki is confident, she gains the ability to fly whereas self-doubt robs her of her powers. Unlike Kiki, however, Sophie's self-confidence is negatively affected by her self-doubt and insecurity. It negatively affects her metamorphosis, disrupting her power of being old yet young at heart, turning her into a bitter old lady when struck with fear. For example, when Howl takes her to his secret garden she states "even though I'm not pretty and all I'm good at is cleaning" (1:15:55) she turns from her younger to her older self despite Howl's insistence to the contrary. Therefore, Miyazaki's *shojo* is distinct from the traditionally naïve and objectified *shojo* in classic anime.

Simultaneously, Sophie acts as a foil to the Wicked Witch of the Waste, who in turn chooses to disguise her real age and uses her powers to wreak havoc and support the war, therefore subverting Rousseau's idea of an adult's conscience being bound by eventual corruption due to loss of innocence. Once Her Majesty takes away the Witch's powers, she becomes a helpless and harmless old woman, unable to take care of herself yet still selfish for Howl's heart as she holds on to it, refusing to give it to Sophie when Howl needs it. She ultimately redeems herself by surrendering possession of Howl's heart, to which Sophie remarks: "Thank you, you have a big heart" (1:50:21). Therefore, the witch does not entirely fall into the category of a simplistic "evil" character. Her disguised age is a sign of the insecurity of an aging woman, an insecurity that Sophie has overcome. She is a jilted woman too: her bitterness towards Sophie is a product of her jealousy; Howl has chosen Sophie after rejecting the Witch once he realized: "She terrified me and I ran away" (0:51:08). However, like Howl she is a victim of Madame Suliman who exiled her to the Waste and then stripped her of her powers, the truth of which Sophie recognizes too when she exclaims to her in the Palace: "You lure people here with an invitation from the king, and then you strip them of all their powers" (1:03:20).

In contrast, Sophie is nowhere depicted as harmless or helpless, for she actively pushes Howl to voice his opinions against the war at the Palace, and even agrees to go in as his representative to Suliman and remains undeterred by her manipulation. She can see through Howl's pretense: "He may be selfish and cowardly, and sometimes he's hard to understand, but his intentions are good" (0:54:48). Parsons (2007) argues in this regard that Miyazaki presents old women as beyond categorization and stereotyping as they can be both powerful and weak, nurturing and selfish while positing "grandma behaviors as powerful, magical, heroic, and successful" (p. 223). Having an old woman as the hero figure who is far wiser and more proactive than the young male wizard celebrates the process of growing up. Sophie as the premature adult counters the kidult Howl and thus subverts the coming-of-age narrative. Her narrative of self-discovery works in reverse to Howl's trajectory of growth. If Howl needs to come to terms with adult responsibility, Sophie has to ultimately recognize her capability and wisdom. Where Howl needs to commit to a responsible decision, Sophie needs to step out of her comfort zone and seek out new challenges.

The film adaptation's exploration of aging appears to be far more nuanced than the novel in terms of the ending that the two preserve for Sophie. While in the novel, Sophie completely turns back into her younger self with her reddish hair (Jones, 1986, p. 220), in a way restoring equilibrium, Miyazaki's adaptation allows Sophie to retain her grey hair. Upon seeing her new hair Howl exclaims: "Wow! Sophie, your hair looks just like starlight. It's beautiful", to which she ecstatically agrees, "You think so? So do I!" (1:53:15). It is a permanent yet beautiful alteration that has taken place as a result of aging not just physically but also in terms of wisdom and experience. Vieira (2018) agrees that Sophie's metamorphosis floats back and forth throughout the film to mirror her psychological age, the way she sees herself, her self-esteem, and how she wants to portray herself – the grey hair then becomes a way to hold onto the positive aspects that aging has to offer. In this manner, Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle* solemnizes aging and coming of age for both Howl and Sophie and in the process subverts both the representation of Japanese *Kawaii Shojō* and the Western kidult.

Conclusion

In summation, the film adaptation by placing the characters against the backdrop of war rewrites the concepts of western kidult and Japanese *kawaii*. Miyazaki's characters cannot afford the stagnant naivety of youth in a world rife with human ambition and mindless bloodshed. To survive, they have to be sympathetic towards others and take responsibility for their choices. Coming of age for Miyazaki is akin to making a painful transition, yet this transition is a necessary stepping stone for human survival. Howl Pendragon is an embodiment of kidult's refusal to take responsibility in the face of war. As Howl is forced to confront the conflict within him, his growth is depicted through a series of symbols and motifs, namely the walking castle, his hair and appearance, his heart, his transformation into a bird, and the meaning of staying human. Similarly, Sophie transforms from an unconfident, naïve, and self-doubting girl to a wise, assertive, and self-aware woman when she is cursed with old age. Old age in women for Miyazaki is not a curse but rather an opportunity to escape inhibiting conventions in patriarchal societies. Miyazaki's rendition as a result confronts the bitter reality of war and creates a coming-of-age narrative that prepares the adolescent audience to step out of their safe space and into the real world, a recurring motif in most of his films that a diverse audience can relate to.

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**DLSU Libraries' Collection Assessment about Philippine Languages
Collection and Collection Mapping of Filipino Reference List**

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which the De La Salle University (DLSU) Libraries collect print resources about Philippine languages (more than 70 dialects) and how successfully the DLSU libraries in acquiring resources about Philippine languages. It also gauges how the DLSU libraries support the curriculum of the College of Liberal Arts in terms of its collection. This study employs a descriptive research method. It uses collection assessment or the systematic evaluation of the quality of a library collection to determine the extent to which it meets the library's service goals and objectives and the information needs of its clientele. Data were extracted and culled from the library's information system, and tables and percentages were used to describe Philippine languages' current collection of print resources. The DLSU library has an excellent primary collection of resources about Philippine languages. However, the collection assessment highlights many reference materials can still be acquired from the market and added to the collection. The Filipiniana section was able to establish a decent collection that could cater to the needs of the faculty and students. The library still needs to be aggressive in the acquisition of library materials recommended as required readings in the class syllabi of each course. The result of the study provides a profile of the DLSU libraries' collection of Philippine languages and the extent of its collection building, and how it supports the curriculum. The result of the study can be used to create a comprehensive collection development plan.

Keywords: Philippine languages, collection mapping, collection assessment, Filipiniana materials, collection development

The earliest written records of Philippine history can be traced back to the coming of Spaniards to the country in the 15th century. However, it was believed that ancient inhabitants of the land were a diverse agglomeration of peoples who arrived from different parts of Asia, who maintained little contact with each other. Trading of goods in China, India, and other Southeast Asian countries was recorded. It had also influenced the culture of the people, such as the Sanskrit-based writing system in the 7th to 13th century. An archipelago influenced by various cultures in the region, it is not difficult to imagine that the country developed numerous languages or dialects. In 'Origins of the Philippine Languages', Cecilio Lopez mentions that there are about 70 languages in the country which can be traced back to Malayo-Polynesia. According to an older school of anthropologists, Malayo-Polynesia was peopled by migration from west to east. From India, these communities migrated southward into Indo-China and Indonesia and then spread northward to the Philippines and Formosa (Lopez, 1967).

The existence of several languages in the country was considered one of the reasons why the colonial Spaniards quickly conquered the Filipinos. Ancient Filipinos had a hard time planning and working together against the force of foreign conquerors because they did not understand each other. Five hundred years later, many of these languages are extinct while others are still widely used. Many of these languages, such as Bisaya (Cebuano), Ilongo (Iloilo), and Ilocano (Ilocos), are used in everyday conversation and printed materials including books, periodicals, and manuscripts. If left unchecked and not given enough attention, these languages will die. Introducing these languages to younger generations is essential, thus building a good collection of print resources about these Philippine languages will help to preserve and maintain their study and teaching.

Academic institutions such as De La Salle University's College of Liberal Arts and Filipino Department have a mission to build a community that will serve as a symbol of the university and, at the same time, function as an instrument in the enrichment and development of the Filipino language. To assist in the realization of this mission and to support their curriculum, DLSU Libraries need to acquire Filipiniana materials and resources that will augment the teaching, lecture, and research of the students and faculty in Philippine languages. In this regard, this study assesses and maps the collection of the DLSU Libraries in acquiring print resources about Philippine languages and the use of research and teaching of Filipino courses. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed:

1. To what extent do the DLSU Libraries collect print resources about Philippine languages?
2. How successfully do the DLSU Libraries in acquiring resources about Philippine languages?
3. How do the DLSU Libraries support the curriculum of the College of Liberal Arts, Filipino Department?

The study results provide a profile of the DLSU Libraries collection on Philippine languages by presenting its current status, which is used to determine its strengths and weaknesses. The results may also be used to determine the extent of its collection build-up with the Philippine National Bibliographies. And lastly, the paper maps the collection on the study and teaching of Filipino subjects and how it supports the curriculum of the Filipino department.

Collection Assessment

Why use collection assessment? According to Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (ODLIS), collection assessment is the systematic evaluation of the quality of a library collection to determine the extent to which it meets the library's service goals and objectives and the information needs of its clientele (ABC-CLIO > ODLIS > Odlis_C, n.d.). In a study by Johnson (2016), the difference between collection analysis and collection assessment is emphasized, focusing on why these tools are valuable within the library's strategic priorities. One quantitatively analyzes the library's collection by employing circulation rates, number of titles per subject area, and financial support on that particular subject in collection analysis. Collection analysis makes it possible to assess the cost-benefit of the resources, that is, if the resources that the patron needs and wants are being bought. At the same time, collection assessment is the qualitative analysis of a library's collection. It gauges the extent to which the library is purchasing the materials that users need. While collection analysis checks on what happens in the group, collection assessment catalyzes change, particularly what can be done to improve the collection.

In an article by Hyödynmaa, Ahlholm-Kannisto, and Nurminen (2010) entitled, 'How to evaluate library collections: a case study of collection mapping', the authors illustrated how to use collection mapping to evaluate and describe the subject-based collection in various universities in Finland. They applied collection mapping to gather data on subject-based collection and then utilize their users' usage. The study found that the collection mapping method can provide helpful information which is able to describe and present the current state of their collections. The data yielded by this study helps determine the strengths and weaknesses of their collection and show the results to the faculty concerned. Alternatively, in another study entitled, 'Indicators for collection evaluation: a new dimensional framework,' Borin and Yi (2008) propose that the two collection evaluation models, that is, collection-based and user-based collection assessment, can be bridged. Borin and Yi contend that doing so provides a different perspective to the literature full of practice-based assessment. It can implicate and offer a multidimensional approach that libraries can use and adapt to the specific situation. They further added that certain environmental factors need to be considered in collection assessment, such as the nature of the institution, levels, programs it offers, budget, pedagogy, new programs and growth direction, comparisons with similar institutions, and consortia.

The various collection assessments mentioned above give light to the researchers on the purpose and benefits that libraries can obtain in using these tools. Whether quantitative or qualitative methods are used – or a combination of both – the objective is to measure the library's collection vis-à-vis an established standard. In these terms, this study will employ collection assessment, mainly list checking, to determine if the DLSU Libraries could support the curriculum in the study and teaching of Filipino subjects and the acquisition of print resources about Philippine languages.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research method. Data were extracted and culled from the AnimoSearch (library system used in DLSU) and used tables and percentages to describe Philippine languages' current collection of print resources. In assessing the collection, this study utilizes a collection assessment method, that is, list checking. List checking is a qualitative method of determining the collection by comparing it against published or

standardized lists or bibliographies. In this study, the researchers used Philippine National Bibliographies (PNB) as the evaluation tool to assess the DLSU print collection about Philippines languages. The objective is to find out what titles listed in the Philippine National Bibliographies are or are not available in the DLSU Libraries collections. First, the researchers determine which entries per volume in PNB fit the category of Philippine languages. Keywords such as Language and languages, Philippine languages, Philippine dialects, Native languages, Native languages- study and teaching, Filipino languages, Filipino languages-study and teaching, multilingual education- Philippines, and so forth, were used to determine the subject quickly. It must also be noted that the researchers opted to choose only the titles of printed books related to Philippine languages and their teaching. Titles in different formats or types such as theses, dissertations, and textbooks were excluded. After the titles in PNB were selected, using the AnimoSearch, each title identified as being about or related to Philippine languages was searched. To quickly note the titles, coding was employed. Number one (1) indicates that a title has an exact match in the collection. Zero (0) was used to indicate that a title does not exist in the collection. A summary in tabulated form was made to interpret the results easily. To map the collection of DLSU Libraries and how it supports the curriculum of the Filipino department, the references and reading lists in class syllabi of each Filipino subject were checked against the AnimoSearch. The exact title and edition were checked for the process of coding and tabulation, just as it was in PNB list checking. The data were then analyzed using the measure of central tendency, that is, mean. Frequency and percentage were also employed to present the data and show its distribution.

Results and Discussion

DLSU Collection of Print Resources about Philippine Languages

To answer research question number one—To what extent do the DLSU Libraries collect print resources about Philippine languages?—the researchers asked for help from staff in charge of the library systems. The staff culled all the print titles about Philippine languages from the AnimoSearch and forwarded them to the researchers for tabulation and summary. In culling the data, the researchers used various subject entries that are related to Philippine languages. Some of these include Philippine languages, Bilingualism—Philippines, Oriental languages—Reform, Filipinos language, Pilipino languages, Aklanon language—Study and teaching, Batan language—Study and teaching, Biko language—Study and teaching, Cebuano language—Study and teaching, Iloko language—Study and teaching, Pampanga language—Study and teaching, Tagalog language—Study and teaching, etc.

Table 1
Number of Print Titles about Philippine Languages

Library Section	Total Number	On-shelf	Lost/Missing	In-cataloging	For Binding	Withdrawn
Filipiniana	2183	2074	75	27	4	3
Special Collection	990	982	1	7	0	0
Circulation	10	8	2	0	0	0
Laguna	235	227	0	8	0	0
BGC	10	10	0	0	0	0
BBLRC	25	25	0	0	0	0

Table 1 shows the summary of print titles about Philippine languages from the DLSU Libraries collections. As shown, most print titles are located in the Filipiniana section and are available on the shelf. It was followed by the special collection, while the section with the least number of print titles about Philippine languages is the circulation section. It must also be noted that there is a good number of lost/missing titles in the Filipiniana section. It is expected that the Filipiniana section holds the most number of titles about Philippine languages since it is imperative that the collection focus on supporting the curriculum on Filipino subjects and courses. The number of volumes per title was not included in the culling of data.

Upon further reviewing the data, the oldest title in the DLSU Libraries collection was dated 1849; however, it was withdrawn. The oldest title available on the shelf was published in 1860. The DLSU Libraries Filipiniana section has 15 titles published from 1908-1920, eight of which were already withdrawn in terms of the number of titles per publication year. From 1922-1950, 56 published titles, 34 of which were available on the shelf, seven were lost/missing, and 14 were withdrawn. From 1951-1960, 50 published titles, 37 were available on the shelf, three were lost/missing and ten were withdrawn. From 1961-1970, 265 published titles, 189 were available on the shelf, 12 were withdrawn, and 25 were lost/missing. From 1971-1980, 408 published titles, 278 were available on the shelf, nine were withdrawn, and 20 were lost/missing. From 1981-1990, 439 were published titles, 361 were available on the shelf, two for binding, three in-cataloging, two lost/missing, and seven withdrawn. From 1991-2000, 376 published titles, 338 of which were available on the shelf, four were withdrawn, three lost/missing, two in-cataloging, and one for binding. From 2001-2010, 609 published titles 600 were available on the shelf, three were lost/missing, two were withdrawn, and four were for binding. From 2011-2019, 229 published titles, 205 were available on the shelf, 22 were in-cataloging, and two were for binding.

It is noted that in the case of the Special Collection, from 1860-1865, it has ten published titles, nine of which were available on the shelf and one in cataloging. Table 2 shows the summary

of the number of print materials by period. It can be noted that the decade with the most number of Filipiniana titles is from 1971-1980 and from 1981-1990.

Table 2

Number of Print Materials by Period

Period	On the shelf	In-cataloging	Lost/Missing
1901-1920	26	0	0
1921-1950	28	1	0
1951-1960	28	0	0
1961-1970	123	0	0
1971-1980	291	0	1
1981-1990	208	0	1
1991-2000	166	2	0
2001-2010	62	1	0
2011-2019	23	1	0

Figure 1

Print Titles about Philippine Languages by Publication Year

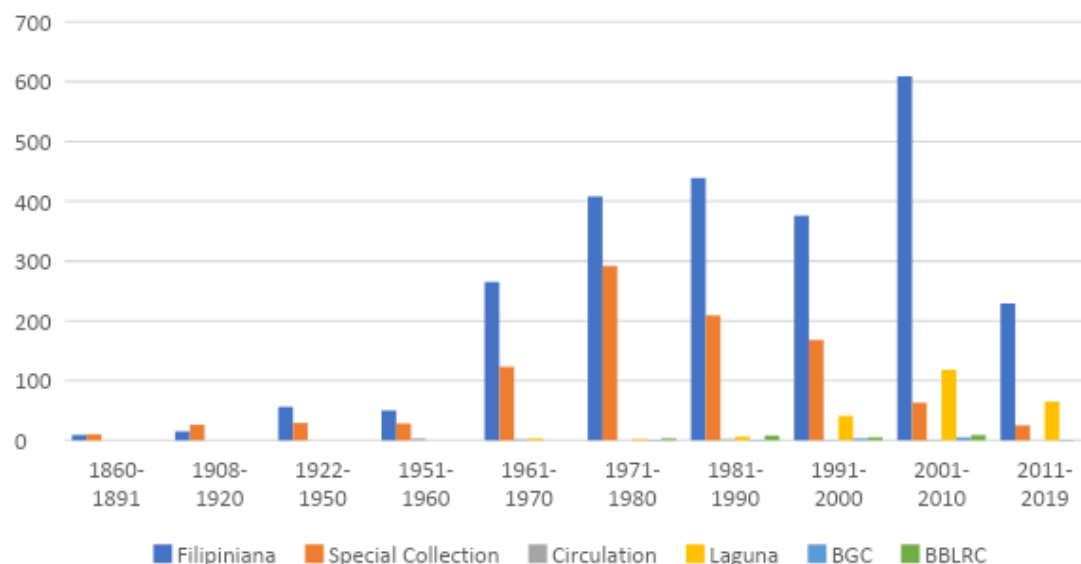


Figure 1 shows the overall distribution of the number of titles per section and publication year. Based on the figure, only the Filipiniana and Special Collection sections have print titles published from 1860-1950. However, most of the print titles in the Filipiniana section were either withdrawn from the shelves or lost/missing. Unlike the print titles in the Special Collections, most if not all are still available on the shelf. It can also be noted that the Filipiniana collection has more print titles published from the decade 1971-1980, 1981-1990, 1991-2000, and 2001-2010. The reason for this might be because since many titles were published during

these decades and are still available in the market. The most print titles available for the Special Collections are from 1971-1980 and 1981-1990. For other sections, most of their titles were published 1991 up to 2019. This may be because these sections are new and so they acquired the latest titles only.

DLSU Libraries Collections vis-a-vis Philippine National Bibliography

To determine how successful the DLSU Libraries were in acquiring resources about Philippine languages, the researchers tediously checked titles about Philippine languages from 2010-2020 of the Philippine National Bibliography. After which, the researchers checked these titles from the Animosearch to determine if the DLSU Libraries have them in their collection. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of titles that appeared in PNB, and that matches in the Animosearch.

Table 3

Titles Appeared in Philippine National Bibliography (PNB) and Matches in Animosearch

PNB	Number of titles	Found exact edition in DLSU Libraries	Not found in DLSU Libraries	Found in DLSU Libraries but different editions	Found in DLSU Libraries but missing on the shelf	Found in DLSU Libraries but online edition
2010	19	2	10	2	0	5
2011	122	4	78	15	15	10
2012	19	2	16	0	0	1
2013	12	3	9	0	0	0
2014	43	9	33	1	0	0
2015	38	3	32	0	0	3
2016	22	6	14	2	0	0
2017	20	2	18	0	0	0
2018	15	2	13	0	0	0
2019	18	4	12	0	0	0

This data shows that the majority of the titles in PNB are not found in the DLSU Libraries collections. Out of 328 titles in PNB, only 35 titles or 10.67%, were found in Animosearch with its exact edition. There are also other 20 titles or 6.09% which were found in Animosearch but with different editions. Furthermore, there are 15 titles, or 4.57%, found in Animosearch but marked as missing on the shelf and 19 titles or 5.79% which were found in Animosearch but online edition only. It must be noted that 71.65% or 235 titles about Philippine languages in PNB were not found in Animosearch. This data suggests that DLSU Libraries still need to acquire more titles about Philippine languages that were listed in PNB. It is in parallel with Kristick (2019), who notes that through the use of bibliography, it was possible to identify the strengths and gaps in the collection with regards to books present in the standardized bibliography. Based on the culled data, many of these titles are published within the last ten years, and the majority of its publishers are local publishers and distributors. In addition, titles found in Animosearch but missing and titles with different editions must also be replaced and updated. This also concurs with a study by Penaflor (2012) on her assessment of the Filipiniana

collection of DLSU vis-à-vis the Philippine National Bibliography. Her research also concludes that the DLSU Libraries' Filipiniana collection is strong in disciplines relevant to the university's course offering, such as Language, Social Science, and History. However, on checking the collection vis-à-vis the PNB, she notes how many titles in PNB do not exist in the Filipiniana collection. The results of her study serve as a basis in developing strategies to be used in acquiring these titles.

DLSU Libraries Collections vis-à-vis Class Syllabi of Filipino Department

In terms of how DLSU Libraries support the Curriculum College of Liberal Arts (Filipino Department), the researchers retrieved the updated class syllabi of every Filipino subject from both undergraduate and graduate programs of DLSU. Then, the researchers collated the print titles found on their list of references and look if each title exists in DLSU library collections.

Table 4

Number of Titles in Class Syllabi of Undergraduate Filipino Subjects

Undergraduate Filipino subjects	Total number of titles in class syllabi	Found in DLSU Libraries	Not found in DLSU Libraries	Found in DLSU Libraries but different editions
BASIFI 1	4	1	2	1
BASIFI 2/3	4	1	2	1
FILDLAR	7	4	2	1
FPLAR	3	0	3	0
GEFILI 2	10	6	4	0
LCFILIC	1	1	0	0
PHSAKAD	10	1	9	0
PHSAKMI	4	3	0	1
PHSDIAS	7	4	1	2
PHSKALI	7	4	3	0
PHSREMS	16	12	1	3
PHSRETS	4	2	2	0
PHSSOCI	24	22	2	0
PHSTURO	18	6	10	2
WIKAKUL	29	20	8	1
Total	148	87	49	12

Table 4 depicts a summary of the list of references in the class syllabi of every Filipino subject in undergraduate courses in the College of Liberal Arts. The data shows that in the undergraduate courses, the majority of the titles in the class syllabi, 58.78% can be found in Animosearch, while 8.10% can be found in Animosearch but with different editions. On the other hand, there are 49 titles or 33.11% titles in the class syllabi that cannot be found in AnimoSearch. This data suggests that DLSU libraries are somewhat successful in acquiring print titles that are being used as reference materials in undergraduate Filipino subjects. However, the number of titles that cannot be found in Animosearch is still significant, which would require DLSU libraries to strategize and acquire those titles in order to meet the

minimum requirements of print materials in undergraduate Filipino class syllabi. Furthermore, the titles found in Animosearch but with different editions must be updated.

Table 5

Number of Titles in Class Syllabi of Graduate Filipino Subjects

Graduate Filipino Subjects	Total number of titles in class syllabi	Found in DLSU Libraries	Not found in DLSU Libraries	Found in DLSU Libraries but different editions
AFL501M/D	19	14	3	2
AFL602M	36	31	4	1
AFL628D	19	6	5	8
AFL628M	19	9	7	4
AFL707D	4	1	3	1
AFL763D	3	0	2	1
AFL521M	9	1	5	3
Total	109	62	29	20

Table 5 illustrates the summary of the list of the references in the class syllabi of every Filipino subject in the graduate courses of the College of Liberal Arts. The data shows that in graduate courses, the majority of titles in class syllabi, 56.88% of the print references in the class syllabi can be found in Animosearch. There are also 18.34% references available but different editions from the class syllabi. Though 29 out of 109 titles or 26.61%, cannot be found in Animosearch, it is still a significant number to be considered.

In both undergraduate and graduate Filipino subjects, of 257 print titles in class syllabi, a total of 149 titles or 57.98% were found in DLSU Libraries, while 12.45% were found in DLSU libraries but with different editions and most of these editions were older editions. On the other hand, a total of 78 titles or 30.35% were not found in DLSU libraries. This data suggests that even if the DLSU libraries provided the majority of the print references mentioned in the class syllabi of each Filipino subject, the library still needs to acquire more materials on Filipino subjects considering the reference list of each Filipino subject. For the other print materials with different editions, these titles must be updated and replaced.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Philippine languages, just like any other language, are living organisms. They can survive, wither, or disappear forever depending on how they are nurtured and used in everyday lives. Aside from using these languages in conversation, producing and providing literature and materials on their use, study, and teaching, or even for entertainment purposes, will significantly affect the community in maintaining and preserving them, passing them down to generations. If DLSU libraries are to be a leading research library, they must be one of the front runners in supporting and cultivating the use and preservation by acquiring materials that will help the community in its study and teaching. Though the DLSU libraries have an excellent primary collection of resources about Philippine languages, the results of the collection assessment pointed out that many print reference materials can still be acquired in the market and can be added to the collection. The results of the study are in parallel to what Bobal, Mellinger, and Avery (2008) note about how collection assessment can be used to give light

on various ways that libraries contribute to the academic environment. These results may also serve as an avenue for making the libraries more visible on the campus and in dealing scholarly communication issues and their impact on library collections. The DLSU libraries can consider using the PNB list of titles to select and acquire materials about Philippine languages. Updating the collection development plan and acquisition strategies must be recalibrated to develop a more meaningful and purposeful library collection about Philippine languages. The DLSU libraries may also collaborate with other institutions, both public and private, to further improve the acquisition of Filipiniana materials and the use and access of it. It is in parallel with Ping's (2022) study on the collection assessment based on the quality-utility-value theory, in which she observes that coordination with public libraries, university libraries, and other scientific research institutions will help in addressing the information needs of the whole society.

When it comes to supporting the College of Liberal Arts curriculum, Department of Filipino, the library is doing well in building up the collection that provides references for Filipino courses. The different sections, particularly the Filipiniana section, were able to establish a decent collection enough to cater to the needs of the faculty and students. However, the libraries must still be more aggressive in acquiring library resources that are being recommended as required readings/materials in the class syllabi of each Filipino subject. Consultation and collaboration with faculty will significantly help build up an excellent collection that genuinely caters to the needs of both the faculty and students. In addition to this, promotion and making use of the Leganto reading list (feature of AnimoSearch) will also expedite the request-and-purchase relationship between the faculty and librarians.

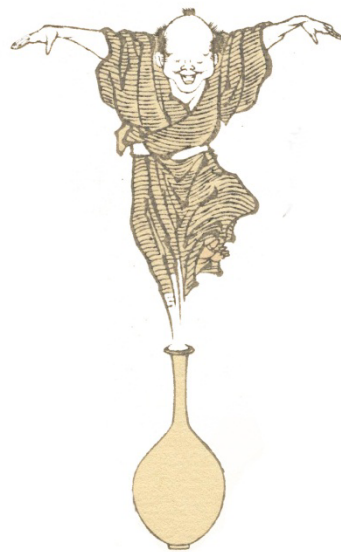
The overall results of this study help to inform the selection and acquisition of resources about Philippine languages and references for the use and research of Filipino subjects. The results can also be used to create a comprehensive collection development plan to improve the library's collection about Philippine languages and the study and teaching of Filipino courses. This will significantly affect the budget proposal, acquisition plan, and future acquisition strategies. However, this study focused only on the collection assessment of print materials available in the DLSU Libraries' collections. A prospective study must be made that includes the print materials and the online or electronic materials available in the library. Furthermore, to update this study, others can also focus on incorporating the PNB list of titles from 2009 down since many Filipiniana references were published during those times and were acquired already by the DLSU Libraries. Lastly, as mentioned in the related literature, future studies can be made using collection assessment, both user-based and collection-based, to assess the collection better. Considering the usage of the library collection will also help the DLSU Libraries determine if what they are building is the needs and wants of its clientele.

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**Reframing the Pillars of Power: The Incarnation of Language and Pleasure
in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale***

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Abstract

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a well-accomplished novel that won countless awards and became a part of the canon soon after publication in 1985. This dystopian fiction circles around Offred, a handmaid living under a totalitarian regime. The subjects in this regime are meticulously monitored. Power is exercised vastly on every terrain it has access to in this dystopia. This paper investigates the vehicles of power in light of the contemporary media scholar and cultural critic John Fiske's cultural theories. Language, a significant terrain of power, is analysed both as a vehicle of power and an opposing force. Furthermore, we will illuminate how pleasure and discipline are involved in the exercise of power within the Republic of Gilead. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, resistance is still producing itself even under a totalitarian government, and the subjects under that regime constantly display resistance wherever possible. Therefore, they can be considered neither as neutral objects nor as commodities. Moreover, we will demonstrate how pleasure is a significant cause for subordination of and resistance by the subjects. Lastly, this article elucidates how subjects resist the dominant power through Guerrilla Tactics.

Keywords: discipline, language, pleasure, power, Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Among the critically acclaimed works of Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* managed to become a bestseller shortly after its publication in 1985. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a narrative of the enslavement of the female body and soul in a wasteland of patriarchal dominance. In this world, a totalitarian political force has overthrown the United States' government and has established itself as an oppressive regime called the Republic of Gilead. Atwood depicts a dystopia in which the sterility of humankind has become a global concern. It is a place where "women are totally under the control of male members of the patriarchal society" (Zarrinjooe & Kalantarian, 2017, p. 66). Moreover, liberty and individuality are empty signifiers in the context of Gilead. Even names and identities are imposed on the subjects by the system. In this dystopia, "women have no rights over their physical and emotional selves" (Tennant, 2019, p. 12), and they are considered as means for reproduction and are enchained to the dominant patriarchal ideology. These women are called handmaids and they "are fertile women young enough to bear children" (Tennant, 2019, p. 12). The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to elaborate on how power and language become two significant pillars of identity making. Moreover, we intend to illustrate the contribution of pleasure in localising and imperialising power.

With its long history, dystopian fiction provides an excellent framework to study the concept of power and sexual politics under which oppressive dystopian forces control the subject and the body. The bodies of handmaids in this context become a site for investigations. Moreover, "dystopias essentially deal with power" (Bloom, 2004, p. 82). Most dystopian fiction deals with the socio-political subject and in recent decades, due to environmental concerns, some works of dystopian fiction have portrayed a post-apocalyptic world resulting from global warming and environmental crises. In the case of *The Handmaid's Tale*, the radiation, pollution, and subjugation create a perfect dystopia for examining the circulation and implementation of political power by a totalitarian regime. Furthermore, "dystopias are notable for the obsessiveness, if not the finesse, with which their elites attempt to eliminate dissent" (Hanson, 1994, p. 56). In *The Handmaid's Tale* such obsessiveness is portrayed at its utmost. Offred, the protagonist, is a woman forced to comply with the rules oppressing the female body under the extreme inculcation of subjugation.

In the light of Fiske's cultural theories, *The Handmaid's Tale* will be analysed to illuminate how power works within Gilead's oppressive system and how this regime constructs subjects and identities in the novel. In this context, Cultural Studies is to be regarded as "the expression of a projected alliance between various social groups" (Jameson, 1993, p. 17). Our approach within the paradigms of Cultural Studies attempts to illustrate how power works in Gilead and how two decisive forces (people and the dominant power) are constantly at war with one another. *The Handmaid's Tale* calls for much critical analysis regarding the concept of power. "Atwood explores in her novels the ways in which individuals become implicated in power relationships" (Özdemir, 2003, p. 57). On the other hand, Atwood depicts a society where women are under extreme tyranny, allowing numerous feministic readings of the novel. "Atwood seeks to examine the political nature of language use" (Hogsette, 1997, p. 265) by depicting the power of language in shaping identities. It is, therefore, intended to illuminate some of the recent research conducted on these two issues. It is a fact that one cannot live outside of an ideology since "subjectivity is primarily an experience" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 6), and all our experiences are taking place within ideologies. In our everyday lives, we are surrounded by countless discourses which sometimes are in an alliance and sometimes in opposition to one another. This leads to a network of interrelated ideological discourses. Mirzayee (2019) draws a link between the Bible and the ideology being practised in the Republic of Gilead; she asserts, "the leaders of Gilead have found scriptural justifications for

their treatment of women” (p. 117). The ideology serving a totalitarian government must always be more potent than any form of government since the hegemony needs that kind of superiority to take precedence over subjects’ civil and human rights. To win people’s consent in such an authoritarian state, in this case, Gilead, is almost impossible because “...religious beliefs stop being what they are and become instead something else: an ideology” (Rachik, 2009, p. 347). Religion does not become a vehicle of ideology. Instead, it becomes *the ideology* itself.

Many tenets of critical approaches concerning the essence of power and how power works in its sociological sense are derived primarily from Marxism and as McQuarie & Spaulding (1989) point out “the concept of power occupies a central place in Marxist theory” (p. 347). In this regard, Roozbeh (2018) investigates the novel in terms of Marxist theories considering the handmaids to be commodities. He further argues that “not only do they [not] possess anything in the society of the proletariat but also they themselves are considered like commodities and goods which are possessed by the bourgeoisie” (p. 19). This assumption is quite radical and extreme. It is indeed reasonable to address the similarities between handmaids and the proletarians. The significant advantage of Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* is that it “rejects the negative discourse patterns of male-oriented dystopian fiction” (Briedik, 2021, p. 59). Atwood’s narrative illustrates the active participation of female characters in the foundation of power relations. Consequently, this participation destabilizes the male-oriented dystopia.

Zarrinjooee and Kalantarian analyse the novel in the light of Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist theory. They claim the central discourse of oppression for women is biology: “in *The Handmaid’s Tale* biology is the key factor for woman’s oppression. Patriarchy has always convinced women concerning their biology” (Zarrinjooee & Kalantarian, 2017, p. 68), asserting that women are biologically inferior. Nevertheless, the fundamental justification of tyranny and oppression both on male and female subjects is rooted in an extreme religious ideology. Atwood’s Gilead was “a society that valued many of the same rigid Old Testament principles” (Moldovan, 2020, p. 104). Even for the justification of the role of women as only child bearers, references to different versions of the Bible are given: “the biblical story in which the barren Rachel directs her husband Jacob to ‘go in unto’ her servant Billah” (Neuman, 2006, p. 857). The biblical references are to feed the dominant ideology. “Atwood looks at the patriarchal biblical history from the perspective of its female ‘victims’, however, only some men in this tale are given some privileges” (Staels, 1995, p. 455). Even during sexual intercourse, which is conducted in a ceremonial sense for particular men, they are not entitled to orgasmic pleasure. In other words, with the female body/subject in shackles, men’s bodies/identities would eventually become mere sperm vehicles for producing more children. One after the other, these children would be transformed and shaped into hosts for the parasitic regime.

The Republic of Gilead does not maintain power only through the apparatuses of religious ideology. Other than the repressive state apparatuses, the ideological apparatuses are also at hand to tighten the grasp of dominance over the subjects. Language is indeed a robust vehicle in the formation of an ideology since “language becomes the site of power in order to practice its objectives” (Namjoo, 2019, p. 87). Kouhestani endeavours to elucidate the role of language and discourse in shaping and cementing ideology in the novel. She argues that “language is the foundation for thoughts and those who can control the language can also restrict the thought” (2013, p. 612). Furthermore, Kouhestani claims that Offred “has strict control over her own language” (2013, p. 612). She does not have a language of her own, and there is no language of one’s own. It is in the essence of language to be multiaccental. Therefore, what is

consequential is how language is practised in different social contexts. This, in turn, validates the multiaccentuality of the language. This notion will be further explored in relation to the subjugation and resistance in Gilead.

The Localising and Imperialising Power

Power is not just a social agent which determines almost everything we encounter regularly in our everyday lives. Power “is a systematic set of operations upon people which works to ensure the maintenance of social order” (Fiske, 2011, p. 11). Maintaining social order is not necessarily limited to the social contexts. However, as Foucault (1992) states, “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, p. 93). An entity that determines almost everything in a social context and exists everywhere and controls our understanding of knowledge, truth, and reality assiduously represents itself in the thoughts and feelings of every individual. Fiske divides power into two oppositional categories. On the one hand, it deals with “imperialising power” (Fiske, 2016, p. 11), which is the power of the dominant that aims to enlarge its scope of dominance, and on the other hand, there exists “localising power” (Fiske, 2016, p. 11), which aims to preserve a space for every individual as an opposite force to imperialising power.

Deeply rooted in Marxism, Cultural Studies has established itself in interdisciplinary fields from literature to sociology. “It would be a mistake to see cultural studies as a new discipline” (Turner, 2009, p. 9) since many tenets of cultural studies have existed long before the formation of cultural studies as a school of thought. Cultural studies’ revolutionary significance in theory is how it creates links between fields of study to shape a comprehensive understanding of the subject it probes. Moreover, it does not, in any sense, limit itself to one field of study. “Cultural Studies was in part the consequence of the deconstructive impact of mass culture itself in the human sciences” (Beverley, 1992, p. 19). For decades, Marxist theorists were largely concerned with the concept of power as possession of the bourgeoisie class; popular culture was usually seen as a result of the dominant ideology.

Culture is where meaning is constantly being produced and reproduced. The production and reproduction of meaning are equal to constant binary forces at stake. “Culture is the constant process of producing meanings of and from our social experience, and such meanings necessarily produce a social identity for the people involved” (Fiske, 2011, p. 1). In this sense, individuals become subjects to the production of meaning since it directly involves shaping their identities. Moreover, “there has been an intellectual tradition dedicated to analysing the role that culture plays in both resistance and repression” (McClennen, 2011, p. 192). Therefore, cultural critics can mainly focus on the formation of power, how it works, and how resistance is born in social contexts. This is done by understanding culture and how it provokes meaning as an agent of resistance and sometimes of power. “Culture... is a constant succession of social practices; it is therefore inherently political” (Fiske, 2011, p. 1). Analysing these constant social practices leads to a better understanding of power and meaning, which illustrates the idea of subject formation. The localising power is the power of the subordinate. Therefore, it fails to act as efficiently as the imperialising power. Nevertheless, it is far from being ineffective. The production of meaning takes place constantly in both of these oppositional powers. On the one hand, the imperialising power attempts to enhance hegemony. On the other hand, the localising power seeks to provide space in which individuals can define themselves through personal preferences rather than collective hegemony. “Any social system... needs a system of meanings and values... to hold it in place or to help motivate it to change” (Fiske, 2016, p. 13).

The influence of the localising power depends mainly on how imperialising power has managed to induce hegemony.

Power utilises everything at hand to ensure the stability of the terrain it dominates, including the realm of meaning. For this reason, it contributes largely to the formation of culture, which involves “the constant process of producing meanings” (Fiske, 2011, p. 1). In Althusserian terms, it uses both ideological and repressive state apparatuses. A repressive form of power that has been successfully hegemonized is discipline. “Discipline is the means by which people’s consciousness and behaviour are adapted to the requirements of power as it is applied in a specific social organisation” (Fiske, 2016, p. 56). Power does not rely only on one thing to ensure its maintenance, and discipline is what proves to be quite efficient in sustaining subordination. The fundamental place where discipline is practised is the body, “for the body is the primary site of social experience” (Fiske, 2016, p. 41). Therefore, it is the most fundamental and significant site of physical struggle. Foucault (1992) considers a disciplined society “populated by docile, obedient, normalised subjects” (p. 255) which is a society where bodies are thoroughly disciplined. If the dominant power has enough authority over the dominant culture, it can determine the production of meanings in the social context which directly contributes to the identity of the subjects. Gilead, in this sense, seeks to enlarge its control over the realm of meaning.

Whatever that takes place in a social context is in the terrain of language. This includes knowledge and truth. They are both the products of the language of a specific episteme. Language creates meaning and therefore it is “a crucial site of struggle, for all our circulation systems it is the one with the widest terrain of operation” (Fiske, 2016, p. 30). The struggle in the terrain of language is interminable. It never stops operating since meaning never stops being produced. “Though it is available to all members of a society, it is neither neutral nor equally available” (Fiske, 2016, p. 30). Offred and other maids have very little access to the language, which in return deprived them of contributing to their independent subjectivity. This availability of language determines the power of the dominant and the imperial. To whomever language is available, there is a path to create knowledge, truth, and a sense of reality. Language creates a network of meanings which in turn create a social structure. This social structure is dominated by power relations that dominate the subject through producing meaning. These “meanings necessarily produce a social identity for the people involved” (Fiske, 2011, p. 1). Consequently, the purpose of creating meanings is to construct identities.

The Multiaccentuality of Language

Language permits the existence of discourse, and the shaping of hegemony begins with discourse. Through this, the subject becomes “an effect of power relations but also actively participates in and affirms those practices that emanate from and support that power configuration” (Rae, 2021, p. 90). Rae adds, the subject “is not fully determined by those power relations and so is able to reflect on and act in accordance with or against them” (p. 90). Though language is available primarily to the imperialising power, it appears to be in service of localising power. “Language is multiaccentual. That is, it always has the potential to be spoken with different accents that inflect its meanings towards the interests of different social formations” (Fiske, 2016, p. 31). This multiaccentuality of language accounts for constant resistance to the imperialising power. As a result, “this imperialising use of language represses this multiaccentual potential and attempts to establish the singular accent” (Fiske, 2016, p. 31). This imperialising power reproduces itself through hegemony or in a repressive act. Power fails

to cope with what is unknown. It also fails to cope with too much differentiation, for power seeks to identify and eradicate the opposing force.

Exercising power for the party which utilises power is always pleasurable. In other words, pleasure resides in exercising power to bend the subversive; “pleasure exists only in opposition to unpleasure” (Fiske, 2016, p. 31). Hence, what becomes pleasurable for those in charge of power is unpleasure to those who have no access to power. Humans are unconsciously resistant to power and that resistance gives them a sense of pleasure. “Pleasure is closely related to power; for the powerless, the pleasure in resisting/ evading power is at least as great as the pleasure of exerting power for the powerful” (Fiske, 2011, p. 17). Resisting/evading power occurs on several grounds. It appears primarily in producing meaning where the subjects create oppositional meanings in relation to the imperialising power. “Within the production and circulation of these meanings lies pleasure” (Fiske, 2011, p. 17). Thus, the subjects physically and mentally resist the discipline, and that gives them a sense of pleasure. This form of pleasure does not need to be explicit in the eyes of the imperialising power. This form of resistance repeats and restructures itself just as language is being used in an everlasting play of signifiers. Therefore, the resistance is provoked as a result of the pleasure it generates. This cycle of provoking and stimulating resistance and pleasure occurs as the language itself is used in an endless flow.

Representation of Discipline as a Vehicle of Power in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Every political body depends mainly on discipline as a potent force that acts as a corrective agent and creates norms among different social ranks. The normal is what power can control since, firstly, the normal is known, limited, and framed. Furthermore, it always reacts the same to the performativity of power. Thus, the normal can always be subjugated without opposition. “The known can be controlled, and the unknown is beyond control” (Fiske, 2011, p. 17). *The Handmaid's Tale* represents a totalitarian governing system that exploits everything at hand to ensure its subjects' subjugation and the perpetual maintenance of the normal. The attempt to discipline is through control, and control occurs where possible. “Gilead regime utilises the totalitarian theocracy to subjugate women and use their bodies as political instruments which can produce future generation” (Sadeghi & Mirzapour, 2020, p. 3). The physical body of the subject becomes highly significant in the process of discipline.

As earlier stated, the body is the site of control and discipline. Offred is a handmaid who has lost her sense of identity under the control of the imperialising power. “I’m remembering my feet on these sidewalks... and what I used to wear on them. Sometimes, it was shoes for running, with cushioned soles and breathing holes” (Atwood, 2019, p. 33), she says. Offred, as a subject produced by and living under this totalitarian government, is banned from wearing whatever she likes. She is to wear only what the government desires. She feels alienated from her own self because of her inability to use whatever commodity she wishes to choose. This creates an identity crisis since “all commodities are consumed as much for their meanings, identities, and pleasures as they are for their material function” (Fiske, 2011, p. 4). What the capitalist world has given us is a sense of belonging to the commodities we use. It gives us pleasure since it defines our individuality. Having eliminated all these commodities creates alienation. In Offred's case, as with all women under totalitarian regimes, the body is a realm that, if conquered, the subject is to be dominated and crippled at the mercy of the patriarchy's imperialising power. The Gilead regime limits bodies to define the desirable subject and controls them. However, limits put into place and forcefully exercised create the potency for transgression. As Shams (2020) observes, “for transgression to be possible, there need to be

limits” (p. 76), and this takes us to “the intertwined interplay of transgression and limits” (p. 76). In other words, “wherever there is a limit, there lies a possibility for transgressing that limit, which reveals the instability of the limit that is there to be transgressed” (Shams, 2020, p. 76). Thus, in the body politic of Gilead, the female body is a battleground of forces, patriarchy against the transgressing female identity.

On the other hand, the reasoning to forbid commodities for individuals by the Republic of Gilead is quite remarkable. “We were a society dying, said Aunt Lydia, of too much choice” (Atwood, 2019, p. 34). Aunt Lydia represents the Republic of Gilead; Offred quotes her on many occasions to illustrate the justifications of the imperialising power. The imperialising power feels threatened since it lacks the resources to cope with individual differences and impede transgressions. That is why the power of Gilead seeks homogeneity. However, “the changes in a regime of power must occur at all levels, and finally, must occur at the most micro level, that of the body” (Fiske, 2016, p. 55). The bodies in Gilead are the smallest constituent segments of the body politic. Therefore, there is a constant struggle in the process to preserve control over one’s body. The body that transgresses the norms reveals the vulnerability of the imperialising power. “The staging of transgression unfolds a paradox inherent in our existence.” That paradox, according to Shams, is that despite “being constructed as affected, regulated and vulnerable beings, we can resist” what forces us into coercion (2020, p. 76), and bend or break the very norms that define our body and existence within a political regime.

From this stance, culture is an opponent of the power bloc and can be seen as “a relatively unified, relatively stable alliance of social forces” (Fiske, 2011, p. 8). Utilising the power bloc, the imperialising power attempts to create a unified society “to control, structure, and minimise social differences so that they serve its interests” (Fiske, 2011, p. 8). Similarly, when Aunt Lydia argues that too much liberty is something despicable, it is because freedom is a threat to the Republic of Gilead’s power. “If you have a lot of things, said Aunt Lydia, you get too attached to this material world and you forget about spiritual values. You must cultivate poverty of spirit” (Atwood, 2019, p. 76). Once more, the imperialising power attempts to hegemonize its subjects by creating a discourse that appears to be for the benefit of its subject. This discourse prioritises the spirit over the body to deny the body the freedom it desires. In other words, Aunt Lydia introduces liberty as a threat, and then she defers any desires for liberty to the afterlife’s spiritual journey. Lydia’s religious stance divorces the perception of the normal body and the self from any thoughts of freedom. She creates an ‘other’ body which desires nothing but the poverty of spirit and champions it as the best state of the self and spirit. This religious discourse proves to be among the most convincing discourses because this discourse controls the body and the spirit of the subject by making the ‘other’ body. This other body is then denied existence through the norms. The other body diverges from what an ideal subject needs to be; it transgresses the norms of the imposed ideology and challenges the unity of power.

Discipline begins with control over the body, but, it does not stop there. It goes beyond the individual’s body and is at its utmost condition in the Republic of Gilead. It is not just about controlling the body to bring order and discipline. Power controls knowledge’s formation and circulation as well, and “the most powerful knowledge is disciplinary.” Discipline produces this knowledge, and “it disciplines... its object” (Fiske, 2016, p. 68). Shams (2020) argues that “the subject is performatively constructed through power relations and in ethical relation to the other (human or non-human)” (p. 43). The oppressive regime of Gilead is the non-human other that imposes the definitive norms on the human body to destroy the ‘other’ body. This regime also removes the ethical relations and replaces them with distorted norms that serve its interests

in oppressing bodies and minds. After the destruction of ethical relations, the body under this regime transgresses the boundaries of the normal body to become ‘other’ to the imperialising power. Since the self is incoherent and unstable, it transgresses the imposed limit to make the political regime unstable and incoherent and bring back the eradicated ethical relations. “Wherever there is a limit, there lies a possibility for transgression of that limit, which reveals the instability of the limit that is there to be transgressed” (Shams, 2020, p. 49). The Republic of Gilead begins by eliminating all the knowledge that resists its ideology, including the previous government’s knowledge because the former networks of knowledge are clear threats to its existence. A replacement for the old knowledge is needed to redefine the body and self and circulate the knowledge of what the Republic of Gilead can tolerate. Therefore, it creates knowledge as a means of control and a tenet of hegemony, which can be understood through Foucauldian episteme. Gilead’s regime creates and circulates the knowledge it desires. Then, it makes sure all bodies abide by this knowledge. They will face disciplinary actions that entail the created knowledge if they do not. “Non-coercive control can only be exercised over people through such knowledge” (Fiske, 2016, p. 68). Although the Republic of Gilead is an absolutist system, it constantly needs disciplinary knowledge that keeps the body and mentality in check. The knowledge and the power entailing it create counterforces as well.

Power is constantly being practised when discipline is exercised on individuals. Discipline, however, becomes multifunctional when practised. It involves both elements of submission and empowerment. The empowerment generates resistance against the centralising political oppression. “A disciplined person is one who submits him or herself to the power of a particular way of knowing/ behaving in order to participate in that power” (Fiske, 2016, p. 62). Whenever the subjects yield to the discipline, they participate in that form of power since there might be a form of privilege for the well-disciplined subjects. In other words, subjects that are well embedded and disciplined within the power-knowledge network can transgress the system’s limits. In this sense, power also constructs intelligibly gendered identities: “intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (Butler, 1989, p. 22). In this vein, Janine represents an intelligible gendered identity who corresponds directly and indirectly to the needs of the dominant social norms. “It’s Janine, telling about how she was gang-raped at fourteen and had an abortion. She told the same story last week. She seemed almost proud of it, while she was telling. It may not even be true” (Atwood, 2019, p. 86). A female body invaded and abused by patriarchal order is the law of the republic being upheld. The female subjects are enslaved bodily and sexually.

Being invaded in the Republic of Gilead for the handmaids is a rule. Testifying to this horrible rule and professing the power it holds over subjects are themselves forms of surveillance and control of the subjects and, as Foucault (1992) puts it, a must for Western man, who “has become a confessing animal” (p. 59). Moreover, confessing is a way to establish and circulate a specific body of knowledge. This knowledge proposes that if a woman is raped, she is to be blamed for it. This notion defines and places women as inferior beings cursed with strong, seductive power. On the other hand, Janine is quite aware of the circumstances of consenting to the discipline. The narrator seems doubtful whether Janine is truthful concerning her horrifying experience. Because power gives pleasure, and that’s what Janine is after. “Disciplined individuals have to be constantly examined” (Fiske, 2016, p. 73). This is why testifying takes place every week, and this is why Janine repeatedly retells the same story. She is aware of this interminable process, the fact that she is constantly being tested and acts accordingly. There is a pleasure for a subordinate male “in exerting power over others, especially women” (Fiske, 2010, p. 40). Even the self is subjected to this imposed pleasure. As

Fiske asserts, “the pleasures of conformity by which power and its disciplinary thrust are internalised are real pleasures and are widely experienced” (2010, p. 40). Therefore, this form of acknowledging and letting themselves be dominated by the power produced a public realm of pleasure for the handmaids.

Another instance where disciplinary knowledge is practised is at the table before dinner when the commander takes out a book and recites verses from a presumably distorted version of *The Bible*. “I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong, and they left things out too, but there was no way of checking” (Atwood, 2019, p. 105). Offred is cognizant of the so-called *Bible*’s unreliability. It is the only knowledge obtainable, and she has no access to any sort of knowledge apart from this one to resist the dominant power. Religion here proves to be a strong apparatus for Gilead’s regime to take over a subject’s mind and body “The Gileadean regime abuses women and does so in many ways that echo past abuses of women” (Tennant, 2019, p. 75). Consequently, the root of all justifications is within religious discourse combined with the political and sexual dominance rather than the biological and physical condition of women as Zarinjooee and Kalantarian (2017, p. 68) stated. The female body is too dangerous and mesmerising for the Gileadean body politic. Therefore, women are put in chains bodily and mentally by dominating the body and practising the imperialising knowledge. The Gileadean power is fortified through the biblical knowledge’s circulation. This oppressing power breaks women into many pieces, preventing them from conceiving their bodies and identities outside the religious discourse. Afterwards, this patriarchal oppression interpolates women into its own network, only to later hail them as subordinate subjects whenever it wishes.

Language, All Too Language; A Double Agent

Previously, the reliability and availability of language were analysed. “Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said” (Atwood, 2019, p. 14). The Republic of Gilead has meticulously exploited language for its own interest. “In Gilead, as in many other totalitarian dystopias, access to the written word is strongly controlled” (Dam & Polak, 2021, p. 176). These exploitations are aligned with religious and patriarchal discourses. As an instance, the handmaids are not allowed to leave the place, and they are not allowed to go for a walk without permission, they are held captive in a place deprived of all human rights. Naming this imprisonment as a privilege is how hegemony comes to its discursive being. The knowledge here is conceived “not as something internal to the agent, but rather as an externally given and structured set of ‘claims’, or as Foucault would have it, ‘statements’” (Miller, 1990, p. 117). The power of the discourse is imposed on and then internalised in the handmaids through the production of an authoritative set of statements. When meaning is produced, there must be a form of relevance since “the aim of this productivity is, therefore, to produce meanings that are relevant to everyday life” (Fiske, 2011, p. 6). In this sense, only creating meaning without any relevance is ineffective, and as a result, the imperialising power must hold to something which makes the meaning, meaningful, and that is in this case, hegemonic religious discourse.

In this totalitarian system where everything is under control, it seems that those in possession of the imperialising power are more aware of how language works, therefore, they have prohibited any form of writing: “writing is in any case forbidden” (Atwood, 2019, p. 50). Previously, it was argued that language is not available equally to every individual. The availability of language directly affects the efficiency of both the imperialising and the localising power. Language is multiaccultural, and it is potentially capable of being in service of the imperialising and the localising power simultaneously. This is why writing for handmaids, who are the subjects of the imperialising power, is forbidden. The imperialising

power cannot eradicate the multiaccentuality of language, as a result, it attempts to limit its use. This limit makes one master and the other slave. As it was stated earlier, the handmaids have only one source of reading and that is FAITH. This as well limits the use and availability of language for its subjects. In contrast, “the Aunts are allowed to read and write” (Atwood, 2019, p. 148). The language is most available to the imperialising assets. These Aunts are those assets and consequently, they are exploiting language as much as they can. The uses of the imperialising and localising power are different. “The imperialising use of language represses this multiaccentual potential and attempts to establish the singular accent of the power-bloc as the only, the natural, the correct one... Localising power, on the other hand, exploits the multiaccentuality” (Fiske, 2016, p. 31). The localising power resists the imperialising power consistently; the subjects of the localising power in the novel are the handmaids. Although they are forbidden from writing and reading freely, they seek to form a resistance to the dominant power. “Resistance is itself a form of power” (Fiske, 2016, p. 76), and it is also necessary for the existence of power. The imperialising power never risks losing control; that is why it constantly monitors pain and pleasure of the body through owning the production of meaning. “Anything out of control is always a potential threat, and always calls up moral, legal, and aesthetic powers to discipline it. The signs of the subordinate out of control terrify the forces of order” (Fiske, 2010, p. 56). Power and resistance must be continuously struggling in various terrains of their existence to hold on to their existence.

Offred, the protagonist of the novel, seems to be conscious of the essence of language. “We are hers to define, we must suffer her adjectives” (Atwood, 2019, p. 130). Framing the subject by using language in the dominant ideology is occurring. Handmaids are given their names and identities, and consequently, it is expected of them to act accordingly. Offred is literally *of Fred*, and Fred is presumably the name of the commander who is in charge of the household. By giving such names, the dominant ideology aims to present identities which do not exist independently; rather, their existence depends on the commander in this case. To remove the sense of having an independent self, even mirrors are banned in the Republic of Gilead, and as a result, the subjects eventually become unfamiliar with themselves. Thus they must embark on a path that help them see themselves as an independent existence. “My self is a thing I must compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born” (Atwood, 2019, p. 79). The self is becoming an alienated and broken object. Trapping and controlling these broken objects is much easier this way. Giving them identities and names and framing their selves are all done to smooth the process of discipline and control.

Resistance and the Exploitation of Pleasure

The patriarchal tone and whip of the Republic defines a rigid hegemony to control pleasure and inflict pain. Everything else is recognised to lie outside social order and thus is to be eradicated. Offred represents the subordinated people. All we know concerning the Republic of Gilead is through her, and she shares all her actions, thoughts, and feelings with us. “I want to steal something... I am out of place. This is entirely illegal... I am doing something on my own” (Atwood, 2019, p. 114). Offred is resisting the dominant power. She attempts to steal a knife without ever needing it. The issue here is not her demand and a need for a knife. It is the exercise of resistance that gives her inner pleasure. Offred resents her subordination, and as a result, she seeks to find a form of solace/pleasure through this action. What she does is illegal because it is against the dominant power. Through this action, she feels that she is given some freedom to choose for herself rather than be told what to do. As Fiske argues, “the least politically active are the bodily pleasures of evasion, the dogged refusal of the dominant ideology and its discipline” (2011, p. 8). Gilead is tightly ordered and finding a way out of this

order is problematic and perilous. The sort of resistance Offred is practising is fighting the suppressing power on the level of meaning production and the circulation of power. She resists the patriarchal tone and, at the same time, risks a minimum level of danger. This is what de Carteau calls the “Guerrilla Tactics” (2011, p. 56). These “tactics are the art of the weak: they never challenge the powerful in open warfare” (Fiske, 2010, p. 16). The pleasure Offred finds from stealing a knife and breaking the order encourages her to perform more of such sorts of actions. When the commander proposes to take her out to the club, she accepts the offer though she could have resisted: “I know without being told what he’s proposing is risky, for him but especially for me; but I want to go anyway. I want anything that breaks the monotony, subverts the perceived respectable order of things” (Atwood, 2019, p. 263). This, she does as a person who has once experienced the pleasure within the resistance. She continues to take action against the dominant power and every time she does so, she takes a riskier chance of her own destruction.

The utmost condition of resistance for Offred is when she continuously sleeps with Nick illegally; a crime that, if known, leads to both Offred and Nick’s execution. Consequently, through this resistance, it can be argued that Offred and the rest of the handmaids are more than commodities since commodities cannot resist the dominant power. Handmaids are extremely subordinated through ideological and repressive state apparatuses, yet it would be a mistake to ignore all these sorts of pleasure and consider the handmaids merely as objects and commodities. Through Guerrilla tactics, the handmaids can invade and subvert power without taking radical actions. “Resistance is easiest and most pleasurable when what is to be resisted is clear and unambiguous” (Fiske, 2011, p. 36). In the Republic of Gilead, everything is ordered, set, and straightforward. This is because, through such discipline, control is achieved quite easier than when there is heterogeneity of voices. There is only one voice in the Republic of Gilead, and that voice is the voice of the dominant. The downside of this straightforwardness is that it reveals itself distinctly for the subjects to resist it, and the dominant voice gradually becomes unstable, and its limits transgressed. As a result, resistance becomes the most pleasurable since everything is clear and all laws and regulations are absolute.

Conclusion

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, it can be argued that language, pleasure, and discipline are highly intertwined in the fabric and practice of power. Power is divided into two categories. The first one is the imperialising power that resides in the hands of the dominant. In the course of this novel, the dominant is the power of the commander, wives, eyes, and aunts. The second category is the localising power, which is the power of the subordinated. Those in charge of the imperialising power have more control over power in general, and they also have more access to the language. They exercise power so that they can enlarge the domain of their power. They attempt to preserve power through language, discourse, and discipline. The religious discourse is the primary source of their power. Whatever they do is justified through the religious discourse. Moreover, they attempt to create hegemony and instil discipline through language. The religious discourse justifies their action in a hegemonic sense. Whatever they do is presented as a privilege of the subordinated people. Supported through biblical references, the Republic of Gilead envisage a nirvana for those who conform to the dominant ideology. Opposite to the imperialising power is the localising power. Those in charge of localising power are the subordinated people, and in the course of the novel, they are the handmaids. They have little access to the language since reading is limited to one book, and writing is forbidden for them. As a result, their access to power is quite limited compared to the imperialising power.

On the other hand, as the representative of the imperialising power, the aunts attempt to create a single, dominant, homogenous voice. Moreover, as the representative of the localising power, the handmaids attempt to create heterogeneity of voices. This conflict is endless, yet the localising power's concern is not to overthrow the voice of the imperialising power. Instead, it aims to create a space for the handmaids to shape their own identities and their own voices. The pleasure they receive within the realm of resistance encourages the subjugated bodies in the novel, specifically Offred. Pleasure is felt since she revolts against being a neutral object of the dominant power. She refuses to be seen merely as a commodity. This is why it can be argued that Offred and the rest of the handmaids, or at least those for whom hegemony has not taken place, are neither objects nor commodities but actual agents of resistance. They resist and revolt against the dominant power where it is possible. This pleasure is not only given to the subordinated. Those who participate in the action of power also feel pleasure. Janine conformed to the needs of the dominant power. As a result, she was included in the discourse of power.

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John Maxwell Coetzee's *Disgrace*: A Covert Narrative of the Transition in South Africa

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Abstract

In John Maxwell Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), some aspects of style are an implicit image of the uncertainty, feeling of discontinuity, and the new trends of violence in the transition period in South Africa. This study of *Disgrace* conjugates Seymour Chatman's analysis of covert narration, and Alain Rabatel's explication of the point of view and narrative perspective, to demonstrate, through narratological and reader-response theories, that the third-person present-tense narrative gives an encoded image of the tense social context in the post-apartheid era. Specifically, this paper shows that the use of present tense, character-oriented perspective, and hybrid use of language are signs of the unbridled violence in the nascent democratic nation, of individuals battling against the demons of the past, to deal with an unstable present, with the hope to negotiate an evanescent future. Through the lenses of feminism, this article discusses the experience and symbolism of rape in the novel.

Keywords: Coetzee, covert narrative, perspective, point of view, transition

More than two decades after its publication, the literary criticism around John Maxwell Coetzee's *Disgrace* has not yet spawned. The reasons for such appraisal and reappraisal of the novel stem from the particularity of the themes, but also from the strained social context which has seen its release. Coetzee, a South African-Australian novelist and recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature, unfolds the tense period that followed the abolition of the ingrained apartheid system, a period of transition from a traumatic past to a more democratic era. It is in such a context where the rhetoric of reconciliation was chanted by South African officials that the writer chose to foreground sensitive questions such as the rape of white women by black men, and the social violence of blacks towards whites, to a point that "*Disgrace* has given rise to strong and diversified reader responses, especially in South Africa" (Agnevall, 2005, p. 15). Political leaders, like former President Thabo Mbeki, peg the story as controversial, taking it as a disgrace from an author who seems to go against the grain of the national interest, and "to be ruling out the possibility of any civilized reconciliation" (Neau, 2012, p. 89). If it is true that the novel appears as a dark image of South Africa, through the character of David Lurie, parts of the story offer snippets of a "redemptive relation" (Hayes, 2010, p. 202) with the others, mostly hinted at by the character's growing relation with animals. The thematic density and the aesthetic value of the story, not only account for the great interest it aroused in critics and readers but also confirm the idea that *Disgrace* is all but disgraceful as it is "a complex exploration of the collision between private and public worlds; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation" (Kosew, 2003, p. 155). Indeed, amidst discordant and caustic reactions against the story¹, parts of readers' responses have rightly recognized the narrative value and the humanistic weight at the heart of the writer's work. Coetzee is a master storyteller; the crux of his writing is to imagine ways his country can handle its future while trying to expiate its disgraceful past and deal with the sacrifice its people must pay in the present (Rogez, 2010, p. 100). From the harshness of the themes unfolded, a glimmer of hope sprouts, despite the contradictions, uncertainties, and frustrations of the characters in the transition period.

Such a time in the troubled historical evolution of South Africa is finely depicted in *Disgrace*, through the present tense narrative, "an eternal present that gives the impression of a timeless mental life, a loss of the sense of time, set in a free indirect style from the point of view of the main character," David Lurie (Neau, 2012, p. 89). This argument of Françoise Neau is backed up by Seyed Javad Habibi and Sara Soleimani Karbalei, in a relevant analysis of the novel, put the focus on "timelessness" as "one of the significant functions of the present tense..." in *Disgrace* (2013, p. 204). Indeed, "unlike the majority of his contemporary writers who prefer 'live, then tell,' Coetzee resorts to 'living and telling.'" (2013, p. 204) Though the two critics accurately interpret the author's preference of the present tense to represent individuals and communities in dire straits in the transition, this research paper deconstructs their position about the meaning of the present tense, which they read as the expression of a "stabilized frame to lead the nation" out of the throes of hatred and violence. Rather, it posits as John Mullan argues that the present tense is a technique replicating "the immediacy of experience," an aesthetic device also framing the story in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Master of Petersburg*.

The narrative craft of John Maxwell Coetzee has brought him to combine present-tense and third-person narration, to deliver a representation of the thoughts of characters, a mental discourse that articulates their growing conviction that they must face a violent past, to expiate

¹ Though the public reception of *Disgrace* was negative, reactions from literary critics have been more positive. This is justified by the large amount of research to date on the novel and which showcase the positive impact Coetzee has on his readers.

their guilty mind, should they hope to live the transition to democracy, with serenity. Such a narrative mark makes *Disgrace* “a disturbing book that forces the reader to confront the darker side of life and deal with ethical issues and the baser instincts of humanity” (Daiely, 2010, p. 7). The result is “a covert or effaced narration, where we hear a voice speaking of events and settings, but its owner remains hidden in the discursive shadows” (Chatman, 1978, p. 197). In *Disgrace*, the covert narrator indirectly expresses David Lurie’s mental discourse, a narration of the inner condition of the protagonist that heightens the drama undergone by the latter and other members of the white community, who, as the article of Sue Kossew informs, must deal with the collision between private aspirations and public realities. Kossew rightly approaches *Disgrace* as a “novel in which bodies are strongly linked to power, desire and disgrace” (2003, p. 156). Indeed, like the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the body is the source of power (through the rape of Melanie Isaacs) and the expression of powerlessness (suggested in the sexual assault on Lucy and Lurie’s own problem to overcome his sexual lust).

The motive behind this topic is its importance as a scope of analysis, mainly because it is part of the abundant critical works on *Disgrace*. Even though much of this wide scholarship have studied the dense esthetic style and thematic value of the book, it is still relevant to explore how the story signifies the transition period. Thus, the present study attempts to investigate how Coetzee’s atypical combination of effaced narration in the present tense with the character-oriented point of view, is suggestive of the chaotic and erratic social conditions in South African society. Moreover, the foremost aim of this research is to shed light on the ambivalent meaning of animal imagery and sexual violence, to argue that they are on the one hand signifiers of a relation of power and powerlessness between perpetrators and victims of violence, and on the other hand, an expression of the author’s hope for the future, even if its building requires facing past traumas, through expiation, and overcoming instability in the present, by “moulding the consciousness of the transiting generation.” (Habibi & Karbalaee, 2013, p. 204) Meanwhile, the research paper attempts to discuss a few questions: how does the combination of third person account and present tense represent the hectic lives of individuals and communities in South Africa’s walk to democratic rule? What effect does the narration in the present tense, largely through David Lurie’s consciousness, have on the narration of events? To what extent does rape in the story suggest power dynamics inherent in apartheid and postapartheid societies? Is animal metaphor a sign of past interracial violence and/or redemption?

Since the study is entirely confined to a text, the research methodology employed is textual analysis, around two major parts: the first discusses how the third-person present tense narration suggests a turbulent present and an unsteady future for South Africans; the second explores how the story, from a character-oriented perspective, draws the contours of a possible future for racial communities.

Third-Person Present-Tense Narration: The Image of an Erratic Future

In his insightful review of *Disgrace*, John Mullan takes to heart to foreground the narrative originality of the novel, whose events are relayed in a third-person present-tense narration. Mullan rightly indicates that such an option is all but frequent, as novels mostly used first-person narrators to replicate the “immediacy of experience.” (2002) This is how the critic explains the reasons behind Coetzee’s choice: “it gives to the narrative voice a numbed, helpless quality (...) The present tense, however, makes everything provisional. It edges us closer to the situation of the character while refusing us any actual identification with him.” (2002) The process of unfolding the story in *Disgrace* indeed brings us close to white characters

and their experienced predicament in a context marked by skepticism, and a profound feeling of loss.

The use of the atypical² narration style is *apropos* as it allows the “vacillating”³ writer, to suggest the confusing condition of South Africans in the transition period. Despite the ambivalence noted in style and content, *Disgrace* offers a painstaking image of the new democratic nation bending under the yoke of violence and instability. In this society, still bearing the lingering effects of a history of oppression, social roles and norms seem to be reversed, with the enigmatic situation of whites, faced with non-white communities who are motivated by a revengeful mind, and who consider that the shift in political ideology must foster a sharing of economic opportunities. This topsy-turvy situation of the nation staggering on the thorny road to reconciliation is alluded to in the shifting narrative voice, and point of view, noted in the exchanges, narrated in the present tense, between David Lurie and Lucy, but also between the latter and Petrus, the black man working in the farm. The narration of the tragic present and problematic social relationships, markedly affected by an escalation of violence in that historical moment, is conveyed through a distant third narrator disclosing the thoughts of David Lurie in free indirect discourse, with a strong dose of irony. David Lurie suffers to cope with the tension and dearth of the farm, which can be read as an epitome of postapartheid society. For the first time, he steps into an unknown zone, a change in space whispered in the change that has unexpectedly stricken his hitherto secured existence. Amid the audible narrative voice, the reader perceives his tormented mind, a narration of his thoughts that foregrounds the existential problems burdening the protagonist. His first impression of Lucy’s lifestyle is delineated in this passage:

“Do you still have your stall at the market?”

“Yes, on Saturday mornings. I’ll take you along”

This is how she makes a living: from the kennels, and from selling flowers and garden produce. Nothing could be more simple.

“Don’t the dogs get bored?” He points to one, a tan-coloured bulldog bitch with a cage to herself who, head on paws, watches them morosely, not even bothering to get up (Coetzee, 2008, p. 62).

We have the free indirect thought of David Lurie who is mentally reviewing Lucy’s life routine in that remote area. The passage bears typographical marks revealing the direct intervention of the anonymous narrator. The indirect discourse, narrated in a present and perfective tense, implies manipulation of the surface of the text for covert narrative purposes (the shift in narration levels is not easily felt). The indirect discourse allows the reader to have a fully-fledged image of the restlessness gnawing at whites, in the transiting days, through the point of view of David Lurie. Therefore, David Lurie’s disenchantment and despair take center stage, through the indirect discourse mode, a covert or effaced representation of his unrest that occupies the middle ground between “non-narration” and the conspicuously audible narration

² “Atypical” narration because, unlike what Roland Barthes states in *Writing Degree Zero*, and largely shared by narrative critics such as Jean-Paul Sartre, *Disgrace* is not unfolded in the past tense (commonly conceived as the tense of narration). By narrating the novel in the present tense, the third-person narrator of *Disgrace* makes a vivid expression of the chaos of the “present” life of David Lurie, the focalizer of the novel.

³ Coetzee has been criticized by scholars for the indecision of his characters, but also for a certain political and stylistic vacillation in his writing. However, as Mathilde Rogez argues, a closer analysis of some aspects of style in his novels, especially the use of italics and repetitions, reveals that vacillation or tentativeness can become a powerful verbal gesture (2010, p. 99).

(the exchange between the two protagonists). He is struggling to cope with the new social context because conscious now that he might well become a demoted citizen in the new South Africa, where the question of revenge, retribution, and possible reconciliation is a serious obstacle to social peace. This ambivalent situation of the character, going through waves of doubts buttresses the view of Vickie Daily, who opines that *Disgrace* is in many ways “a story about the powerful and powerless” (2010, p. 7).

Moreover, the heterogeneous and polyphonic representation of the story in *Disgrace* paints a vivid picture of the erratic and unfettered life of David Lurie. He is the representation of whites in South Africa who are overnight afflicted by the specter of power shifting and sharing, going through waves of doubts and depression. Thus, the combination of the third-person account and the present tense directly renders the strained social situation that befalls whites in the postapartheid era. The tragic and ironical condition of whites is ciphered in this part of the story, where the daughter carelessly reinforces her point about the need for David to bow to the new social realities and accept work from Petrus:

“You could help with the dogs. (...) Then there is Petrus. Petrus is busy establishing his lands. You could give him a hand.”

“Give Petrus a hand. I like that. I like the historical piquancy. Will he pay me a wage for my labour, do you think?”

“Ask him. I’m sure he will...” (Coetzee, 2008, pp. 76–78).

Lurie’s quest for continuity, in the fragmented trajectory his life has taken, is essentially what drives him to contemplate unthinkable possibilities, such as working for Petrus. The “historical piquancy” he highlights reflects a certain negation of the character who still cannot format his mind and heart to adhere to the new social codes and roles. Indeed, irony, as Jean-Claude Rolland opines, is “a tragic figure of negation”; thus, its use in the above discussion constitutes a telling sign of the straight mind that drives Lurie. Truly, in the new South Africa, “the rules have changed, and he cannot know where he is going, where any of them are going. All kinship and all security is frail.” (Mullan, 2002) This analysis of the shift in power and cultural norms is so insightful, as Lurie himself is a bit taken aback by the profound transformations that are settling in. Lurie struggles to unknot the entangled threads of his present life; he is a white man who “was in the role of power” (Daily, 2010, p. 7) because overprotected by the biased judiciary system to the detriment of the powerless members of the discriminated racial groups. It can be argued that it is because of his privileged position that Lurie goes somehow unpunished for the rape of Melanie Isaacs. The tragic irony of his life is that his power shifts to powerlessness as he is “condemned to solitude,” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 34) like the hero in Byron’s poem he is reciting in class. He is shown desperately trying to accept coexistence with those who were at the periphery of society.

Such a fall of the character from the center to the margin is encoded in the thematic line and the narrative design of the story. This is hinted at in the covert narration of his thoughts that are an indirect discourse of the new realities and “deviations” from the normative moral and social codes that were core principles of the modernist era of Apartheid. The man ponders over the sexual orientation of his daughter Lucy, who is a lesbian, a code of conduct that seems to reflect a certain desacralization and deconstruction of a preconceived conception of gender relationships. This is how his thoughts are disclosed to the reader:

He pretends he is tired and, after supper, withdraws to his room, where faintly the sounds come to him of Lucy leading her own life: drawers opening and shutting, the

radio, the murmur of a telephone conversation. Is she calling Johannesburg, speaking to Helen? Is his presence here keeping the two of them apart? Would they dare to share a bed while he was in the house? If the bed creaked in the night, would they be embarrassed? Embarrassed enough to stop? But what does he know about what women do together? (...) And what does he know about these two in particular, Lucy and Helen? (...) The truth is, he does not like to think of his daughter in the throes of passion with another woman, and a plain one at that (Coetzee, 2008, p. 86).

This is all but an overt narration of the anxious thoughts of David Lurie, who seems to be lost and burdened with what he suffers to admit and accept: Lucy, his daughter, his “second salvation, the bride of his youth reborn,” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 86) is a lesbian. Indeed, though the passage is an effaced image of the mental discourse of the character, it is opened by the audible voice of the he-narrator describing the action of the protagonist – “he pretends he is tired...” This clear inscription is followed by an indirect representation of his thoughts, implicitly indicated by the set of questions that unwrap the subtle effacement of the narrator expressing the anguish suffered by the man. Whether these are or are not the exact words expressed by the quoted speaker (Chatman, 1978, p. 200), the rhetorical questions in the excerpt are a pronounced image of the preoccupations of a father who cannot figure out the reasons that brought her daughter to “deviate” from mainstream sexual normative codes and be “in the throes of passion with another woman.” As Jacqueline Authier-Revuz correctly reasons, the question mark is a written manifestation of doubt, incomprehension, a request for an explanation, a speechless answer of one interlocutor to what has been just said by another⁴. Thus, the interrogative structure adds to the emotional agitation already distressing Lurie, who not only laments about his disrupted existence but also feels dejected by the turn in his daughter’s life: “He sighs. Poor Lucy! Poor daughters! What a destiny, what a burden to bear! And sons: they too must have their tribulations, though he knows less about that” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 87). We have here an internal monologue of the character, introduced by the open mention by the third narrator (he sighs). The use of the exclamative signals that this is a direct reproduction of Lurie’s mental discourse. As Chatman highlights, “exclamation does not suit the role of effaced or transparent mediator. The logic of covert narration permits only the character to exclaim.” (1978, p. 202) The narration of his thoughts has “a greater degree of autonomy, and though ambiguity may persist, the absence of the tag makes it sound more like the characters’ speaking or thinking than a narrator’s report” (Chatman, 1978, p. 200).

Thus, the third-person narration, together with the present tense, draws a more enchanting image of the tribulations and turmoil of white South Africans who feel entrapped by the immediacy of change and the difficulty to give meaning to the new political code settling in the nascent democracy. The present tense approach is suggestive of a certain timelessness, and therefore habits and factual statements, but also new (transgressive) gender norms, are expressed through this grammatical instance in *Disgrace*.

In this way, the narrative choice to make joint use of the third-person narration and the present tense is a sign of the trouble lived by whites, who overnight realize that their hitherto secured life, built on the backs of marginalized and invisible groups, now hangs by a thin thread. This is disclosed by this part of the mental words of David Lurie, the least inclined to abide by the new order, in the novel:

⁴ Jacqueline Authier-Revuz. (1979, p. 78) [Le point d’interrogation] est « la manifestation écrite d’un doute, d’une incompréhension, d’une demande d’explication, réponse muette de l’un des interlocuteurs à ce qui vient d’être dit par l’autre ». Personal translation: “[The question mark] is “the written sign of a doubt, a misunderstanding, a request for explanation; it is one of the interlocutors’ speechless answer to what has just been said by another.”

But the questions remain. Does Petrus know who the strangers were? Was I because of some word Petrus let drop that they made Lucy their target rather than, say, Ettinger? Did Petrus know in advance what they were planning? In the old days, one could have it out with Petrus. In the old days, one could have had it out to the extent of losing one's temper and sending him packing and hiring someone else in his place. But though Petrus is paid a wage, Petrus is no longer, strictly speaking, hired help. It is hard to say what Petrus is, strictly speaking. The word that seems to serve best, however, is *neighbour*. Petrus is a neighbour who at present happens to sell his labour, because that is what suits him. He sells his labour under contract, unwritten contract, and that contract makes no provision for dismissal on grounds of suspicion. It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it (Coetzee, 2008, p. 117).

The third-person present tense option makes this passage from Lurie's bubbling mind much more vivid. Indeed, this is a free indirect expression attributable to David Lurie, a narrated monologue, as Dorrit Cohn (1978) labels it, that shows the existential problems weighing on the character. The array of questions opening the passage is indicative of the emotional unrest of the character who wonders whether Petrus was in complicity with the group of strangers who sexually assaulted his daughter. His preoccupation becomes more pregnant, as the unanswered questions are immediately followed by an affirmation which is a burning truth bothering him: the days when the like of Petrus would be brutalized into confession have gone by. Lurie is conscious that the black man (an epitome of formerly downgraded communities) can no longer be pegged as inferior, in the new days; he no longer is an invisible subaltern who cannot speak because of a systemic oppression. Petrus has become, "in the new world" they are living in, a "*neighbour*." The italicized aspect of the world not only reflects that direct access to the mind of the character but a dark irony as well, suggesting the disastrous condition of whites in the transition, inferred in the anaphoric repetition of the name Petrus in the mental discourse. Lurie is skeptical about the possibility to envisage an alternative to racist policies.

Thus, the fleeting and frail aspect of whites' lives hovers over the third-person present tense structure of the passage. Though David Lurie is represented struggling to get his head above his erratic existence, Coetzee is unblinking in his conviction that the link with the past must not be broken but rather, it must be reconsidered and serve as motivation to define the offshoots of the vital program (reminiscent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), to redefine interpersonal relationships in the nation. This does not dovetail with the position, upheld by Habibi and Karbalei who argue that it is because the link with the past is broken that a chaotic situation "perhaps would prevail there since there is no stabilized frame to lead the nation and mold the consciousness of the transiting generation" (2013, p. 204). However tragic his condition is, events in the story suggest that there is no way for Lurie to accept the wind of change blowing in the country unless he and his community expiate their guilty mind, and expiation is only possible if he recognizes and accounts for the past, vivid and present, more than ever before. This can explain the option to foreground his points of view and perspective in the elucidation of the implications of the country's shift in political ideology.

Mapping The Transition Through a Character-Oriented Perspective

Narrative information and images of the transiting period hover over the fictional borders of *Disgrace*. To meet up with the need to tell more about the hustle and joy of marginalized communities but also the consternation of whites tussling for the upkeep of the old way, Coetzee's literary craft leads him to choose to regulate and deliver the information through the

lenses of one (...) participant in the story (David Lurie), with the narrator adopting or seeming to adopt what [is called] “vision” or “point of view” (Genette, 1980, p. 161). In other words, next to the third-person voice, the bulk of the information is perceived by the reader through Lurie’s “perspective” that is, with “distance”, the two chief modalities of that regulation (Genette, 1980, p. 162). The concept of point of view underpinned in Genette’s *Narrative Discourse* is further discussed by Alain Rabatel, in his exhaustive work on the textual construction of point of view. For the French scholar, it is almost impossible to elucidate the question of the representation of objects without considering the interactions between the object and the subject (Rabatel, 2009, p. 25). In a narrative work such as *Disgrace*, the possibility for the reader to perceive or experience characters, objects, and events in the story can only happen if the character-transmitter (Lurie) is placed in a position to “perceive” and “make perceive” the reader. This dimension of the narrative perspective that Rabatel calls “pragmatico-argumentative,”⁵ (2009, p. 26) explains why *Disgrace* is not a verist reproduction of the South African reality but a *re-presentation* of that reality, filtered by the consciousness of the character-subject, to articulate a point of view, which is, *in fine*, the information that he has on the object (life in the transition period). In other words, the events of the story are essentially *presented* to the reader from the perspective of the protagonist.

As the center of enunciating narrative information, David Lurie’s point of view about the social malaise of whites in the nation is relayed in an explicit discourse on the people around him. His intense mental discourse and multiple perceptions of the new realities are conveyed through images disclosing his pathetic life. Indeed, the regulation of information in Coetzee’s story is not limited to identifying “who sees” or “who knows,” but rather, as Catherine Détrie argues, it interrogates referencing choices, the reference donation mode, and constructs a conscious subject of the consciousness based on perceptive, cognitive, and axiological components. The textual features of Lurie’s point of view, through which the reader perceives the tragic events befalling his daughter (with the rape), map out the social and political upheavals in the nation. We have a filtered yet comprehensive picture of the dramatic situation of communities who were living on the backs of nonwhite groups.

Besides, the third-person present-tense approach connotes the indecision of whites who find it hard to give a new direction to their lives, in the transition. Mathilde Rogez, in her exploration of the esthetics of ambivalence and vacillation in *Disgrace*, considers this situation of characters as tentativeness or hesitation (2010, p. 102), much visible in the post-stress traumatic disorder in their troubled life, caused by the rape of Lucy. The connoted rape scene is perceived through the consciousness of David Lurie, who was caught up by one of the assaulters, while his daughter was being violated in another room. Such a narrative position – to use David Lurie as the router transmitting signs and sounds of the assault – makes the pain and humiliation experienced by the young woman more acute in the mind of the reader. This passage well delineates the consciousness of David Lurie, filtering the traumatic incidence:

⁵ « Cette dimension pragmatico-argumentative de la vue explique que celle-ci ne soit pas la reproduction vériste du réel, mais une *re-présentation*, une mise en spectacle qui oblige à donner à la vue tout son empan, c’est-à-dire à prendre en compte le fait que toute perception manifeste, d’une façon ou d’une autre, des opinions qui correspondent à des manières de voir » (p. 26). Personal translation. [This pragmatico-argumentative dimension of the point view explains why it is not a verist reproduction of real, but a *re-presentation*, a performance that gives to the view all its span, that is to say take into account the idea that any perception shows, one way or another, positions that signal ways of seeing.]

“Lucy!” he croaks, and then, louder: “Lucy!”
He tries to kick at the door, but he is not himself, and the space too cramped anyway, the door too old and solid.

So it has come, the day of testing. Without warning, without fanfare, it is here and he is in the middle of it. In his chest his heart hammers so hard that it too, in its dumb way, must know. How will they stand up to the testing, he and his heart?

His child is in the hands of strangers. In a minute, in an hour, it will be too late; whatever is happening to her will be set in stone, will belong to the past. But now it is not too late. Now he must do something. (...) He shivers. A dangerous trio? Why did he not recognize it in time? But they are not harming him, not yet. Is it possible what the house has to offer will be enough for them? Is it possible they will leave Lucy unharmed too? (Coetzee, 2008, p. 95; my italics).

We have here a most pronounced expression of the tragedy befalling David Lurie, at the moment of the assault, as he feels unable to protect his daughter from her abductors. The account of the rape is more enthralling as it is encoded in a hybrid style, with the blend of voices of the he-narrator and the bubbling thoughts of Lurie. The emphasis on the agitation of the man is shown from the outset, especially with the implicit juxtaposition of the two narrative styles: “He tries to kick at the door, but he is not himself, and the space too cramped anyway, the door too old and solid.” If the first sequence is an explicit indication of the third-person present narration, the last part is a narrated monologue of Lurie, signaled by the elliptic structure (with the verbal lexicon omitted). After that, we have a direct representation of Lurie’s mind speech (Chatman, 1978, p. 202). There is no degree of ambiguity that this is a covert narration of the thoughts, as exposed in the passage. The thoughts are a lament of the character confronted with what they (the whites) have been expecting, since the announcement of the demise of apartheid, which Lurie calls “the day of testing.” This is more unbearable for the latter as he does not know how “to stand up to the testing.” The narration of his monologue is woven around a set of questions, ending the passage. These graphic markers are part of a host of expressive features (exclamations, expletives, imperatives, repetitive, and similar emphases (Chatman, 1978, p. 202), which are indicative of free indirect speech. Lurie’s questions express affliction, vulnerability, uncertainty, and hesitation as to the stance to take. He sadly realizes that the assaulters will vent their age-long anger at Lucy.

In blacks’ struggle for visibility and social recognition, white women bear the brunt of lifelong frustrations. Though criticized by political leaders for harping on the hackneyed myth of the black man raping the white woman, Coetzee’s representation of Lucy’s sexual abuse is, in fact, an encoded expression of his deep concern about the unbridled sexual violence unleashed in the new South Africa. The writer’s conviction is articulated in the mind discourse of Lurie who opines that there “must be some niche in the system for women and what happens to them” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 98). Bedeviled with his devastated girl, Lurie has a more positive mind about the fierce reaction of the lesbian community against sexual violation: “no wonder they are so vehement against rape, she, and Helen. Rape, god of chaos and mixture, violators of seclusions. Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 105). The ignominy of sexual assault resounds in the emphatic structure of the character’s mental discourse that compares rape to the most devastating chaos, desacralizing the secluded feminine intimacy, but also from the insistence on the violation of a lesbian, which is more symbolically humiliating an attack. As it is written by Achmat Dangor in *Bitter Fruit*, rape “is an ancient form of genocide (...) You conquer a nation by bastardizing its children” (2005, p.

204). Under apartheid, the sexual violation was an expression of white power over blacks; it was a *verb* with which white racists communicated with black combatants; rape was a means to create and reproduce multiple systems of domination including racism and colonialism. In the transition period, rape can be conceived as the utmost expression of powerlessness. Indeed, the assault on Lucy is not only a violation of her intimacy and personhood, but it is also empowerment, albeit temporal, of the three rapists who vent lifelong anger on the white woman, whom they consider as the symbol of oppression.

The forced sexual act of David Lurie on his student Melanie Isaacs is as well “an ultimate demonstration of power in a racist and patriarchal society” (Donat & D’Emilio, 1992, p. 14). However, although Melanie seems to consent to Lurie’s advances, – “she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her,” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 24) it should be pointed out that she is the victim of Lurie’s domineering behavior, progressively invading the life of the young woman, and violating her intimacy. Therefore, Melanie does not consent to the sexual act but rather remains inert faced with the overwhelming presence and insistence of David Lurie. On the contrary, her “domain”⁶ or “the physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual space [she] lives in” (Frye & Shafer, 1977, p. 338) is violated by her molester. As Vickie Daiely correctly explains, Coetzee shows that “when he takes Melanie’s body, he also intrudes her home, her social life. By assaulting Melanie’s body, David Lurie’s actions foreground “the theme of power and powerlessness as it illustrates that he at first has power over her, then loses his power as a result of his actions” (2010, p. 3).

The shame and disgrace felt by Lucy are much more perceived by the reader through the character-orientated narration of the rape aftermath. Many instances are filtered and shared by Lurie but also by Lucy herself, exposing thus her post-traumatic stress disorder. “Patiently silently, Lucy must work her way back from the darkness to the light,” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 107) Lurie opines. However, right after the rape, the woman has withdrawn into silence, a horrible aftereffect of trauma, esthetically whispered in the imitative harmony built around this alliterative thought of the character: “It [rape] will *dawn* on them that over the body of the woman silence is being *drawn* like a blanket” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 110; my italics). Such figurative language wrapping the mental words of David Lurie inspires in the reader a relation between the meaning of the text and the effect of insistence, inscribed in the sound form.

This esthetic dimension of the story in *Disgrace* is further articulated in the thoughts of David Lurie who finally talks her daughter into speaking about the trauma that is progressively becoming the night of her life (pp. 155-6-7). Lucy’s father cannot fathom the rationale behind his daughter’s refusal to report the case and leave the farm. For Lucy, raping a woman is “pushing the knife in; exiting afterward, leaving the body behind covered in blood...” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 158) As the narrator states, these powerful words of the victim,

echo in his mind (...) *Covered in blood*. What does she mean? Was he right after all when he dreamt of a bed of blood, a bath of blood? They do rape. The things of the three visitors driving away in the not-to-old Toyota, the back seat piled with household goods, their penises, their weapons, tucked warm and satisfied between their legs - purring is the word that come to him (...) He remembers, a child poring over the word *rape* in newspaper reports, trying to puzzle out what exactly it meant, wondering what

⁶ Frye, M., & C. Shafer, in “Rape and Respect” (1977, p. 338) employ the concept of “domain” to refer to the violation of private and emotional space by the act of rape.

the letter p, usually so gentle, was doing in the middle of a word held in such horror that no one would utter it aloud (Coetzee, 2008, p. 159; my italics).

The words from the mind of the character are fraught with satire, translating the hatred and disgust the father feels towards the three assaulters. In the passage, the narratorial representation of the character's thought is signaled by the verbum dicendi "he thinks... he remembers", which are "cues of immediate context," (McHale, 1978, p. 267) but also by the italics that indicate a shift to David's voice, as the typographical devices report his thoughts by reproducing his mind style (Silva, 2012, p.18). Truly, even if the logic of covert narration permits only an italicized inscription of the character's point of view (Chatman, 1978, p. 202) the need is to point out that, in *Disgrace*,

the "use of italics underlines the eruption of violence, which spreads to the text itself. Unlike repetitions, which only record the character's thoughts, italics work at another level. Because they are a typographical sign and as such are visible on the page, inscribe on and within the body of the text (...); they suggest that the text itself becomes contaminated by violence (Rogez, 2010, p. 104).

Indeed, the systemic violence bred by the policies of separation, incensed by the gloomy moment, comes out in Coetzee's text: written in italics, Lurie's reference to "*covered in blood*" and "*rape*," indicates a distance between the narrator and the character; when combined with the overall imprecision in the narrative, they contribute to reflecting the fear and skepticism, in the transition era, a situation that fuels the enmity between blacks and whites.

The story in *Disgrace* is informed by conflicting forces, materialized by the brutality of the rape; such brutality is featured in the assaulters' verbal violence against Lucy. The latter's efforts to vent her agony are suggested through her intense discursive sections, signs of her humiliation. Through her point of view, the reader has painstaking perceptions of the rape scene, of the shocking moment, here underlined:

Lucy was frightened, frightened near to death. Her voice choked she could not breathe, her limb went numb. *This is not happening*. She said to herself, as the men forced her down; *it is just a dream, a nightmare*. While the men, for their part, drank up her fear, revelled in it, did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror. *Call your dogs!* They said to her. *Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs!* (Coetzee, 2008, p. 160).

Lucy's point of view about the moment of terror she experienced is spotlighted in this polyvocal passage formed by the joint use of the narratorial expression of the thoughts and a direct inscription of the mental words. This option allows a more captivating expression of the terror she felt, as she could not believe what was happening to her. The direct quotation of her mind, structurally indicated by the italics, renders the image of the assault more vivid and insists on the abasement imposed on the young woman. The rapists "did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror;" through this gradation that gives a hyperbolic allure to her pain, the narrator draws an enchanting image of the torment overwhelming the woman, while the three black men were forcing her down. Feminists have been much prolific about the panic aroused by sexual assault in the victim. Indeed, feminist perspectives on rape have become more elaborated, through the years. First-wave and second-wave feminists refute psychoanalytic theorists' analysis of rape as an act of men dominated by their overwhelming sexual impulses; rather, they recognized rape "as an act of violence, not of sex" (Donat &

D’Emilio, 1992, p. 19). In the 1960s-1970s, new feminists reconceptualized rape and further argued that it is a form of violence that affects the personhood of the assaulted, yet from which the latter can survive. Truly, the most basic challenge that feminists have posed to traditional views of rape lies in the recognition of rape as a crime against the victim herself.

When sexual abuse leads to pregnancy, it puts the abused in the most serious trauma. Lucy, answering her father’s request to report the case and not humble herself before history (Coetzee, 2008, p. 160), says this: “I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life. All I know is that I cannot go away (...) Yes, the road I am following may be the wrong one. But if I leave the farm now I will leave defeated, and will taste that defeat for the rest of my life” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 161). These words of her disclose the political allegory of the novel, as they are eloquent of the anxiety of whites, who no longer know where to fit, faced with a blurred future, in that hectic time in the life of the nation. Lucy is dying as an outcome of gender-based violence; likewise, the whites in the interregnum “know that they cannot go away” and cut the filial bond with South Africa, otherwise, they will feel defeated, by “the permanent changes affecting [their] personal situation as well as the country as a whole...” (Rogez, 2010, p. 102).

Despite the apparent violence of the text in *Disgrace*, there are gleams of hope sprouting from the inclement atmosphere in the country. As Dereck Attridge reasons, “while Coetzee’s novel may seem to be producing an overpoweringly dark image of South Africa, through the character of David Lurie, the text makes its counter-affirmation of the ethical values” (2004, p. 202). This mention of ethical values is given credence by the decision of the daughter to accept marriage as an alliance, a deal with Petrus. “Disgraceful” and uncertain as the idea may be, she is decided to accept the inevitable redistribution of power and riches, as a primal stage on the road to social justice and reconciliation. She avers: “Yes I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity” (Coetzee, 2008, p. 205). Modulators like “maybe”, or “perhaps” punctuate the utterance of the young woman and reflect the frailty of the hope and fear of a future, that seems most ungraspable. Such an ambivalent presentation of her decision to stay on, is further reinforced by “the truncated nominal sentences that are riddled and almost hollowed out by suspension marks,” (Rogez, 2010, p. 102) that shows her determination to stay in the farm. However, the elements of uncertainty in her discourse are an implicit reflection of skepticism about the possibility of peaceful cohabitation between racial groups, in a society deeply stricken by an age of iron, and where they are mostly liable, at least in the transition, to have a dog life.

Therefore, such ambivalence, noted in the representation of these characters’ discourse and painful experiences, is filtered by the consciousness of David Lurie and Lucy, whose perspectives of the sentiment of angst, discontinuity, and trauma allow the reader of Coetzee to *have a re-presentation* of the implications, disruptions as well as impacts of the abolition of apartheid. The linguistic and symbolical features of their points of view, mostly rendered in mental discursive sections, carefully quoted, or *retold* by the distant narrator, have greatly participated in the construction of the narrative perspectives. Despite the violence of the text, the unrest born from existential problems, Coetzee holds out hope for a reconciliation of individuals and communities. Truly, Coetzee strongly believes in the building of a multiracial, transethnic society, an opinion symbolically envisaged by the rape child that Lucy is, against all odds, willing to have, but also by her unflinching position to take alterity differently, although uncertainty and doubts loom ahead. More than David Lurie, Lucy has the

consciousness that they will have to pay a huge price for that reconciliation to happen, to humble themselves before history, and “live like a dog.” However, as whispered in the animal metaphor (with Lurie’s growing interest in and commitment to animal life), dog life is what can lead them to reconsider alterity and envisage the future with serenity.

In *Disgrace*, the animal metaphor is used as a signifier of interracial violence. Indeed, David Lurie’s intricate position with the dogs in the veterinary clinic can be explored within the historical and political context of the novel. Such a tense context is marked by violations and injustices and the denial of human rights, an arbitrary situation upon individuals and communities who are reduced to the state of animals. Likewise, the counter-violence from the system’s victims (the three rapists), turns them into disgraced animals. The novel draws a parallelism between the antipathic relations between individuals in postapartheid South Africa and the killing of dogs.

Moreover, the symbolism of animal images is more eloquent as it suggests the lack of perspective for the whites in the transition period. Indeed, the dogs seem to have no future and that is the reason why they were put to death and incinerated. Such a disgraceful condition of the animals calls to mind that of the whites, epitomized by Lurie and Lucy, who pain to envision better days ahead. The act of giving up his preferred dog shows nascent alterity in the man, as it is “symbolic of relinquishment of “desire” and acceptance of “responsibility for the other” (Zembylas, 2009, p. 225). Through animal imagery, Coetzee showcases what Don Randall takes as an “intensified focus on the animal [that] enables to write in a zone of intersection between sociopolitical and ecological ethics that sharpens the critique of modern political regimes that dominate and exploit fellow beings both human and non-human” (2007, p. 250). Thus, by developing a sympathetic relationship with them, especially the one he is obliged to dispose of through lethal injection (Coetzee, 2008, p. 220), by caring for the existence of the dogs, Lurie develops an ethical consciousness that generates a growing empathy for the other (animal/human) body, which can lead the self to identify with the other, and *in fine* construct more humane relationships.

Admittedly, “John Maxwell Coetzee is a master storyteller trying through his fiction to imagine a way his country can handle its future while trying to expiate its disgraceful past and deal with the sacrifice its people must pay in the present. In the end, the glimmer of hope he sees may be evanescent and under constant threat, but it is there nevertheless.”⁷ The narrative grace of the prose writer is a major esthetic contribution to washing away the disgraceful past deeds of his people, in his *essential gesture* to imagine a time of grace for the Azanian nation.

Conclusion

The objective of the analysis of John-Maxwell Coetzee’s *Disgrace* was to demonstrate that the story is an encoded narrative of South Africa’s transition from a statutory regime of racial oppression to a democratic one. The argumentation has conjugated the postulates of Seymour Chatman on covert narration to Alain Rabatel’s explications of the point of view and narrative perspective, to conclude that the third-person present-tense narration suggests the alarming situation of individuals and communities, faced with uncertainties and a sense of discontinuity, following their country’s unexpected liberation from the prison that apartheid was (Gordimer). The present tense allows more insightful representations of the tribulations and emotional

⁷ *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*’s praise for the book (<https://www.plaindealer.com>).

unrest of whites, who pain to imagine a post-apartheid South Africa, and who battle to preserve “the uneasy pleasures of white privilege” (Cooper, 2005, p. 22). The article has showcased the pathetic condition of Coetzee’s protagonist, representing the older social order, whose secured life comes overnight to an impasse, as he can hardly cope with the wind of change blowing through the country.

The profound angst felt by Lurie is connoted in his intense monologuing, mental discursive sections that are either covertly narrated by the third-voice narrator or directly quoted in the text. This layered narration is a trait of the polyvocal aspect of the novel, as it expresses David Lurie’s confrontation with change, his reluctance to adhere to the new political vision which calls for a reconsideration of interpersonal relationships, and a redistribution of power. The disclosure of the mental discourse of characters, implicitly *re-told* in a present-tense approach, demonstrates profound anxiety in society, as communities find it daunting to appropriate themselves to the normative codes in the transitional period and grasp an evanescent future.

Such a condition is much more highlighted by the character-oriented focalization or point of view, as Alain Rabatel puts it. With David and Lucy filtering the bulk of information about the drama of whites witnessing the officially defunct of apartheid and uneasy privileges, *Disgrace* harps back to the disenchantment of the latter, tottering between efforts to avoid change and the challenging need to amend their straight minds to adhere to the new yet unpredictable social order. By placing Lurie and Lucy in a position to perceive and make perceive, the story allows a *re-creation* of that stressful period for communities in South Africa. Lurie’s perspective allows articulating his point of view about the unsettling situation, a point of view mostly conveyed through the revelation of his thoughts about the alternative life imposed on him by political change. Through his mind’s eye, the reader fully appreciates his anxiety, enhanced by the language of graphic signs (italics, interrogative, points of suspension), with which the text is fraught.

This graphic image of systemic violence is further developed through the narrative perspective of Lucy, filtered through Lurie. The latter’s position about her trauma is another telling representation of the rape scene and the humiliation she had to bear. Lucy calls her tormentors “tax collectors”: she and her community must honor the “debt” of years of oppression, to expiate past guilt. Images and textual elements of her post-rape stress are reflected in the tone of her words of pain, and the typographical mentions in the text.

However violent the text is, and notwithstanding the ambivalent stance of characters about the implications of political change, words, and images of hope grapple to sprout out of the textual gloom. The author’s hope for a fairer social context is implied in Lucy’s decision to come over her agony and build an alliance with Petrus, to envision a possible future for herself and the rape child to be born. Likewise, the optimism of Coetzee is hinted at in David Lurie’s disposition to amend his temperament and transform his “dog life” into a “*life for the dogs*”, an animal metaphor symbolizing the vital need for him and his community to re-imagine alterity and thus become more human. Though lean yet simmering with feeling,⁸ *Disgrace* is Coetzee’s “endeavor to grasp the consciousness of his time and place.”⁹

⁸ Paul Levy (October 26, 1999), in The Wall Street Journal, praises J. Maxwell Coetzee and *Disgrace* (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB940892119143957157>).

⁹ Inspired by one of Nadine Gordimer’s famous citations about writing, from Nadine Gordimer: a life in quotes. (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jul/14/nadine-gordimer-a-life-in-quotes>).

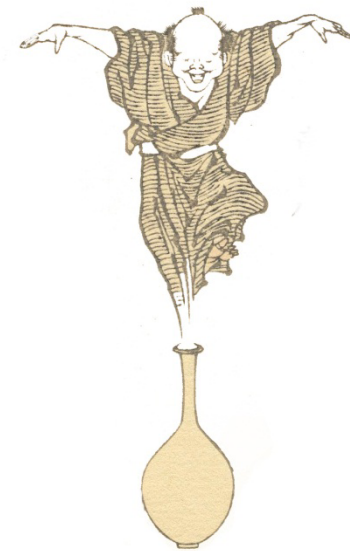
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**Navigating the Antiheroine's Internalised Misogyny: Transformative
Female Friendship in *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride***

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Margaret Atwood's novels, *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride*, as well as her short story "I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth" in order to examine her complex construction of the elusive antiheroine, a figure who ultimately challenges the archetypal *femme fatale*, despite initially masquerading as the *femme*, villain, and antagonist of the text. The conclusions of *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* situate forgiveness as significantly important in the Gothic antiheroine's redemption and suggest that there is power in ambiguity, for both Cordelia and Zenia remain unknowable in their motives and perceptions. Yet while the protagonists' reconciliation with the dark Gothic double results in the relinquishment of internalised misogyny and subsequent realignment with the self, the very notion of forgiveness implies a (somewhat misplaced) wrongdoing. I argue that by framing Cordelia's and Zenia's acts as needing an explanation or absolution, their behaviour becomes unnatural, abject, and deviant, as opposed to being overtly read as consequences of a patriarchal system. The transgressions of Cordelia and Zenia in *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* thus border the line between villainy and antiheroism in ambiguous ways, reinforcing the Gothic antiheroine's liminal existence between denunciation and adherence to patriarchal norms.

Keywords: abjection, antiheroine, Atwood, female friendship, Gothic

At the conclusion to Margaret Atwood's 1988 novel, *Cat's Eye*, protagonist Elaine Risley expresses her resentment towards childhood nemesis, Cordelia, and acknowledges the internalized misogyny that has shaped both women's experiences. Atwood's centralization of female friendship in her narratives – a focus that “has been [and continues to be] distinctly peripheral in literature” (Brown, 1995, p. 197) – has received much scholarly attention. Most notably, much of the research surrounding her novels focuses on Atwood's narrative construction and use of doubling (Brown, 1995); her metanarratives and links to classic mythology (Alban, 2013); and the recurring use of symbols and metaphors across her many texts (Sternberg Perrakis, 2006). This paper focuses on her two novels, *Cat's Eye* (2009a) and *The Robber Bride* (2009b), and short story, “I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth” (2012) in order to examine Atwood's complex construction of the elusive antiheroine, a figure who ultimately challenges the archetypal *femme fatale*, despite initially masquerading as the *femme*, villain, and antagonist of the text. Both Cordelia and Zenia (*The Robber Bride* and “I Dream”) are fundamentally abject, sexually deviant, and linked with a “tainted” femininity; that is, they are ultimately punished for their (monstrous) transgressive behavior, as is typical of the antiheroine¹.

The conclusions of *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* situate forgiveness as significantly important in the Gothic antiheroine's redemption and suggest that there is power in ambiguity, for both Cordelia and Zenia remain unknowable in their motives and perceptions. Yet while the protagonists' reconciliation with the dark Gothic double results in the relinquishment of internalized misogyny and subsequent realignment with the self, the very notion of forgiveness implies a (somewhat misplaced) wrongdoing. I argue that by framing Cordelia's and Zenia's acts as needing an explanation or absolution, their behavior becomes unnatural, abject, and deviant, as opposed to being overtly read as consequences of a patriarchal system that actively silences individuals, namely women. The transgressions of Cordelia and Zenia in *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* thus border the line between villainy and antiheroism in ambiguous ways, reinforcing the Gothic antiheroine's liminal existence between denunciation and adherence to gender norms.

The Gothic Antiheroine

Indeed, and as Diana Wallace contends, while “the Female Gothic explains the ghosts, the male formula accepts the supernatural as part of the ‘reality’ of its world” (2013, p. 17), once again suggesting a higher standard against which female characters, and particularly antiheroines, are held. In her work on television antiheroines, Margaret Tally suggests that they “often must explain their aberrant behaviour and guilt about making choices that are perceived to be selfish or morally suspect” (2016, p. 10), and Cordelia and Zenia are no exception. Indeed, in a more recent study on the figure, Sarah Hagelin and Gillian Silverman contend that contemporary antiheroines are “characterised not by pluck but by punch and pathos... Her signature move... is a wholesale rejection of virtue and social responsibility” (2022, p. x). Cordelia and Zenia, while more essentialist in their expressions of stereotypically “feminine” behaviors such as deviancy and cunning, are positioned as generally irresponsible and inept in matters of social, cultural, and political life, much like Hagelin and Silverman's antiheroine. What is unique about these novels in the antiheroine context, though, is their thematic focus on female friendship, for as Julia Mason contends in her discussion of antihero mothers and women, “mainstream narratives often fail to include positive representations of women's friendship or sisterhood, which can serve to reinforce ideas about women not supporting each other” (2019,

¹ Edward Friedman writes that the antiheroine must suffer her “downfall” for the narrative to be complete, with “sexuality” being her “major weapon against society” (1987, p. xi).

p. 657). Atwood explores how female friendships can both perpetuate and eventually overcome internalized misogyny, despite the somewhat problematic conclusions. Elaine's relationship to her art – and thus, her expression of true self – is inextricably tied to her fraught “friendship” with her unlikely muse Cordelia, the childhood bully who led Elaine to near-death at age nine and who has haunted her for forty years. Operating as doubles for each other, “trapped in a perniciously symbiotic *doppelgänger* gaze” (Alban, 2013, p. 164), Elaine and Cordelia demonstrate the horrific impact of gendered othering on the construction of the self that continues to haunt the antiheroine's experience both in and beyond the Gothic genre. Similarly, the impact of the ambiguous, antiheroic Zenia on the lives of Tony, Charis, and Roz in *The Robber Bride* is life-altering in how she holds a mirror to their experiences and self-hatred. Both texts challenge the traditions of the Old-Gothic and reframe the villainous woman as multifaceted, ambiguous, and antiheroic, a transgressive rendering of femininity in a genre that has been historically dependent on women's subordination for the purposes of narrative intrigue.

The argument that Zenia and Cordelia act as mirrors for the protagonists in order for them to “access the dark underside of the self for the first time” (Sternberg Perrakis, 2006, p. 352) is not new, however its contextualization within the wider framework of the antiheroine narrative is largely unexplored. Despite this paper's analysis of Atwood's novels within the context of the (Female) Gothic mode, I argue that her characterization of the antiheroine transgresses genre. In both texts, there are ambiguous, liminal, and widely misunderstood antiheroines in Cordelia and Zenia, who are kept at a narrative distance from the reader. They are made monstrous by the protagonists in order for them to simultaneously denounce and understand them, and they garner sympathy, even likeability, despite their malicious behavior. Unable to fit in with her peers, Elaine comments that “sisterhood is a difficult concept for me... because I've never had a sister. Brotherhood is not” (2009a, loc. 5381).²

Atwood examines this problematic expression of internalized misogyny that encourages women into what feminist scholar and psychoanalyst Hélène Cixous calls acts of “antinarcissism,” a “narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't got!” (1976, p. 878). Indeed, the protagonists of both novels turn against themselves in self-hatred and fear and internalise misogynist ideals surrounding women as “other” and inferior. As contradictory figures, both Cordelia and Zenia exemplify the Gothic's tension between “mimic[king] the polarisation of women in Western society” and “challeng[ing] damaging stereotypes” (Horner & Zlosnik, 2016, p. 2), yet Atwood's short story, “I Dream,” posits a new framework for understanding the antiheroine as no longer oppositional but allied.

From Childhood Enemy to Gothic Double: The Dual Antiheroism of Cordelia and Elaine in *Cat's Eye*

The thematic recurrences in *Cat's Eye* revolve around the passing of time, the inescapability of the past, and the fragility of memory. Protagonist Elaine's past is viscerally omnipresent as she recalls her time as Cordelia's friend: “You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away” (Atwood, 2009a, loc. 157). The memories of Elaine's childhood are presented alongside a present-day narrative in which she returns to her hometown of Toronto for a retrospective art show of her works. Present-day Elaine is bitter, cynical, and trapped in the memories of her childhood trauma surrounding bullying and self-harm: “Get me out of this,

² I refer to locations (“loc.”) instead of page numbers for *The Blind Assassin*, as I read a Kindle edition.

Cordelia. I'm locked in. I don't want to be nine for ever" (loc. 6260). While the classic Gothic heroine experiences entrapment of the physical kind, Elaine's prison is a mental one, an invisible force that filters through and poisons her life. As Eve Sedgwick contends, Gothic texts feature individuals who are often "spatialized" in relation to conventions and "massive[ly] blocked off from something to which [they] ought normally to have access" (1986, p. 12). This might be repressed pasts, a lover, "the free air" (p. 12), or, in Elaine's case, her authentic self. A daughter of eccentric parents, Elaine lives a nomadic life until her family settles down in Toronto where she meets Carol, Grace, and eventually, Cordelia, childhood friends who introduce her to the harsh world of femininity. She describes it as "unfolding, being revealed to me," noting that "there's a whole world of girls and their doings that has been unknown to me...I can be a part of it without making any effort at all" (loc. 891). The friendship is undeniably toxic, described by Gillian M.E. Alban as "desired yet dreaded" (2013, p. 169) in nature, much like the abject or the uncanny in the way both inspire simultaneous allure and repulsion. Subjected to constant surveillance by the girls, Elaine becomes physically and emotionally unwell, begins self-harming, and starts fainting on purpose once she realizes it is a "way out of places you want to leave...like stepping sideways, out of your own body, out of time or into another time" (2009a, loc. 2713). The turning-point of the story – one that enables Elaine to escape from the girls' influence – comes when she nearly drowns in a frozen lake after being forced to retrieve her hat, which Cordelia threw over the bridge and into the water. As the years pass, Elaine struggles to recall a formative memory of the girls, having repressed the worst of their experiences: "They're like the names of distant cousins, people who live far away, people I hardly know. Time is missing" (loc. 3117), and yet the memories are vividly detailed in their trauma. As is Atwood's style, neither Elaine nor Cordelia is perfect nor wholeheartedly evil, and it is this challenge to the rigidity of Gothic stereotypes that allows the antiheroine to flourish and evolve in her novels.

Like Zenia, Cordelia is morally ambiguous, operating as both tormentor and friend, and as Elaine's Gothic double: "We are like the twins in old fables, each of whom has been given half a key" (2009a, loc. 6406). As Alban argues, "the symbiosis of these two 'friends' ultimately paralyses both" (2013, p. 174), leading both women to "change places as Medusan severed heads" (p. 170) in the novel: Elaine is buried by the girls in an imitation of Mary Queen of Scots, and Cordelia embarrassingly drops a rotten cabbage disguised as a head in one of her stage plays. Indeed, Cordelia is first introduced to the reader and Elaine in a way that aligns her, and Carol and Grace beside her, with traditional notions of female deviancy: the girls are "standing among the apple trees, just where [Elaine] left them. But they don't look the same" (2009a, loc. 1131), and the trees are "covered with scabby apples, red ones and yellow ones...the apples mush under [Elaine's] feet" (loc. 1138). Atwood is not aligning Cordelia with female original sin but symbolizing the girls' premature introduction to the patriarchal world that is about to destroy their childhood innocence. It is this focus on both Cordelia and Elaine, specifically, as unwitting child victims to gender constraints that stops either woman from descending into unlikeable, deviant, and *femme* territory. It is only in Elaine's adult years that she begins to question that "women I have thought were stupid, or wimps, may simply have been hiding things, as I was" (loc. 5381).

Further, Cordelia is shrouded in ambiguity that allows her to operate in the liminal spaces between victim and abuser, enemy and friend. Elaine frequently dreams of Cordelia "falling, from a cliff or bridge, against a background of twilight," or "standing in the old Queen Mary schoolyard...wearing her snowsuit jacket" (2009a, loc. 5660), and it becomes clear that Cordelia's treatment of Elaine could very easily have occurred if their roles were reversed. When recalling the day of Elaine's near drowning, her mother nonchalantly states that "I never

thought she was behind it. It was that Grace, not Cordelia. Grace put her up to it, I always thought” (loc. 6170). While this could be dismissed as a mere oversight by Elaine’s unobservant mother, the novel’s preoccupation with the precarious nature of memory only adds to this ambiguity: “I am growing confused myself. My memory is tremulous, like water breathed on” (loc. 6176). The dual entanglement that the two women remain trapped in is symbolized in Elaine’s painting of Cordelia called “Half a Face,” an “odd title, because Cordelia’s entire face is visible” (loc. 3519). Elaine narrates:

It was hard for me to fix Cordelia in one time, at one age. I wanted her about thirteen, looking out with that defiant, almost belligerent stare of hers. So? But the eyes sabotaged me. They aren’t strong eyes; the look they give the face is tentative, hesitant, reproachful. Frightened. Cordelia is afraid of me, in this picture. I am afraid of Cordelia. (Atwood, 2009a, loc. 3519)

Cordelia’s face, half “covered with a white cloth” (loc. 3519) speaks to this ambiguity, to the monstrous-feminine, and to that which “beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1). Kristeva writes that “the abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I” (p. 1), and it is only through Elaine’s identification with Cordelia as her repressed, symbolic twin that she is able to free them both. It is in this recognition of shared trauma, epitomized by internalized self-hatred, that the two women are freed from restraints of their own making and ultimately unified.

Aligning with the Female Gothic mode, *Cat’s Eye* is less concerned with traditional notions of entrapment in decaying mansions and more interested in the pervasive, imprisoning threat of patriarchal violence. When Cordelia attempts to frighten the girls with tales of “dissolved dead people” (2009a, loc. 1234) lurking under the bridge, Elaine narrates that “the reason the ravine is forbidden to us is not the dead people but the men” (loc. 1241). This justified terror of patriarchal violence sits uneasily alongside Elaine’s internalized misogyny and hatred of other women. Present-day Elaine imagines a scene where “some man chases Cordelia along the sidewalk...catches up with her, punches her in the ribs... throws her down,” and despite not being able to “go any farther” (loc. 217) with the vision, she takes some delight in mentally punishing Cordelia. The irony in Elaine’s near drowning in the ravine is that it *is* the fault of patriarchy, for the girls are representative of its most hideous ideologies:

Cordelia doesn’t do these things or have this power over me because she’s my enemy. Far from it. I know about enemies...With enemies you can feel hatred, and anger. But Cordelia is my friend. She likes me, she wants to help me, they all do. They are my friends, my girlfriends, my best friends. I have never had any before and I’m terrified of losing them. I want to please. Hatred would have been easier. With hatred, I would have known what to do. Hatred is clear, metallic, one-handed, unwavering; unlike love. (Atwood, 2009a, loc. 1903)

Elaine’s anxiety about pleasing the friends who scrutinize her under intense (patriarchal) surveillance speaks to Hélène Cixous’ contention that “men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves” (1976, p. 878). Not only does this misogyny manifest outwardly towards other women, but also inwardly. Cixous writes, “we’ve been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them” (p. 885), a reality which manifests early on in Elaine’s life when, while under the enduring power of Cordelia, she feels “sick to [her] stomach every morning” (2009a, loc. 2199) and unexpectedly vomits

in front of the girls. She writes that it “feels like bits of carrot” (loc. 2203), a deliberate evocation of phallic imagery that echoes Cordelia’s earlier comments that “men have carrots between their legs. They aren’t really carrots but something worse” (loc. 1502). Elaine’s abject response to the girls’ abuse exposes her anxieties surrounding the expectations of women in a sexual world, one that she is on the brink of understanding for herself: “We examine our legs and underarms for sprouting hairs, our chests for swellings. But nothing is happening: so far we are safe” (loc. 1489). This abject relationship to the physical self and to the dangers of the female body, suggests that the Gothic antiheroine’s unwitting prison is her own mind.

This self-surveillance emerges for Elaine out of the girls’ inconsistent treatment of her – one minute they are “linking their arms through mine, asking me how I feel” (2009a, loc. 2734), the next, viciously berating her. The “major effect of the Panopticon,” as Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*, is “to induce...a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (1979, p. 201). The pervasiveness of Cordelia’s power leads to Elaine’s mental imprisonment extending far beyond childhood. According to Foucault, power should be “visible and unverifiable” (p. 201), operating in a subversive way so that the subject will know they are being watched, but not know *when* this occurs. Elaine is subjected to this twofold: she is both a victim to the patriarchal system itself, and to the girls who have weaponized it against her. Indeed, “it does not matter who exercises power” for “any individual...can operate the machine” (p. 202), and both Cordelia and Zenia are the vehicles through which this patriarchal power and its associated punishments are exercised. The power dynamic between Elaine and Cordelia switches as Elaine reaches adolescence, and she narrates that she is “not afraid of seeing Cordelia,” but ‘afraid of being Cordelia. Because in some way [they] changed places, I’ve forgotten when” (2009a, loc. 3526). This fear comes to fruition as Elaine transforms into her most hated subject: “I’m surprised at how much pleasure this gives me, to know she’s so uneasy, to know I have this much power over her” (loc. 3633). This patriarchal, self-fulfilling cycle of “antinarcissism” (Cixous, 1976, p. 878) causes both Elaine and Cordelia to self-harm, a physical mutilation of the body that many antiheroines exercise.³ The pain of ripping skin off her feet gives Elaine “something definite to think about, something immediate,” (2009a, loc. 1797) and it is “an old habit [she] cannot seem to break” (loc. 6166) even in adulthood. Cordelia herself is institutionalized for attempting suicide, and she begs a reluctant Elaine to help her escape: “‘So you won’t,’ she says. And then, forlornly: ‘I guess you’ve always hated me’” (loc. 5649). Poignantly, it is Elaine’s escape from the cycle of internalized misogyny that frees both women, for “only [Elaine] can return Cordelia what she needs” (Alban, 2013, p. 169).

The conclusion of *Cat’s Eye* restores order to the fractured identities of the two women, and Elaine’s reconciliation with Cordelia’s memory marks her true emancipation from her trauma: for “an eye for an eye leads only to more blindness” (2009a, loc. 6305). Unlike Zenia, who suffers her stereotypical “downfall” and is killed at the end of *The Robber Bride* (despite her later redemption in Atwood’s short story), Cordelia’s future remains unknown. As Elaine notes, “I’m headed for a future in which I sprawl propped in a wheelchair, shedding hair and drooling... While Cordelia vanishes and vanishes” (loc. 6427). Immortalized in this way, Cordelia becomes supernatural in her ambiguity, much like Zenia, forever young and unknowable, misunderstood. Returning to the bridge where she nearly lost her life, Elaine imagines Cordelia standing “halfway up the hill, gazing back over her shoulder” (loc. 6491). She narrates: “I reach out my arms to her, bend down, hands open to show I have no weapon.

³ Examples include Amy Dunne and Camille Preaker from Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* and *Sharp Objects*; Ayoola from Oyinkan Braithwaite’s *My Sister, the Serial Killer*; Lisbeth Salander from the *Millennium* trilogy (her tattooing can be figured as self-mutilation); and Eileen from Ottessa Moshfegh’s novel *Eileen*.

It's all right, I say to her. You can go home now. The snow in my eyes withdraws like smoke" (loc. 6482). Having united the lost halves of herself, Elaine, like *The Robber Bride*'s Tony, Charis and Roz, is able to reconcile with the dark, troubling double and rather than expel her out as the Old-Gothic would encourage, accept her as part of the redemptive narrative. This subversion to the traditional dichotomy of the "good and evil woman" (Fleenor, 1983, p. 11) has indeed manifested physically and internally for the Gothic antiheroine, however it is overcome in these Atwood texts. This suggests that while the antiheroine is still limited to the oppressive patriarchal system from which she emerges, she *is* eventually able to escape its confines through the protagonist's reconciliation with her as the dark, *femme*-masquerading double: a very Gothic undertaking indeed.

The Elusive "Villain" as Antiheroic Saviour in *The Robber Bride*

The Robber Bride begins with protagonists Tony, Charis, and Roz meeting at their favorite café, the Toxique, for their monthly lunch, a regularity they had "come to depend on" since the "catastrophe" that was Zenia (Atwood, 2009b, p. 51). The novel switches between the past and the present, detailing each woman's intense interactions and friendship with the mysterious antiheroine, who single-handedly destroys each of their romantic relationships. Zenia's ability to insert herself into the lives of each woman is what allows her to betray them so thoroughly. Yet, Atwood ultimately presents this betrayal with ambiguity, for Zenia's malicious behavior ultimately saves each woman from a toxic relationship (ironic, considering the name of the café). Consistently described via vampire imagery and abject language, Zenia is deliberately shrouded in mystery, existing as both an object of envy and a hated subject in the eyes of Tony, Charis, and Roz, each of whom markedly represents second-wave ideologies related to, as June Hannam argues in her discussion of the second wave, the bringing of "anxieties about the body, sexuality and relationships" into the political sphere (2011, p. 81). Indeed, this era saw the politicization of the personal and the centralization of (white) identity politics, where women were beginning to question the ways they "were expected to conform to particular ideas of femininity" (p. 81). Atwood's positioning of Zenia as enigmatic and elusive reinforces her liminal status, that which allows her to infiltrate the women's lives so seamlessly and impactfully. After Zenia "returns from the dead" (p. 19) at the beginning of the novel, much to the protagonists' horror, each woman confronts her one last time, in a final standoff that is filled with more of Zenia's lies and manipulation. Zenia's (actual) mysterious death at the end of the novel signifies the beginning of new life for the protagonists, and yet each is changed by their respective relationship with the "cold and treacherous bitch" that is Zenia (p. 509).

Zenia's status as an antiheroine, as opposed to gothic villain or *femme fatale*, lies partially in the ambiguity of her motives. The beginning of Atwood's novel positions Zenia as the focal point of the narrative, despite her function as an unknowable object: "the story of Zenia ought to begin where Zenia began" (2009b, p. 14). Of course, gaining an accurate knowledge of Zenia's history is impossible, for when asked about the truth of her life story, Zenia "would lie earnestly, with a catch in her voice, a quaver of suppressed grief" (p. 14). Tony, whose mother walked out on her at a young age, learns that Zenia's own mother sold her into child prostitution and Tony is horrified, "electrified" (p. 165) by the story, despite the fact that her "own little history has dwindled considerably" (p. 167) in the shadow of Zenia's revelation. Taking advantage of Charis' generous nature, Zenia reveals that she has cancer, which allows her an entry point into Charis' life (and couch), while for Roz, Zenia concocts a story about how Roz's father saved Zenia and her family during the war in Berlin. The gift of storytelling allows Zenia to act as a kind of double to the women, for she is "constructed...from the many stories they tell her" (Tolan, 2007, p. 53): "My own monster, thinks Roz. I thought I could control her.

Then she broke loose” (2009b, p. 102). As Tolan observes, “Zenja in her Gothic doubleness contains numerous multiplicities and contradictions” (2007, p. 54), for while she eventually steals the lovers/husbands of the three protagonists, she is, at least for a short time, also the closest friend of each. The advice that she gives the women throughout their friendships runs contradictorily to these outcomes, revealing a deeper motive. She warns the women that “all men are warped. This is something you must never forget” (2009b, p. 136) and “they’re all just rapists at heart” (p. 225), and yet, to the women, she is merely the “up-market slut” (p. 286) who steals their lovers, as opposed to the fierce feminist friend they need. Zenja personifies the “phenomenon of the unstable boundary” (Murphy, 2016, p. 27) inherent in Gothic narratives, and it is this ambiguity that underpins her function as a formidable antiheroine.

Much of the critical discourse surrounding Zenja explores her embodiment of postfeminist ideals that exist in direct contrast to the second-wave characteristics of Tony, Charis, and Roz (Tolan, 2007). As a confident, sexual, manipulative “man-eater” (2009b, p. 377), Zenja is deliberately ambiguous and ultimately functions as a representation of cultural anxieties surrounding female sexuality and abjection. Zenja operates as the object of the protagonists’ envy, for, as Jean Wyatt observes, “her thoughts and feelings are never recorded; no subjectivity, no inner world, confronts the reader directly” (1998, p. 41). This elusive distance allows Zenja to also represent the darker aspects of female and individual subjectivity that early feminism sought to repress in favour of a collective “sisterhood.” Indeed, Zenja “both represents and evokes the feelings the women are leaving out of their friendship – rage, envy, and violence against women” (p. 58), and in writing her this way, Atwood reinforces the importance of a multifaceted and complex feminist identity. Zenja thus rejects the binary stereotypes that have historically underpinned the Female Gothic, emerging as an entirely original representation of antiheroism.

Zenja’s death at the conclusion of the novel, however, complicates the subversive feminist ideal that Atwood puts forward. Fiona Tolan argues that “if postfeminism is to be read as an entirely negative phenomenon – an *anti*-feminism – then this conclusion proves satisfactory as feminism triumphs” (2007, p. 54). Highlighting the ambiguous nature of the Gothic mode, Tolan acknowledges how the genre is both “empowering and imprisoning to the female character,” particularly when it comes to Zenja, who is “something to be both desired and feared” (p. 54) by the other protagonists. As a rejector of the traditional idea of the heroine, and, indeed, the *femme fatale*, Zenja must be destroyed, but not entirely. Through an analysis of the short story and sequel to *The Robber Bride*, “I Dream of Zenja with the Bright Red Teeth” (2012), I argue that through the spiritual revival of Zenja, Atwood rectifies her previous denunciation of postfeminist ideals and frames Zenja as a transformative and positive influence on the protagonists. In re-establishing Zenja within the lives of the three women who are now older, wiser, and happily independent, Atwood addresses the suggestion posed by critics that “maybe Zenja’s intentions were benevolent all along” (p. 63). Read in this way, Zenja’s death and subsequent revival can be viewed as a disruption to the familiar narrative that favors the antiheroine’s downfall, ultimately subverting the “punishment” that death often serves these antiheroic figures.

Indeed, Zenja’s confident embodiment of postfeminist sexual ideals also disrupts the notion that the antiheroine must possess “problematic sexual aspects” (Tzikas, 2011, p. 158). When confronted by Zenja’s return from the dead in *The Robber Bride*, the women describe her as being “as beautiful as ever,” as she “sits unmoving, as still as if she were carved” (2009b, p. 42), a modern-day Miss Havisham, in the Toxique where they regularly meet. Her perfume is “the smell of scorched earth” (p. 41), and her “purple-red angry mouth” stands out amongst her

“startling new breasts” (p. 75); in this moment, she is simultaneously the object of their envy and fear. Certainly, for Atwood’s protagonists it is Zenia’s physical body more than her sexual expression which poses a threat to their sense of propriety and order, with Charis feeling the overwhelming need to reassert and ground herself upon Zenia’s return from the dead: “*My body, mine, she repeats. I am a good person. I exist*” (p. 101). As Sternberg Perrakis contends, Zenia represents the gothic notion of excess, as the “protagonists perceive her as overflowing the boundaries of the bodily envelope” (1997, p. 50). Indeed, the alignment of Zenia with vampiric imagery elevates her to a position of abjection in the eyes of the women. Zenia certainly “beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1), and is representative of the “immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady” (p. 4) aspects of abjection that cross all boundaries of understanding and order.

Aside from the overtly monstrous and Gothic descriptions of Zenia as a literal vampire, someone who “can’t cross your threshold unless you invite them in” (2009b, p. 58), she represents the epitome of abjection in her “return from the dead.” The women equate Zenia’s sexual body with death, noting that “those things don’t burn when you cremate them either; that’s the rumour going around, about artificial boobs” (p. 87). As Tolan notes, “by magnifying Zenia to monstrous proportions, they simultaneously validate their own status as her victims,” a process through which they can “inscribe themselves as innocent victims of an external and supernatural threat” (2007, p. 50). In considering her as the abject, sexual “other” – as “Zenia, chicken murderer, drinker of innocent blood... Zenia, aphid of the soul” (2009b, p. 279) – the women can maintain their second-wave sentimentalities with dignity, without fear of the threat of postfeminism (Tolan, 2007). Rather than existing as a sexually problematic antiheroine in and of herself, Zenia functions as a mirror to the sexual anxieties of the other women, forcing them to face their own self-hatred and psychologically damaging relationships with their respective lovers. This aligns with Fleenor’s contention that the Female Gothic prompts an inward reflection of the female self, an ambivalence which leads to “feelings of self-disgust and self-fear” (1983, p. 11). Atwood positions this internalization of misogyny as an obstacle to be overcome, with Zenia functioning as an agitating agent of patriarchal expectations; ultimately, the positioning of her existence as a threat to the protagonists exposes the many ways that patriarchy’s policing and regulating of women’s bodies forces them into self-surveillance and control.

Zenia becomes the embodiment of abjection when her corpse is discovered, her “white mermaid eyes” (2009b, p. 428) staring blankly at the women as she lies in the hotel fountain, “her cloudy hair floating” (p. 433) around her. Ironically, the women find out that Zenia was, in fact, dying from ovarian cancer, the disease she had lied to Charis about having all those years before. The unmistakable link between sexual desire, motherhood, and decay is prevalent here, and something that Zenia is positioned as having avoided in her premature death. Even in death, Tony is left wondering, “what if Zenia’s cries for help really were cries for help, this time?” (p. 438), her hold over the women as strong as ever. Zenia’s continued presence in their lives is hinted at in her ambiguous “return” at the end of the novel: “Tony stares up at Zenia, cornered on the balcony with her failing magic, balancing on the sharp edge, her bag of tricks finally empty” (p. 448). Tony likens Zenia to Medusa with her “dark eyes, the snaky hair” (p. 448), and yet she wonders, “was she in any way like us? ...Or, to put it the other way around: Are we in any way like her?” (p. 449). Like Cordelia, Zenia is aligned with traditional notions of deviancy, but this is ultimately challenged by Atwood. Zenia’s legacy is that she allows the women to embrace the darker sides of their personality, ultimately “restoring to a feminist community the right to envy” (Wyatt, 1998, p. 59). Indeed, “the story of Zenia is insubstantial, ownerless, a rumour only, drifting from mouth to mouth and changing as it goes” (2009b, p.

440), and yet, at the conclusion of the novel, this is the narrative that they wish to tell, as they embrace the idea that “tonight their stories will be about Zenia” (p. 448). Zenia exemplifies one of the Victor Turner’s “liminal *personae* (‘threshold people’)” in that her ambiguity causes her to “elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (2017 [1969], p. 95); it is in this space of intangibility where Zenia thrives as the antiheroine of Atwood’s novel.

Indeed, Tolan contends that Zenia “threatens the stability of each of the women” (2007, p. 45) in her representation of postfeminist ideals, forcing them to confront and re-evaluate their assumptions about femininity and sexuality. Phillis Sternberg Perrakis suggests that “Zenia’s function is ultimately transformative, forcing the three protagonists out of submissive relationships” (1997, p. 152), and subsequently allowing them to form their own sense of individualism. Within a postfeminist framework, Zenia is representative of the “double entanglement” that postfeminist scholar Angela McRobbie describes (2004, p. 255), which “comprises the co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life...with processes of liberalisation in regard to choice and diversity in domestic, sexual and kinship relations” (pp. 255–256). Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon define this as a movement which “takes feminism ‘into account’ only to repudiate it” (2018, p. 28), and Zenia functions in such a contradictory way; she is both an enviable, empowered subject in her progressive sexual expression, while simultaneously embodying the ways in which patriarchy seeks to erode women of their sense of self. This postfeminist notion of “choice” is certainly a “modality of constraint,” for “the individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices” (McRobbie, 2004, p. 261). Zenia is representative of the desired outcome of this internal battle in her blatant self-confidence, but her presence causes the others to reflect upon their own perceived failings as women within the context of postfeminism’s rhetoric of choice.

However, Atwood’s short story “I Dream of Zenia with the Bright Red Teeth” (2012) repositions Zenia as a positive influence in the protagonists’ lives. In the sequel, Zenia is but a distant memory for the three women, who have “lost track” (p. 59) of when she died, yet the repercussions of her actions are still notably present. Charis, the most gothic of the three women in her propensity for clairvoyant prophecies, reveals that she had a dream about Zenia wearing “a sort of shroud thing...more like a nightgown,” with “kind of pointy” (p. 60) teeth, a comment that causes her dog, Ouida, to erupt in an excited burst of energy. Dressed in white, Charis’ dream-like Zenia is reminiscent of the subdued “mad-woman” of gothic literature, her mysterious “floaty” (p. 60) appearance akin to the descriptions of Bertha Mason stalking Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*. Zenia’s alignment with monstrosity in *The Robber Bride* is similar to Brontë’s “clothed hyena” (2010, p. 296), a brutal image of Bertha with “red eyes” and a “savage face” (p. 286). However, Atwood’s realignment of Zenia in “I Dream” allows her to operate in a similar way to Jean Rhys’ Antoinette, in that she is stripped of her previously perceived monstrosity and reinstated as woman. Charis notes that “she wasn’t menacing or anything. In fact, she seemed kind of friendly. She had a message for me. What she said was, Billy’s coming back,” and indeed, it is revealed that Charis rents her house next door to “deadbeat” Billy, much to her friends’ dismay (2012, p. 61). Tony and Roz ponder over how to save their friend from almost certain heartbreak, but this time, it is not about another woman, but Billy the “psychopath” (p. 62). Rather than blaming the “other woman,” the oft-demonised figure of gothic literature, Atwood returns to the root of the women’s anguish: their problematic relationships with men. Zenia’s framing as an ambivalent antiheroine is cemented in Atwood’s repositioning of her as a specifically positive impact on the women’s lives. Charis believes that Ouida is Zenia reincarnated, and Atwood certainly suggests this, with Ouida’s perfectly timed

interruptions when Zenia is the topic of discussion. Ouida attacks Billy aggressively enough to send him to the hospital, ultimately leading to his departure from Charis' life, "never to be seen again" (p. 63). Charis contemplates Zenia's previous actions in light of these events:

Maybe she stole Billy to protect Charis from such a bad apple as him. Maybe she stole West to teach Tony a life lesson about well, music appreciation or something, and maybe she stole Mitch to clear the way for Roz's better husband, Sam. Maybe Zenia was, like, the secret alter ego of each of them, acting out stuff for them they didn't have the strength to act out by themselves. When you looked at it that way... (Atwood, 2012, p. 63).

Surpassing the emotions of envy and jealousy, Tony, Charis, and Roz envision Zenia as a sort of guardian angel, always protecting them in the form of Ouida, as she did (indirectly) in life. Atwood's story concludes with a subtle nod to Zenia's postfeminist embracement of sexuality, noting that Ouida approves of Charis' new love-interest and "flirts with him shamelessly" (p. 63). Through this faux revival of Zenia (albeit in the form of a dog), Atwood is able to reverse her previous silencing of the antiheroine, ultimately elevating Zenia to a transcendental position in the lives of those she has impacted.

Conclusion

Atwood's protagonists in *The Robber Bride* are quick to separate themselves from an identification with Zenia, which leads to their own ambiguous sense of self. This can be contrasted to the ending of *Cat's Eye*, where Elaine finds peace and closure by her identification with Cordelia in her understanding of them as symbiotic twins. Helen Hanson argues that:

...the female gothic text is interesting precisely because it explores the negotiations of 'female selfhood'. And it does so textually through the female gothic heroine's identification of another woman's story, and her determination of her own fate as different. 'Not being like that' is the formation of the heroine's self-image, as distinct from a woman in the past, and 'not being like that' also constitutes survival (2007, pp. 61–62).

"The other woman," often categorized by the *femme fatale* or deviant other, is almost always opposed to essentialist feminism, making her a contradictory and potentially transgressive figure. For Elaine, "negotiations of 'female selfhood'" (2007, p. 62) are ultimately explored not through a rejection or denunciation of "the other woman," but through an alignment with her, supporting Abel's contention that novels depicting "actual friendships" of women focus on identification rather than complementarity as the "mechanism that draws women together" (1981, p. 415). Indeed, at the end of *Cat's Eye*, Elaine ponders how differently her friendship with Cordelia could have turned out had they been amicable friends: "This is what I miss, Cordelia: not something that's gone, but something that will never happen. Two old women giggling over their tea" (2009a, loc. 6520). In *The Robber Bride* the protagonists both hate and love Zenia, while also turning this hatred toward themselves, in an act of Cixous' "antinarcissism" or "antilove" (1976, p. 878). Certainly, Elaine fears becoming Cordelia but only because she knows that they are one and the same, "twins in old fables" (2009a, loc. 6399); the fear is of the dark side of herself. The conclusions to *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* speak to Cixous' hope for a less fragmented notion of sisterhood: "It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was 'born'" (1976, p. 882). Despite being partially responsible for

the women's inner turmoil, Cordelia and Zenia ultimately enable their victims to solve their identity crises. Unable to be inherently and inexcusably bad, Cordelia and Zenia are *forgiven* for their behavior in an emancipatory act of closure – yet the gendered ideologies responsible for their creation remain operational.

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The Early Phase of Japanese Literature in Bangla in Periodicals

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Abstract

Many Japanese literary texts have been translated recently into Bangla. However, nobody has yet identified the first translation of Japanese literary text in the periodicals until today. The purpose of this paper is first to map the early phase of Japanese literature in Bangla periodicals; second, it attempts to distinguish the first piece of Japanese literature in Bangla; and third, it strives to ascertain the trends in interpreting Japanese literature in the second half of the 19th century. At least four pieces of literature are unearthed for the first time in this article. Despite not embracing the original Japanese or English name in the title in Bangla, *Gonpachikomurasakihyokufun* (The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki) and *Hone Kawa* (*Bones and Ribs*) became the earliest Japanese literary specimens in Bangla. Colonial influence and preference for works of religious significance pertinent to Bengal society – are pinned down as the trends in interpreting Japanese literature in periodicals in the 19th century.

Keywords: Bangla, first Japanese literature, periodical, 19th century

In the latter half of the 19th century, Bengal province¹ arose with its flourishing publishing society, enriching the Bangla² language and literature by translating foreign and continental texts. Both creative writing and translation³ experienced a parallel stride in periodicals during this period. While looking for the earliest translation of Japanese literature in the prominent periodicals of this century, *Bharati*⁴ stood out for translating Japanese literature by printing at least two writings in two issues of one volume consisting of two translations – a tale and a farce. During the 1856-1900 period, at least 21 writings on Japan and the Japanese culture, including literature printed in nine different periodicals, were found. However, *Prabasi* overshadowed any magazines by printing the highest number of Japan-related essays in at least 44 issues from the 19th to the 20th century. *Sahitya* has the highest record for publishing translations of Japanese literature compared with several contemporary critical literary periodicals that published Japan and Japan-related articles during the 19th and 20th centuries. From these numbers, this paper intends to first sketch the earlier phase of Japanese literature in Bangla in the second half of the 19th century. Second, it intends to recognize the first Japanese literature interpretation in Bangla, and third, it attempts to determine the trends in interpreting Japanese literature in Bangla.

Literature Review and Methodology

Although “Nikki Kimura, a scholar and monk from Japan who studied Sanskrit in Chattagram, took admission at the Oriental Studies Department of Calcutta University in 1911” (Azuma, 1996, p. 2), this precedent is not the earliest Japan-Bengal relationship from various perspectives. Previous researchers have discussed Manilal Gangopadhyay’s *Japani Phanus* (1908) and *Jhumjumi* (1910) consisted of several Japanese tales (Mitra, 1958, p. 230). However, “*Japan-Probas* and *Japan* by Manmathnath Ghosh and Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyay, respectively, can be considered to be the earliest Bengali travel narratives that portray Japan in the early 20th century through a Bengal gaze” (Keeni, n.d., p. 1). Subrata Kumar Das believed that between the two of them, Sureshchandra Bandopadhyay was the first Bengali person to write about Japan (Das, 2009). However, Milinda Banerjee has stated Ramakanta Ray as one of the earliest Bengali residents in Japan (Banerjee, 2018, p. 168). The latter wrote a letter from Japan, enunciating his profound respect for the Japanese people (R. Ray, 1901, p. 160). On the other hand, Gita Keeni indicated Rabindranath Tagore as the first translator by including a Bashō’s haiku in his *Japan Jatri* (1919) (Keeni, 2006, p. 298). Furthermore, the four phases of the development of Japanese literature in India identified by Sachidananda did not show a starting point of the year as she clearly stated that “the first phase began in the mid-50s” of the 20th century by pointing out the Hindi translation of *Genji Monogatari* (Sachidananda, 2010, p. 474). In addition, Lopamudra Malek, while analyzing a few instances of Japanese poetry, did not emphasize any historical context of publishing Japanese poems in Bangla. Instead, she focused on discussing the significance of Japanese poets, consequentially Matsuo Bashō, Taniguchi Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and a few songs from Nakano Shigeharu, Yosano Akiko, Sakutarō Hagiwara, and Yone Noguchi (Malek, 2018). She

¹ In this paper, “Bengal Province” expresses the undivided so-called Bengal area in the Indian subcontinent, and “Bengali” is used for the Bengali nation.

² Although, “Bengali” is used by the Indian Bengali people for the Bangla language and other scholars in the world, Bangla is used in this paper to acknowledge the state language in Bangladesh.

³ In this paper, translation means the piece of work.

⁴ Due to the pandemic effect, the primary data for periodicals collected from the digital library of University of Heidelberg. All the volumes of the periodicals are collected in a digitized form from CrossAsia-Repository of Heidelberg University Library <http://crossasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/view/schriftenreihen/sr-48.html?lang=en>, retrieved February 25, 2022 and from Internet Archive Books <https://archive.org/details/internetarchivebooks>, retrieved February 25, 2022.

also stated that the first introduction of *haiku* was occurred through *Japani Jhinuk* (1940) by Surendranath Maitra. However, Lopamudra Malek indicated that Rabindranath Tagore included a Japanese poem in his *Kari o Komal* (1886) (Malek, 2018). The original source of this poem, which was included under the subtitle “Bideshi Phuler Guccho” (A Fascicle of Foreign Poems), is yet to discover. These prominent researchers on the Japan-Bengal relationship have explored the phases starting from the beginning of the 20th century. Notably, Subrata Kumar Das, in his book *Sekaler Bangla Samoyikpotre Japan*, is the first researcher to study “Japan” as content in periodicals. He did not pay any particular attention to Japanese literary content. Instead, he noted that five magazines published seven Japan-related writings, excluding literature, during the 19th century (Das, 2012).

This paper intends to fill up the inadequate attention and discovery of the previous researchers in the 19th century, during which we find the earliest translations of Japanese literature in Bangla. The earlier samples of works are located in the periodicals. Therefore, the primary data for this paper is based on the prominent literary periodicals and other magazines the Bangla readers highly appreciated in the 19th century. The newspapers and periodicals that appeared in the 19th century Bengal played a vital role in inaugurating Japan by printing and making news and information about this country and its culture available to the then Bengalis. At least 29 periodicals active in the second half of the 19th century are thoroughly screened for this article, including– *Bharatasanskarak*, *Bamabodhini*, *Bangadarshan*, *Bharati*, *Bibidhartha Sangraha*, *Biva*, *Binapani*, *Birbhu*, *Tattwabodhini*, *Karnadhar*, *Krishitattwa*, *Modhyastha*, *Mohajanbondhu*, *Masik Prakashika*, *Nababidhan*, *Nababarshiki*, *Nabajiban*, *Nabyabharata*, *Rahasyo Sandarbho*, *Sahitya*, and *Sakha*. This paper also intends to identify the observed trends of those translations published in the periodicals.

The two main reasons for not including the periodicals before 1853 are: one, “the tendency of periodicals of the first half of 19th century was producing news” (Ray, 2000, p. 27), and second, due to the Sakoku system of Japan in the Edo period, direct transmission of Japan-related news became difficult in company-ruled India. However, *Bibidhartha Sangraha*, which was founded in 1851, popularized importing foreign educational content and literary components from the West and Indian subcontinent. Therefore, the earliest Japan-related news, “Japan o Japaniyodiger Brittanto,” was published in 1856 in *Bibidhartha Sangraha*, immediately after Matthew Calbraith Perry demanded open access to Nagasaki in 1853, in colonial Bengal. Therefore, 1856 was the first time Japan-related news appeared in the Bangla periodicals.

Japanese Literature in the Periodicals

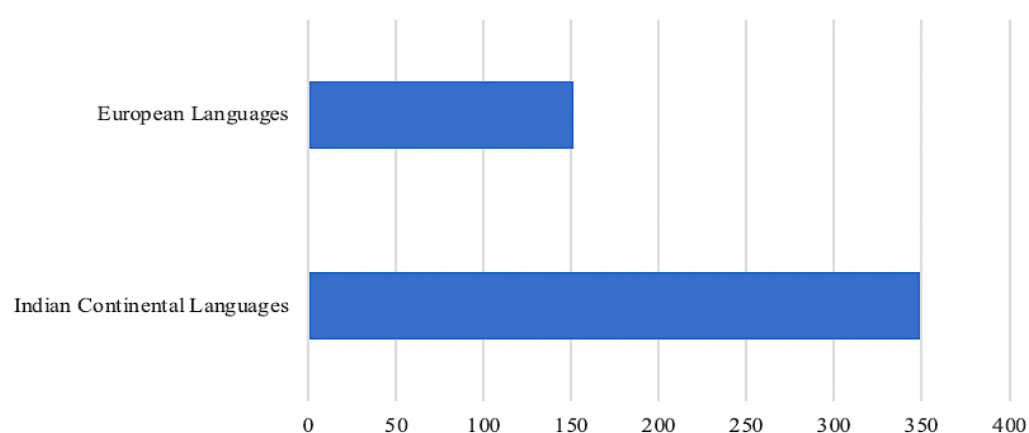
As the timeframe for this paper is outlined from the Sakoku period to the end of the century, the primary data remains within this timeline. According to Priya Joshi, importing books to India saw a sharp rise in the immediate decade after 1857 (Joshi, 2002, p. 40). However, the case of Bengal Province regarding importing books or literature, specifically even before the copyright acts were established in this territory, is yet an undiscovered field of study.

For this study, to identify the oldest piece of translations of Japanese literature in book format, I developed a primary database of translation books in Bangla. Figure 1 is based on a preliminary survey of various libraries and literary history books written in Bangla. It was found that the percentage of translating literature from other Indian languages like Sanskrit was significantly higher than the percentage of translations from European languages (see Figure 1). Surprisingly, the only book available about Japan is *Jepan*, a translation. Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay translated *Narrative of the expedition of an American squadron to the China*

Sea and Japan, performed in 1852, 1853, and 1854, which was originally written by Perry. It was published with the title *Jepan* by the Vernacular Society of Literature in 1863. Several significant disciplines, like folklore, theology, and linguistic surveys, which were highly valued by the then European scholars, caught the attention of the Bengali scholars. The growing intellectual society immersed in patriotic harmony and thrilled to leave behind the colonial influence on their culture in the first half of this century merged into the next 50 years, elevating excellence in cognitive knowledge and humanistic intelligence by producing numerous copies of literary periodicals in the second half of the century. At first, importing foreign content to enrich the Bangla language in those periodicals in the first half of the 19th century was not something favored by the editors or leaders as nationhood, patriotic mentality, and holistic perception received more attention in the effort to conquer colonial supremacy. As “the elite society of the nineteenth century became aware of bringing forth the sufferings of villagers in respect of liability and experience to nationalism, patriotic prosperity, and social welfare” in the newspapers and periodicals (Chowdhury, 2000, p. 55). Meanwhile, weekly periodicals saw a massive surge in number (Mamoon, 2000). We observe an inevitable fluctuation in the number of magazine publications throughout the century. Although the publication of literary periodicals in the first half of the nineteenth century was limited, Muntasir Mamoon believed that the publication of magazines was not feasible due to the low income generated from it (Mamoon, 2000, p. 22). However, a considerable number of the absence of Japan-related books directs this paper to investigate periodicals as a following target survey field.

Figure 1

Translations in Book Format from 1852 to 1900



After exploring the translations in book format, articles in periodicals became essential in this context. About 18 pieces of work, which were published in several periodicals from 1856 to 1937, were translations of Japanese literature, including a song, several poems, a few tales, a farce, prose, and a novel (see Table 1). In the 19th century, three issues of *Bharati*, which appeared in 1881 and 1892, included contents about Japanese literature. However, the first translation of a Japanese song in 1881 was not a standalone piece; instead, the song, which did not have an acknowledged source, was included in an article written anonymously, providing a slight hint of Japanese literature only. Therefore, 1881 marks the initial phase of introducing Japanese literature in the form of a song in Bengal after Japan’s opening to the West in 1853. Ironically, the article that introduced the first Japanese literature was an article whose actual aim was to present contemporary developments in Japan. In other words, it was not a single piece of writing intended to introduce Japanese literature. The intention of a translator or a writer has always been a critical aspect in determining the target text. As a result, in this paper,

I recognize the article “Japaner Bortoman Unnoti” (Current Development in Japan) (1881) as the earliest borderline that translates Japanese literary contents into the form of a song.

Table 1
Japanese Literature in Periodicals

Periodical	Title	Writer/ Translator	Year	BS	Vol.	Issue
<i>Bharati</i>	Japaner Bortoman Unnoti (Current Development in Japan)	Not mentioned	1881	1288	5	3
<i>Bharati</i>	Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Upakhyan (Editor’s Addition: Japanese Tale)	Swarnakumari Devi	1892	1299	16	2
<i>Bharati</i>	Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Prohoson (Editor’s Addition: Japanese Farce)	Swarnakumari Devi	1892	1299	16	3
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japaner Prothom Uponyas (The First Japanese Novel)	Sharacchandra Das	1897	1304	8	2
<i>Dasi</i>	Ekti Japani Golpo (A Japanese Story)	Not mentioned	1897	1303	6	3~5
<i>Mukul</i>	Japani Rupkotha (Japanese Fairy Tales) *	Priyambada Devi	1904	1311	10	3
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japani Golpo (Japanese Stories)	Ramlal	1906	1313	17	8
<i>Mukul</i>	Japaner Upokotha (Japanese Fairy Tales) *	Abaninath Mitra	1907	1314	13	10
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japani Kabita (Japanese Poetry) *	Satyendranath Dutt	1908	1315	19	2
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japani Golpo (Japanese Stories) *	Manilal Gangopadhyay	1908	1315	19	9
<i>Prabasi</i>	Tonsakur Bipotti (Trouble of Tonsaku)	Sureshchandra Bandopadhyay	1910	1317	10.1	4
<i>Prabasi</i>	Matsuyama Darpan (The Mirror of Matsuyama)	Sureshchandra Bandopadhyay	1910	1317	10.2	6
<i>Prativa</i>	Namiko (Namiko) *	Hemanalini Ray	1912	1318	2	12
<i>Sourav</i>	Japane Sahityo Chorchha (Literary Practice in Japan) *	Jadunath Sarkar	1913	1320	2	1

<i>Sourav</i>	Japaner Sekkhopiyar (Shakespeare of Japan) *	Abinashchandra Ray	1914	1321	3	7
<i>Manasi</i>	Cha-grontho (Tea Book) *	Priyambada Devi	1915	1321	7	11
<i>Prabasi</i>	Tibbat Rajye Bhromoner Tin Bochor (Three years in Tibet) *	Hemalata Devi	1916	1323	16.2	1~4
<i>Ramdhonu</i>	Japani Golpo (Japanese Stories)	Kalidas Ray	1937	1344	10	8

Note. The asterisks (*) in Table 1 and Table 2 mean that these are referred in Subrata Kumar Das's *Sekaler Bangla Samoyikpotre Japan*.

Finding these pieces of work in the periodicals prove that the early Bangla literary domain was being encouraged by importing foreign literature, which also leads us to realize that globalization played significant role in creating Bangla literature via translations. Furthermore, Finding Japanese literature in this period proved that due to the colonial networks, Bengal was accommodating not only European countries but also brought the Asian countries like Japan closer to Bengalis. The gradual interests towards an unfamiliar neighboring nation Japan continued to the next century via these literary imports.

After about ten years of the first Bangla translation of Japanese literary content, Swarnakumari Devi translated two pieces of Japanese literature under the same titles, “Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Upakhyar” (Editor’s Addition: Japanese Tale) and “Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Prohoson (Editor’s Addition: Japanese Farce)” in 1892. She produced these Japanese translations not as a picture of Japan but to propound a diversified literary angle. The first one is a translation of the famous tale of “Tomb of the Shiyoku,” well known as “The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki.” Interestingly, A. B. Mitford, a secretary to the British delegation in Japan, had already published *Tales of Old Japan*, which included this tale (Mitford, 1871). Mitford’s work might be the source literature for the translation as, unfortunately, Swarnakumari Devi was unable to have the opportunity to learn Japanese in person, as pointed out by the researchers who have done studies on her. The second contribution made by Swarnakumari Devi is the translation of the famous Japanese farce (*kyōgen*) *Hone Kawa*. In May 1878, B. H. Chamberlain read “On the Medieval Colloquial Dialect of the Comedies” before the Asiatic Society of Japan, which consisted of *Hone Kawa-Ribs and Skin*, a bilingual work, published in part 3 of volume 6 of *Transactions—The Asiatic Society of Japan*. Thereby, it is possible that Swarnakumari Devi came across Chamberlain’s English translation and used it as her source.

In 1897, *Dasi* anonymously published “Ekti Japani Golpo” (A Japanese Story) with the subheading “Inari in Japan,” and the storyline for identifying the source literature is so vague that it is like finding a needle in a haystack. However, the closest match resembles Lafcadio Hearn’s “Kitsune,” in which Hearn portrays the mythological Inari God prominently in fox forms by drawing Japanese people’s folk beliefs and in-person experiences. The translator probably prepared an adaptation by sketching only the acceptable folktale version from this book.

On the contrary, in his essay published in *Sahitya* (1897), Sharacchandra Das acknowledged *Taketori Monogatari* as the source for his translation *Japani Kathuriya* (Japanese Woodcutter),

which indicates a particular purpose for introducing Japanese literature. Although the translation is not printed as standalone literature, the essay aimed to introduce Japanese literature to the Bengalis. As Hubscher-Davidson emphasized on incorporating the study of attitudes, personalities, and dispositions in addition to the study of merely cognitive processes of psychology of translation (Hubscher-Davidson, 2017, p. 3), in this article, the intense curiosity of introducing Japanese literature in Bangla in detail establishes Das's article as the remarkable one. Incontrovertibly, Das' purpose was to put *Taketori Monogatari* forward as the first unique literary piece of work from Japan.

The most probable reason for the 18-year lapse, from *Jepan* to *Bharati*, in translating Japanese literature is that the Bengalis were mostly interconnected with Japan through the influences of colonial interests during the emergence of literature as a domain in the late 19th century. The text that appeared in the British territory reached the Bengali readers as a colonial influence in Bangla form. To add more, there are unexplored examples of European literature in Bangla in the periodicals which indicates that the colonial networks throughout the world was influencing the Bangla literary developments.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, we find at least 13 pieces of literature translated and published in periodicals. *Mukul* published translations of several Japanese children's tales in two different issues (in 1904 and 1907) in the first decade of the 20th century in 1904 and 1907 (Das, 2012, p. 52). In 1913 and 1914, *Sourav* published two proses specially written on literary practices in Japan. A particular appreciation can be accredited to *Prativa*, from the East Bengal, for publishing a novel, *Namiko, Hototogisu (The Cuckoo)*, written by Tokutomi Kenjiro, in 1913-1914. Subrata Kumar Das was unable to explore the first volume of *Partiva*, which contained the first few chapters of the novel. "Namiko's 3rd chapter was printed from 2nd volume of *Pativa* translated by Hemanalini Ray" (Das, 2012, p. 40). Nonetheless, the last chapters of *Namiko* remained unexplored in Subrata Das' study. However, during my survey, I explored all of the 23 chapters of *Namiko* published in 19 issues of *Prativa* from March 1912 to March 1914. In 1915, Priyambada Devi translated the first chapter of the famous *Book of Tea* (1906) by Tenshin Okakura, which was published in *Manasi*. "Although 'to be continued' was mentioned at the end of the translation, the book's remaining chapters in translation were not found. It could have been a milestone for the Japan-Bangla relationship if she had continued her translation of that book" (Das, 2012, p. 51).

On the other hand, *Prabasi* was founded in 1901 in an effort to write about the immigrant life of Bengalis living in various countries, and therefore, it preferred publishing foreign content. However, it did not pay any particular attention in introducing Japanese literature to Bengali readers, notwithstanding the three pieces of literature that appeared in it. Noticeably, it emphasized presenting Japan-related news and the Japanese culture, which received the world's attention during the first half of the 20th century. At least 60 writings on Japan and Japanese culture were printed in it. Given this number, it is hardly surprising that *Prabasi* only published a travelogue, in its four consecutive issues in 1916, which was initially written by a Japanese Buddhist monk Ekai Kawaguchi, who was the first Japanese monk to travel to Nepal; besides Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyay's two tales, which were later included in *Hanashi* (1912). Therefore, in exploring the earlier phase of translating Japanese literature in Bangla in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Bharati* historically comes in first.

The First Japanese Literature in Bangla

The idea of translation is more understandable as a process than by any particular definition. According to Roger T. Bell, this process conveys meaning from the original to the target text (Bell & Candlin, 1995). David Damrosch established that both the attainment and misplacement of literary language are possible in the literary translation process (Damrosch, 2003), which, I believe, was unavoidable in the case of translating Japanese literature in Bangla from English sources. On the other hand, according to the Japanese word *chōyaku*, it is possible to prepare a more comprehensible document for the readers by not committing to a word-to-word translation but instead involving interpretative activity. Based on the collective summarization of the discussions on the early modern cultures of translation in Europe, Newman and Tylus believed that the renaissance would have been impossible without translation (Newman & Tylus, 2015). Likewise, in the case of the Bengal Province, it can be said that the early manifestation of the Bangla language and literature would not have been possible without translation, as many scholars interpreted numerous amounts of works of literature to expand the cognitive periphery of the growing educated elite class as well as the mass. The purpose of importing foreign literature was to make the Bengalis conversant with the outer literary world so they could upraise their treasure with their creativity. Hence, it is widely accepted that “creativity” helps prepare “distinctive writing practices” (Rossi, 2019, p. 49). It has been observed among the Bangla translators that the translator who attempted translations at earlier stages became a literary figure later – for instance, Swarnakumari Devi. Translators or translations did not receive proper appreciation in the 19th and 20th century Bengal since creative literature was then the most applaudable work. From this perspective, imposing the most definitive definitions derived from the 21st century to understand the translation process to identify the most acceptable earliest work in the 19th century Bengal would be an injustice to those pieces of works. As a result, in this paper, I only follow the fundamental characteristic identified by Rodger T. Bell mentioned earlier.

Swarnakumari Devi’s interpretation of *The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki* and *Hone Kawa* has been recognized as the first piece of translated work. Unfortunately, neither of the translations had a translated version of the original title; instead, they came with subtitles, namely, “Japanese Tale” and “Japanese Farce.” However, the storylines of both pieces are entirely well-adapted in that they could represent the original images depicted in the Japanese version.

For instance, in *The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki*, Swarnakumari Devi followed the presentation style adopted by Mitford. “Tomb of the Shiyoku” is one of the tragic legendary love stories that consist of strident actuality, desire, and misery endings of unforgettable characters like Miura Komurasaki and Shirai Gompachi in the 18th century in Japan. Published in May 1892; Swarnakumari Devi’s translation also concisely followed the central plot depicted in Mitford’s *Tales of Old Japan*. Notwithstanding that there are two identical elements lost from Mitford’s version, it is difficult to reach a decisive conclusion whether Swarnakumari Devi’s version is more of a *chōyaku* than a word-to-word translation as she was conscientiously faithful to the original. For instance, in his rewriting, Mitford began the tale by describing the writing on the second stone:

Amid the changes of a fitful world, this tomb is decaying under the dew and rain; gradually crumbling beneath its own dust, its outline alone remains (Mitford, 1871, p. 47).

Swarnakumari Devi interpreted it as follows, which carries the most proportionate meaning from the Mitford's version:

এই অনিত্য জগতের মাঝে এই সমাধি স্তম্ভ শিশির ও বর্ষায় ক্ষয় হইয়া যাইতেছে। নিজেরি ধূলির মাঝে লয় প্রাপ্ত হইয়া সে রেখা মাত্রাবশেষ হইতেছে। (Devi, 1892, p. 104).

Personal translation: In the midst of this eternal world, this tomb is decaying by dew and rain. Gradually coming apart at the seams by its own dust, only its outline remains. The essence of Buddhism – that is, in the eternal world of suffering, the true nature of living is in sorrow, and nothing more – is reflected in these lines of the tale. Immediately after interpreting the engraved words on the tombstone, the Bangla translator followed a more comparatively comprehensive rewriting compared with Mitford's. However, the broader storyline did not change at any stage from Mitford's version. Besides the two identifying names and the newly attained name of Komurasaki at Yoshiwara, the translator conveyed all other identical names of places. The name of the site in Yoshiwara, where lady Komurasaki lived, "The three Sea-casts," was not used by Swarnakumari Devi. The identical elements like Yedo, Suzugamori, the name of the wardsman Chobei, and Boronji Temple at Meguro are perspicuously portrayed in the Bangla version. Even without a proper title in the heading, the Bangla version is so adroitly crafted that a reader can immediately comprehend that this tale adheres to the Japanese culture. Regardless of the elements, the tale's essence remains original and as distinctive as Mitford's version. However, the original Japanese version is written in old Japanese and compiled in the Kabuki collection *Ukiyogarahiyokuinazuma* 『浮世柄比翼稲妻』 under the title *Gonpachikomurasakihiyokufun* 「権八小紫比翼墳」.⁵ The kabuki adaptation appeared in 1816 with two acts detailing Gompachi's encounter with Komurasaki to death. (Fukumori, n.d.). Overall, both the English and Bangla versions are more comprehensible version than the original Japanese Kabuki version. Whether the English or the Bangla translation resembles the Japanese version is still an unexplored topic.

On the other hand, *Hone Kawa* might be interpreted from the English version in the same farce format. Chamberlain's translation, printed as bilingual side by side, presented Japanese and English versions, following a direct translation approach. Swarnakumari Devi also maintained the farce style by offering a conversational approach rather than a descriptive one. From narration to the portrayals of the characters, every minor detail is masterfully presented so that the question of gaining or losing literary essence during the interpretation process does not arise. The rendered message developed in this farce for the readers about the then Buddhist monks' socio-cultural context is considered unrefined for modern Japanese society but relevant to the contemporary Bengal society. Each time the Curator revealed what he was advised to say in front of the parishioners, the readers could enjoy a recreational comic relief. In the end, when the parishioners chased the monk, his responses offer the audience or readers the ultimate perception of how Buddhist monks were welcomed by the commoners in the Edo period in Japan. It is not yet determined if this farce was staged in Bangla.

Concerning the argument of identifying the first specimen of Japanese literature in Bangla, Swarnakumari Devi can be conferred the accomplishment for either of her interpretations: *The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki* and *Hone Kawa*. In the 19th century, distinguished scholars in Bengal did not develop any particular school of translating from any specific language. Despite not having an appropriate methodology to follow, Swarnakumari Devi

⁵ This information is collected from the National Diet Library Digital Collections. Retrieved May 13, 2022 from <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/881027/15>

successfully translated both pieces of literature skillfully. She remained the editor of *Bharati* for about 11 years. She was the foremost among the Bengali women writers in the early colonial Bengal. Her splendid mastery of creative writing in Bangla strengthened her superiority in rendering Japanese literature in Bangla. Therefore, according to the publication month, “Editor’s Addition: Japanese Tale,” illustrating *The Loves of Gompachi and Komurasaki* is considered the earliest translation of Japanese literature in Bangla.

Trends of Introducing Japanese Literature in the 19th Century

The history of modern Bangla literature has had glorious episodes like improvement in the quality of Bangla prose, advancement of theater forms, attaining the only Bangla literary epic, and so forth; since the 19th century, it was impossible to evade the British colonial influence during the emergence of modern Bangla literature. The process of translation did not evolve quickly as literature was not a public sphere in the early 1800s. However, in the first 50 years of the 19th century Bengal, at least 90 pieces of work introducing Christianity, Hinduism, and the *Puranas* were published from various sources. One of the influencing factors was the Sanskrit College, which was established in 1824 and which eventually became Presidency College in 1855. It showed profound interest in teaching educational content from the Eastern languages of the then subcontinent. Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, and Farsi were among these languages. However, a particular society came into the limelight for translating works into the Bangla language by conducting a meeting titled *Banga Bhashay Pustok Onubadartho Sabha* (A Meeting for Translating Books in the Bangla language) held in 1850. This society later became the Vernacular Literature Society (Mondal, 2005, p. 58). These institutions played key roles in bringing foreign literature to Bengal.

Furthermore, the 19th-century children’s literature was precisely translation-based. Not only from English was being translated, but there were also many translations from Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, French, and Farsi (Mitra, 1958). Japanese literature appeared in the latter half of the century. Besides Perry’s book *Jepan*, the people of Bengal Province began learning about Japan from the newspapers and periodicals. At least 21 articles were printed in 9 different periodicals from 1856 to 1900 (see Table 2).

Table 2*Japan and Japan-Related Contents in the Second Half of the 19th Century*

Periodical	Title	Year	BS	Volume	Issue
<i>Bibidhartho Sangroho</i>	Japan o Japaniyodiger Brittanto	1856	1262	6	3
<i>Rahasyo Sandarbho</i>	Japan Dwiper Parbon	1872	1279	7	
<i>Bamabodhini</i>	Japani Kukur*	1874	1281	10	10-11
<i>Bharat Sanskarak</i>	Bharatborsho o Japan*	1874	1281	2	2
<i>Bharat Sanskarak</i>	Chin o Japaner Bolporikkha*	1874	1281	2	
<i>Bharati</i>	Japaner Bortoman Unnotir Mul Potton	1881	1288	5	2
<i>Bharati</i>	Japaner Bortoman Unnoti	1881	1288	5	3
<i>Bharati</i>	Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Upakhyan	1892	1299	16	2
<i>Bharati</i>	Sompadoker Chitrochoyon: Japani Prohoson	1892	1299	16	3
<i>Bharati</i>	Japaner Fulbinyas	1892	1299	16	2
<i>Shikkha Parichor</i>	Japanir Mukhe Japaner Kotha*	1895	1302	5	2
<i>Bharati</i>	Japan o Japani	1896	1303	20	4
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japaner Potro*	1897	1304	8	2
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japaner Prothom Uponyas	1897	1304	8	2
<i>Bamabodhini</i>	Japan Kahini: Japaner Koyekti Deshachar*	1898	1305	36	5
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japan o Japani	1898	1305	9	2
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japaner Portro	1898	1305	9	9
<i>Sahitya</i>	Japani Mohila	1898	1305	9	9
<i>Bamabodhini</i>	Japane Bharat Chatrer Subidha*	1899	1306	37	5-6
<i>Mohajonbondho</i>	Japani Bhasha Shikkha	1900	1307	1	12
<i>Sakhi</i>	Japani Khela*	1900	1308		5-6

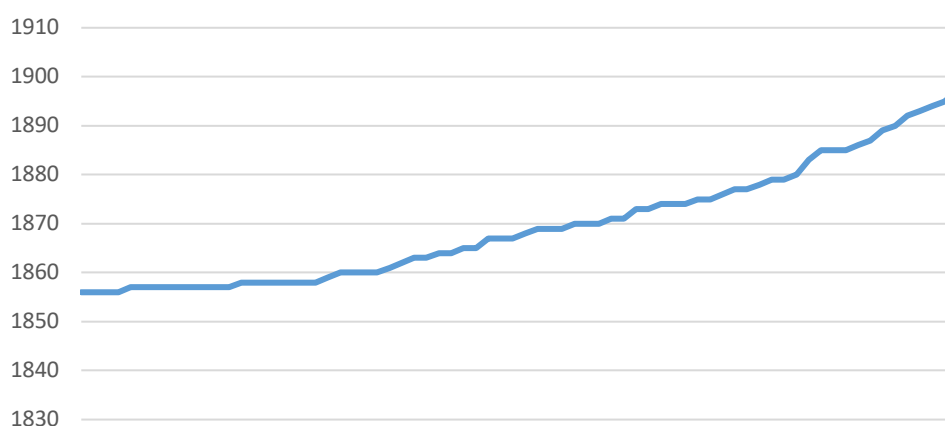
During the British period, starting from the company rule and ending in the 1947 partition, the undivided Bengal underwent the direct influence of British colonization. Therefore, the

translation of Japanese literature was not an instantaneous initiative. At first, the Bengal experienced a very delicate introduction to Japan and Japanese society. As different scholars began writing about Japanese history and culture, the Bengali people became more intrigued about Japan. This eagerness displayed by the readers became an inspiration to bring information successively about Japan and the Japanese culture and translate it for the growing readers. “A mature literary public sphere vibrant in creativity and debates steadily emerged as an alternative, as a section of the Bengali intelligentsia, howsoever numerically insignificant, began to redefine conflict-ridden notions of society based on caste and religious communities, and turned to the possibilities of a literary public sphere as the basis of a new social order.” (Mitra, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, I identify colonial influence as one of the trends in introducing Japanese literature in the 19th century.

From the first Japan-related content in 1856 to the first writing about Japanese literature in 1897, about 40 years of empty space is observed in interpreting Japanese literature. Moreover, a gradual increase in overall translation works is experienced during this period (see Figure 2). This pattern of Bangla-translated books matches Priya Joshi’s indication of a gradual rise at a later stage of the Sepoy Mutiny of Indian rebellion against British rule in 1857, which led the British administration to exercise control over the rebellious Bengalis (Joshi, 2002, p. 40). Therefore, focusing on enhancing the literary field as a sphere might have had a positive impact on the 19th century Bengal.

Figure 2

Translation in the Second Half of the 19th Century



Note. This figure is retrieved from the primary database developed for the main ongoing PhD dissertation. To date, it includes 500 books from various catalogs and literary history books.

A second trend in introducing Japanese literature in the 19th century is about choosing literature from a specific religious occupancy: Buddhism. Religion as a topic in newspapers and among people remained a fundamental issue that required raising voices against the dominant in the first 50 years of this century. This led the editors of the latter half of the century to work toward evolving their society through a sophisticated literary practice.

The dialog between the exasperated dogmatists in the 19th century Bengal exchanged through periodicals was an unavoidable ambiance due to its religious sentiment. At least 31 books were printed for Christian propagation by 1850. In response to its evangelistic intention, religion-based periodicals began to publish items discouraging Christianity and encouraging Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islamism. *Tattwabodhini* was such a leading spokesman for the *Brahmasamaj*.

Surprisingly, Buddhism-based periodicals are merely discovered by the previous researchers. For instance, while writing about religion-based bulletins, Swapan Basu only explored the Hinduism- and Islamism-based periodicals (Basu, 2000). Here a question arises about how Buddhism was reflected in Bangla in magazines or books. The construction of Hinduism having in 19th-century India was “less indeterminate, unbound, pluralistic to the point of all embracing—as, in other words, distinct and different from other religions” (Smith, 1998, p. 330). Therefore, discussion referring to Buddhism was not an avoidable aspect in this period; hence Hinduism is the root of Buddhism. Although *Tattwabodhini* dealt with the argument for Hinduism on behalf of the *Brahmasamaj*, it also dissected the relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism by denying the forthcoming invasion of Christianity as there were many writings reflecting messages from Hinduism and Buddhism in its different consecutive issues. While *Sambad-Prabhakar*, which was founded in 1831, contributed to sharpening the excellence of Bangla prose, *Alochana*, which was founded in 1884, prioritized disseminating the viewpoints of uniting the separated *Brahmasamaj*. Meanwhile, *Bangadarshan* had already published the first Bangla fiction *Kanchanmala*, adapting Buddhist contents by Haraprasad Shastri in 1883. Thereafter, at least five books on Buddhism were interpreted by several intellectuals in the last decade of the century.

In other words, the turmoil of argumentative and offensive theological dialogs in periodicals in the first half of the 19th century led the Bengali scholars and intellectuals to a sapient circumstance to focus on developing the literary excellence in Bangla. As a result, many periodicals, especially literary magazines, and children’s papers recorded exponential growth in the latter half of the century. Although the number of children’s bulletins assumed to be not less than 50 during the hundred years from 1818 to 1918, Subimal Mishra stated the number to be 38 in total (Mishra, 2000, p. 283).

The first single appearance of Japanese literature under the titles, “Editor’s Addition: Japanese Tale” and “Editor’s Addition: Japanese Farce” in two consecutive months of *Bharati* in 1892 is reflective of the intention of presenting a religious context to promote a holistic mindset. The story’s significance lies in the remarkable appreciation of creating a tomb over Gompachi and Komurasaki’s dying place built by the temple monk. Bandit Gompachi’s aspiring relentless endeavors to free Komurasaki from slavery deliver a message to the Bangla readers that religion could bestow the ultimate appreciation. The sense of humanity and harmony circulated by Buddhism depicted in this story draws the readers’ attention. In addition, *Hone Kawa*, one of the famous *kyōgen* in the Edo period with a portrayal of a Buddhist temple creating a comic atmosphere, became a successful rendering in Bangla that amused Bangla readers. “Chamberlain’s 1879 rendition of *Hone Kawa*, titled *Ribs and Skin*, marked the beginning of the first wave of attempts to render the short comedies into English” (Iezzi, 2007, p. 211). Accordingly, the motive of presenting farce to the Bangla audience was justified as Bengal had already seen such forms and was familiar with the best Bangla farce *Nil Darpan* (1859) by then. On the question of how Japanese literature entered Bengal province after the Sakoku period, this paper establishes that importing Japanese literature was a colonial influence in the first place, and secondly, works of religious significance, especially Buddhism, received closer contemplation.

Both trends are observed in other later writings in the 19th-century periodicals. As the writer of the Japanese tale subtitled “Inari’s visit to Japan,” published in *Dasi* (1897), did not mention either the sources or the characters’ names, discovering the Japanese version becomes a challenge. The only identifying name is Inari; other characters of the story are mentioned only by their professional identities, like the beggar, the lord, the judge, and others. The closest

assumption is that the translator collected different stories of the Inari God from English sources and compiled them into one narrative. Notwithstanding the undiscovered fact of the original Japanese or English origin, the story conveyed the moral values of the Inari God and how she balanced justice by showing mercy and offering wealth. The famous writer-translator Lafcadio Hearn had already published his book *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, which included “Kitsune” (1894). One can find exceptionally presented legends of the Inari God in this book three years before *Dasi*’s story (Hearn, 1894). Surprisingly, there are no Buddhist materialistic elements in the story other than the messages of good (Inari God) against the wrong (people) in an unsettled plot of her visits to different places in various disguises. A reader can only feel the essence of congruity and benevolence, relevant to Buddhism, throughout the story.

In “The First Japanese Novel”, Sharacchandra followed the original storyline of *Taketori Monogatari* depicted in both the Japanese and English versions. Moreover, he continued the exact name of the place *Tenjiki*, in Northern named Sindhu, where Prince Ishizukuri would find Buddha’s beggar bowl. In the original version, “depending on which part of the *Taketori Monogatari* are focused on, the figure of Kaguyahime can be seen as a composite of folkloric and literary personages. The tale also contains thematic and narrative elements derived from Chinese Taoist literature” (Joy, 1996, p. 10). The contents or elements of this tale appear as “the product of mind putting legendary material well known to the people of his time to the use of moral and political discourse” (Marra, 1991, p. 16). However, Sharacchandra’s Bangla work is more of a concise and summarized version in Bangla rather than a word-to-word translation even of the English version.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, countries from all over the world united in many ways – through cultural exchanges, trades, education, and so forth. In today’s tumultuous world, the formation of an administered world literature import system can regulate the enervated stagnant multifariousness of human creativity to achieve a particular brilliance. However, in the colonial Bengal, first, the translators could not evade colonial influence while interpreting Japanese literature. Second, works of religious significance enticed the editors much more than works of other subjects as they helped Bengal grow more culturally and holistically. Third, socially apposite Japanese results became interlocutors in Bangla periodicals. *Gonpachikomurasakihiyokufun* and *Hone Kawa* in Bangla, interpreted from the English versions, are marked as the first works of interpretation. Among the five renderings in the earlier phase of Japanese literature translation in Bangla, *Hone Kawa* excels in respect of all aspects. Unquestionably, this farce incorporates all the trends determined in this article.

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**Followership Complicity in Insecurity in Nigeria: A Case in Femi
Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen***

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Abstract

Insurgency, kidnap for ransom, banditry, herdsmen-farmers clash, and gruesome killing of individuals have become quotidian security realities in contemporary Nigeria. Scholarly approach to this concern has often resulted in criticism domiciled only at leadership while neglecting the role of the followership in this security predicament. This paper is therefore designed to examine the representations of the complicity of the people in insecurity using Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (2002)¹ as a case study. The investigation combines a deliberate look at the dramaturgical devices employed by Osofisan to enhance this representation. Georg Lukacs's theory of literary realism and Achille Mbembe's model of the Postcolonial theory are adopted as the framework for the study to unravel the complicity of the people. At the same time, the method applied is the interpretive design and the socio-artistic approach to literary criticism. Osofisan deploys dramatic metaphor, aesthetics of masking, Orunmila motif, and Satire to unmask the villains who mystify efforts to address insecurity and throw the state in a nightmare. The revelations are incredible even as vigilantism is deconstructed. The play points attention to the need to carefully examine proposals on ending insecurity in Nigeria while also contributing to emerging scholarship on investigating the followers with regards to their contribution to their disillusionment.

Keywords: dramatic metaphor, Femi Osofisan, followership and insecurity, insecurity in Nigeria, literary realism, vigilantism

¹ *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* was first published in 1992 by Heinemann Educational books (Nigeria). The revised edition published in 2002 by Opon Ifa Readers is used for the analysis of this study.

The oracle was clear yesterday—Increase the night guards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death. And who knows a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness (Femi Osofisan, 2002, p. 139).

The varied complexions of banditry, kidnapping, robbery and insurgency by Nigerians to their fellow countrymen have made the discourse of security in Nigeria a complex one as one finds it difficult to pin down the saint or the villain in the emerging twist of attacks that seem to defy all attempts at ending insecurity in the country (Umoh, 2015; Udoh, 2015). However, the situation is worrisome even as scholarly opinions are divided in attributing its causes and identifying those responsible for insecurity in the country. Ajidahun (2012) indicts the state as responsible for the insecurity in Nigeria, given the stifling economic factors which have given birth to armed robbery in the society. Umah (2019) corroborates that unemployment, poverty and ineffective security agencies are the major causes of contemporary insecurity in the nation. Contrary to this, Ezeabasili (2022) traces the insecurity situation in the country to Nigeria's political system, which gives room for political thuggery. She concludes in her assessment of the political situation in Nigeria between 2015 and 2021 that political thuggery gives a breeding ground for kidnapping, terrorism, armed robbery and drug addiction.

However, there has been little or no literary critical work that traced insecurity to the undoing of the followers. A closer study is Abubakar Gimba's *Letter to the Unborn Child* (2008), where Gimba holistically indicts the followers as complicit in Nigeria's backflip development, contrary to Chinua Achebe's (1984) fuming rage that *the trouble with Nigeria* is emphatically leadership. While Gimba (2008) did not provide a sufficient explanation for followership complicity in insecurity, the current study strives to partake in the discourse by critically examining how the people have contributed to the complexions of insecurity in Nigeria. The study approaches this investigation by engaging the utilitarian art of the dramatic genre owing to its pedagogic and sociological dynamics (Owonibi, 2009). Moreover, since drama is the re-enactment of the way of life of a particular people, drama thus becomes an appropriate medium both to reflect and examine insecurity and advocate national peace and security (Ajidahun, 2012; Utoh-Ezeajugh and Ogbonna, 2013).

Femi Osofisan's drama is apposite to this exploration as he has extensively dramatised the feelings of fear, anxiety, lack of protection, and the threat to life and property (Beland, 2005; Ezeabasili, 2022), which this study adopts as a working definition for Insecurity in Nigeria. His *Once upon four robbers* (1980) is a social commentary on the Nigerian government's decree of the public execution of armed robbers. This play has sparked divergent public and scholarly opinions regarding the death penalty as a panacea to ending crime in Nigeria. *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (*Aringindin*) is another detective play from the stable of the playwright where he experiments with unravelling the paradox in the nation's insecurity. Although scholars have examined it (Awodiya, 1995; Ajidahun, 2012), it has not received critical attention regarding followership defects as the current study investigates. This study will contribute to the notion that man's natural state combines evil and good regardless of the class s/he belongs to in society (Akporobaro, 2001; Cates, 1992). The study thus seeks to justify the claim that the Nigerian drama remains an unbiased medium in the reflection and refraction of the contemporary Nigerian society as it stops at nothing to comment on and satirise the oppressor and the oppressed, the rich and the poor, aristocrats and ordinary people in its bid to address challenges of development in the country (Utoh- Ezeajugh & Ogbonna, 2013). Femi Osofisan in *Aringindin*, like his earlier plays: *Farewell to a Cannibal* (1986), *Birthdays*

are not for dying (1990), *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990) and so forth, takes his social investigation a step further to x-ray the security situation in Nigeria and the consequent establishment of Community Based Armed Groups, CBAGs known as vigilante groups by the people. The study, therefore, will examine how the playwright indicts the people/ followers of complicity in their predicament as the nightguards given arms to protect their people turn into robbers. Osofisan thus becomes relevant in contemporary security discourse in Nigeria as this study pitches *Aringindin* as an exposé, partly to the untold causes, and further as a guide to the solution to Nigeria's insecurity.

Of Insecurity and Complicities in Contemporary Nigeria: A Review

In 2015, while Nigerians were still groaning under the scourge of Boko-Haram insurgency, herders killing, banditry and kidnapping joined these evil forces at the first tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration to make life unbearable (Idhalama, Dime and Osawaru 2021). From the North-east down South-west and to the East, the nation is thrown into mourning and wailing as the people cannot sleep with their eyes closed in a country acclaimed to be the giant of Africa. Rape and gruesome killings of innocent individuals are rife while the herdsmen alleged of these crimes are above the law (Olaniyan, 2019; Idhalama, Dime and Osawaru, 2021). Southwest Nigerian roads have become dangerous spots as abductors kidnap for ransom, and when the ransom is delayed, they kill their victims. Farmers-herders clashes have further heightened insecurity in the region as farmers are daily exiting the areas noted for infinite agricultural potential in the southwest. It becomes illogical that the war against insecurity is not yielding tangible results as it seems the war is only fought in the media.

The Abuja-Kaduna train attack on March 28, 2022 is one among these dastardly acts where hundreds of travellers were kidnapped. Meanwhile, these travellers chose rail transportation because of the dangers of being kidnapped on the road (Isenyo, 2022). Another brutal act is the Saint Francis' Catholic Church attack in Owo, Ondo state on June 5, 2022 where over forty worshippers were gruesomely killed during the Sunday mass service by unknown gunmen (BBC, 2022). However, the Nigerian Defense Headquarters and the Ondo state governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, announced on 6th August, 2022 that the attack was carried out by some Ebira indigenes from Kogi state living in Owo (Sunday, Nzor, and Akingboye, 2022; Ayitogo, 2022). This ridiculous news becomes a bitter pill for the residents who have peacefully co-habited with the Ebira people for years. These are few among hundreds of other incidences of gruesome attacks and abductions for ransom that Nigerians have experienced in recent times (Ekpo, Agorye and Tobi, 2018). All these attacks and the seeming inability to end insecurity have made many Nigerians to lose hope in the government and even indict authorities as complicit in their predicament (Ekpo et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, compromise and complicity are two strategic words in security parlance that are used to describe the involvement of an external party or conniving of an official (internal party) with an enemy to frustrate a mission (Lepora and Goodin, 2013; Agunbiade, 2019). Recent development in insecurity in Nigeria have been reportedly traced to the involvement of some state actors and stakeholders, indicating the need to look inward (Guardian, 2021; Obiageli, 2015). Therefore, the government and security personnel have been alleged complicit in Nigeria's insecurity, while some investigative efforts have reportedly been compromised. For instance, Ekpo et al., (2018) frame how the security operatives, the state governors, and past presidents have been blamed and alleged complicit in Nigeria's insecurity using DapChibok (Dapchi and Chibok school) kidnapping as a case study. According to Ekpo et al., "there were factoids to speculate that the Borno State Governor and Chairman of the state security council,

Mr Kashim Shettima, the former president and grand commander of the Federal Republic, Dr Goodluck Jonathan and the Nigerian military were complicit or accomplices to the security breach” (p. 7). In the study, Governor Shettima of Borno state was blamed for ignoring warnings by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) that he should not situate any examination centre outside the state capital following alerts of an impending assault on the schools by militants. This action of Governor Shettima has engendered speculations and politico contextual analysis, of which Mr Shettima was alleged to have been a shadow party, and the abduction, a demarche (Ekpo et al., 2018).

The security operatives are also not exempted from this blame game. According to Oyewole (2016), “despite series of alerts received by the military commands in Damboa (36.5 km away from Chibok) and Maiduguri (130 km away from Chibok) between 7:00 pm on April 14 and 2:00 am on April 15, 2014, the call for reinforcement did not receive prompt response, culminating in the outnumbered soldiers fleeing after about an hour of gunfight with the insurgents” (p. 26). It was also disturbing to hear that when the whereabouts of the abducted girls and their abductors were subsequently divulged to the Nigerian security forces by families and communities, the security men failed to act (Okome, 2017). The same army has also been alleged culpable in the attack on Dapchi girls abduction on 18 February 2018 as they withdrew forces from the area a week to the attack claiming the town is safe and that the police had taken responsibility for the town. However, the Yobe State Commissioner for Police denied any such handover or consultation took place (Crisis Group Africa, 2018). Subsequently, the presidency has been indicted of being a party to the state of insecurity in the country with the Federal government’s lackadaisical attitude to attacks on the people. According to Nti (2014), former president Jonathan found it difficult to believe the abduction of the Chibok girls until the Tweet #BringBackOurGirls# from a Nigerian lawyer, Ibrahim Abdullahi, exploded on social media.

The year 2020-2021 brought succour in the southwest after a series of brutal attacks by Fulani bandits on residents with the messianic intervention of the Yoruba freedom fighter, Sunday Igboho, who emerged to rescue his people. The gruesome killing of 50 people by bandits in his country home Igangan, Oyo state on 5th June 2021 became a watershed for this development. He also gave herders a seven-day ultimatum to vacate Ibarapa and Oke-ogun area of Oyo state due to the criminal activities of armed herders (Kabir, 2021). However, in early July 2021, Sunday Igboho fled the country after authorities raided his home in Ibadan, alleging him to be a separatist figure and complicit in attacks against herders. The twist in this development is how the same government has been docile in nipping in the bud or taking decisive steps over the ravaging banditry and insurgency in the country to the extent that certain characters have taken the opportunity to become prominent over security matters. Aside from Igboho, the controversial Islamic cleric and a former captain in the Nigerian Army, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi from the Northern part of the country has appeared on the security scene. Sheikh Gumi, according to Oyero (2021) in a Punch Newspaper report, on June 28, 2021, “has also been seen hobnobbing with bandits and kidnappers and had also recently recommended the establishment of special courts to try bandits and kidnappers but many Nigerians have since flayed the cleric for being complicit with the bandits”. The same Gumi is reported to have played mediatory roles between the bandits and families of the abducted in the northern part of the country (Ochieng and Kiriungi, 2021).

The preceding reveals that these alleged complicities had not only involved the authorities and the security operatives but have started filtering among the people in their effort to arrest insecurity. Though incredible that the people could be an accomplice to their disillusionment, Nigerian quotidian security realities which have given rise to vigilante groups, ethnic militias

and advocacy for community policing have shown the possibility of this milieu. Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* is apposite for the current study as the playwright presents a paradigm shift and novel glance in these complexities.

Theoretical Consideration

This study adopts an eclectic approach to analyze the primary text for ideological and aesthetic purposes. This is aimed at aiding the unraveling of the paradox in the security situation in Nigeria. The approach is in line with Ambanasom's admission that:

No single approach is valid for all works. No matter its claims and supposed validity one should not carry a single approach blindly to a work of art; it is rather the work that calls forth the type of approach suitable for its apprehension. An approach that is only remotely relevant to a work of art may mislead its conceiver to condemn the creative writer for the wrong crime; it may force the critic to judge and crucify the artist for what he never set out to do in the first place. (Ambanasom, 2003, p. 6)

Georg Lukacs's theory of literary realism (1962 and 1964) and Achille Mbembe's (1992 and 2001) model of the Postcolonial theory of literature suggest themselves by the genre of the text and the ideological concerns of the play. Both theories are combined in the study with the socio-artistic approach to literary criticism, which blends the sociological and artistic approaches to literature for a proper understanding of a literary work. The literary realism of Lukacs, for example, reflects the totality of society by revealing through the narrative form the underlying conditions of history in terms of the truthful depiction of the socio-economic tensions in the society without bias toward the bourgeois or the proletariats (Keller, 2014). Lukacs aver that "the general paradox of art is sharpened in those genres which are compelled by their content and form to appear as living images of the totality of life" (Lukacs 1962, p. 92). Having confirmed that drama reflects the fact of life, Lukacs then contends that "life is constantly providing the possibilities for genuine drama" (Lukacs, 1964, p. 20). The central tenets of Lukacs theory are the presence of realistic characters, a plausible plot and complete detail of everyday life, all of which are deployed in the primary text.

The study combines Mbembe's version of the postcolonial literary theory owing to the need for a critical examination of the idealised members of the society. Mbembe's position is a provocative challenge to African scholarship as Robins (2004) puts it that "rather than critique of neo-colonialism and global capital, Mbembe writes about the excess of the postcolony, including the connivance of the masses in rituals of state power" (p. 20). Mbembe (1992) in cautioning the African critics insists that "the analyst must watch out for the myriad ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it" (p. 25). Mbembe's caution is adroitly considered in the current study. That is why this study departs from earlier studies that are not incisive enough to query the role of the people in the nation's ailing security status quo. Therefore, the choice of Postcolonial theory is not only to reflect Nigeria's debilitating state of security but also to depict how the people have become accomplices to their predicaments. The study further engages the interpretive design and the Socio-artistic approach to literary criticism for analysis. The analysis combines the sociological and artistic approaches for a better apprehension of the full meaning and significance as well as the aesthetic realisation of the imaginative text (Ambanasom, 2007). By this, the study examines the text given its wider social context and the effectiveness of the dramatic techniques deployed by the playwright. With this frame of thought, the play *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* is engaged in this study.

Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen: A Synopsis

Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen is one of Femi Osofisan's detective plays where he unravels the paradox of insecurity in a typical African Society (Agunbiade, 2019). Unlike his position in his popular detective *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) where he alleges the leaders of complicity in insecurity, in *Aringindin*, Osofisan takes a critical look at the rising menace of crime. It is observed that although the situation has grown worse than the milieu depicted, the playwright has a message to contemporary Nigeria. In the play, Osofisan demonstrates his intrepid and indomitable social commitment as he embarks on the critique of the Nigerian security system from a novel vista. Evidently, the *play* is an adaptation of Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI* set in the 1930's gangster-ridden Chicago where a powerful man runs a team of men doing a protection racket on the local greengrocers. These men ask for money to keep the locals safe from the gangsters tearing up their stores, but unknown to the locals, the gangsters are the powerful man's men.

Aringindin opens with a disordered town square where stores have been looted over night by robbers. The robbery (the third in two weeks) which has become a recurring issue is however brutal this time around as the night guard – Lamidi is killed. The scene is suddenly crowded as the shop owners appear one after the other wailing and recounting their loss. Aringindin the protagonist and the eponymous character, appears at the scene with Baale (the traditional king) to assess the situation and condone with the store owners and family of the nightguard. Unknown to Baale and other citizens, Aringindin is the one responsible for the robberies. He has an ulterior motive of taking over the palace. As an ex-soldier, he has advocated the creation of a Vigilante group; a request which Baale has repeatedly turned down because the gods have revealed that it will be used to perpetrate more evil in the community. Adeoti (2009, p. 399) also captures the mind of the gods that "a tiny but arm-bearing segment of the population may, one day undermine the authority of Baale and imperil the security of the unarmed majority". Baale succumbed as he could not continue to see his subjects suffering from robbers' attack even as the police who should protect the people are corrupt.

Aringindin launched another attack where Baale is humiliated and abdicates the throne. Ayinde, the school teacher who is the only voice of reason in the town, is also killed, and Yobioyin, his fiancé, is abducted by Aringindin's men. Aringndin mainly succeeds in this intrigue due to the aid of his accomplice – the elected counsellor (Kansillor) and other young members of the society who join his security outfit to unleash mayhem on the community. Idoko (2009, p. 142), describes Aringindin's role in the play as "a masquerade bringing violence and subjugation in the guise of security and protection". Aringindin's vicious dream is eventually hatched but short-lived as he is toppled by the collective effort of the people who used their traditional ingenuity, which he has abused against him.

Discussion

The contemporary situation of insecurity in Nigeria in terms of a rise in banditry, kidnapping for ransom, herders-farmers clashes and insurgency has resulted in the growth of Community-Based Armed Groups (CBAG) also known as indigenous security network (which are modernised vigilante groups), which led to Nigerians advocating community policing. This development in the west of the country saw the creation of the Western Nigeria Security Network code named Operation Amotekun by the South-west governors, while in the East emerged the Eastern Security Network created by the leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu. Both were created in the year 2020 as indigenous security outfits to

curb the rife of crime in the regions. However, their creation attracted divergent debate regarding the pros and cons of such security outfits (Umoh, 2015). Femi Osofisan a restless researcher and prophetic avant-garde dramatist in following Mbembe's caution on the ordinary people has in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* subjected opinions on such indigenous security outfits to investigation because the outfits are composed of the common people who have volunteered to help end crime in their vicinity. This also is in line with Georg Lukacs position on the totality of reflection of the entire society. He thus embarks on an investigation of vigilantism and security challenges in the country.

Osofisan not only anatomises the activities of vigilantism in Nigeria as exhibited in his eponymous character – Aringindin, but goes deeper to unravel the least examined reasons behind the formations of such groups. With the character of Aringindin, a onetime soldier, the playwright demonstrates how what is presented to be in the interest of the society could also be a means to swindle the members of the society. Osofisan, however, did not fail to depict the significant reason for the quest for nightguards which is increased crime and the weakness and corruption in the police force. The play thus opens with the entire community representing Nigeria, being looted by armed robbers while the security guard, Lamidi is killed (*Aringindin*, p.124). Osofisan humorously depicts a scenario where the nightguards are disappointed after bringing a robber to the police and are told to go back because the robber is a regular criminal who has completed his term with the police (*Aringindin*, pp. 162–163).

Osofisan, therefore, presents the outcry of Nigerians for indigenous security outfits in the face of these insecurities with the wailing of the residents and owners of the looted shops whose plights are being championed by Aringindin. Baale, however, is reluctant to approve Aringindin's suggestion of forming a vigilante group. He does this because of its consequences which the gods have indicated. The vigilante groups are, however, widely advocated because these formations, according to Pratten (2008: p.10), "have recourse not only to the physical weaponry of imported and locally produced handguns but to a repertoire of supernatural devices" which can make them invisible and protect them against bullets (Anderson, 2002). Osofisan in the play depicts that as powerful as they are, the vigilantes are still immediate members of their respective communities. He thus presents how some of such nightguards have ulterior motives and could be hijacked to perpetrate more havoc than external criminals.

In the face of increasing crime in Nigeria, the creation of such security networks in certain parts of the country are being asked to be subjected to investigation. One of such calls has been made by the Benue Youth Forum which had specifically described the Miyetti Allah planned vigilante group as an invitation to crisis (Duru, 2022). Similarly, the International Centre for Investigative reporting has alleged that a few elements in the Operation Amotekun in the southwest part of the country have been arrested for alleged attempt to perpetrate crime (Abolade, 2022). The Nigerian government has also alleged the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as responsible for continued unrest in the Eastern part of the country (IAGCI, 2022). Although this claim could not have been unconnected with the imbroglio between the Nigerian government and the proscribed IPOB (Channels TV, 2021), the unabated unrest and crime in that part of the country and allegations against ESN is worrisome.

Osofisan presents this restraint on the proliferation of Vigilante groups by Baale who has sought the face of the gods as Baale openly discloses that,

BAALE: the oracle was clear yesterday—increase the Nightguards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death! And who knows, a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness! (p. 139)

As the gods predicted, it later becomes clear that Aringindin with the most appealing proposal of ridding crime in the community, is the villain and head of criminals ambushing the community just as in Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI*. Aringindin the retired soldier has a selfish interest of becoming the head of the community. He has a team of armed robbers he has been training to help hatch his intention. These robbers are members of the community. They occasionally unleash terror on the community by raiding shops at night after which Aringindin will suggest to the victims the need to have a vigilante group. By this, he makes life unbearable for the Baale, who eventually succumbs and later abdicates his position as the traditional ruler. In Aringindin's proposal, he wants volunteers in the community to join his vigilante group. He further converts these volunteers to robbers who terrorised the community before and after Baale abdicates his throne. Osofisan's presentation of the complicity of the nightguards in crime is a message to contemporary Nigeria, where he foresees the tendency that the vigilantes could become robbers. Even Oluode who the Baale sends as a spy among the nightguards betrays his mission and is silent until Ayinde the school teacher, exposes Aringindin's plan to take over the community the next day. Osofisan presents the bias in such complaints and proposals which Aringindin tenders in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) when he remarked that, "appearances do not always tell the truth, (...) just because he has been complaining, we don't ask, why is he complaining? Perhaps he is complaining because he is not one of those enjoying the corruption" (Agunbiade, 2015, p. 5). Osofisan, in other words, is saying that not all those complaining about the state of insecurity in Nigeria wants insecurity to end.

It is ridiculous to imagine such development Osofisan presents. This is as he presents realistic characters that Nigerians can identify, with plausible plot that captures history and the contemporary twists in insecurity in Nigeria. For instance, the erstwhile Bakassi Boys, also regarded as vigilantes, reportedly extorted money from business people and traders while their activities were characterised with thuggery and unjust killing of individuals. (Meagher, 2007). The Oodua Peoples' Congress, OPC has also been alleged as perpetrators of human right abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Osofisan therefore presents the irreducible ambiguity among the people in their clamour for security just as he indicts them as complicit in insecurity as long as some of them betrays the reason behind the formation of such outfits.

Metaphorically, the play also suggests the formation of insurgent and banditry groups and the gullible entry of youths and teenagers into such in Nigeria. Osofisan shows how the younger generation are brainwashed without ethical reasoning of the import of their decision to perpetrate crime on their community and thus allege them as complicit. In the play, the entire community rejects the voice of reason as represented in Ayinde the school teacher, while they digest without question the lie of their elected counselor (Kansillor). Osofisan presents Ayinde's counsel against the proposed nightguard below:

AYINDE: Aringindin is our hero: he has made our nights safe, chased away the robbers who would steal even our dream! But let me ask you, what is the price we pay for this safety? Answer me? We sleep safely, but everywhere Aringindin's decree surrounds us like iron fences!... let him take his reward, and let him also be retired! Disband the nightwatchmen!...things are happening which, in our innocence, will soon turn this place into a virtual prison yard! Unless you take my advice now (p. 159).

Ayinde and his fiancée Yobiyin represent informed citizens, civil societies and Non Governmental Organisations who sensitise the youth and the people on the proper steps to take to rid insecurity. However, their voice is overpowered by Kansillor, who rallies the people against Baale and for the creation of the nightguard outfit. The Almajiris (lumpen children) and other idle youths in Nigeria who are gullibly brainwashed into crime and violence are represented in the nightguards who betray their community in the play. One finds it ridiculous for an entire community to be against the voice of reason. They, therefore, join the nightguard and allow themselves to be used against their families. This is why the Cameroonian social theorist Achille Mbembe has written extensively on the excesses of the postcolony, noting the need to “respond with greater urgency to the shifting priorities of contemporary... complexity of everyday life in the ‘African postcolony’” (Syrotinski, 2012, p. 413). In Mbembe’s opinion, both the dominant and the dominated have robbed each other of vitality, leaving each other impotent (Mbembe, 1992). Therefore, he no longer sees the masses (followers) as being coerced by a dominant force but being coerced by themselves. Mbembe thus submits as we see in *Aringindin* that “in the postcolony, an intimate tyranny links the rulers with the ruled” (Mbembe, 1992, p.25). The likes of Aringindin and the vigilantes in the play are therefore seen in the cryptic lens of Mbembe as traitors. The nightguards are culpable in the insecurity in the land. They know the truth but decide to join robbers to afflict their kinsmen. This is what Osofisan has shown that the perpetrators of insecurity in Nigeria are from individual communities while some are among the security agencies to produce tyranny, an act which is incongruent with what they are meant to be to the society. Their complicity in the insecurity of their community is incredible and a paradox. This is why Osofisan in an interview with Awodiya said,

I don’t just question any longer only the people I consider evil forces, I also try to question nowadays even those who claim to fight for the betterment of this society (Awodiya, 1993, p. 39).

Osofisan therefore wants the people to be truthful to themselves as the play dramatises one of the Yoruba proverbs that says “*Kokoro to n jefo ara re lowa*” (*the pest destroying the vegetable lives on the vegetable*). In other words, the parasite feasting on the society lives within it. So the banditry and kidnapping for ransom in Nigerian communities are perpetrated in connection with the individual members of communities. The attack on Saint Francis Catholic church Owo, Ondo state on June 5, 2022 confirms this as the perpetrators are said to have connived with some Ebira citizens in the community (Sunday, Nzor & Akingboye, 2022). Many of the bandits and kidnappers in Nigeria are thus believed to reside or have accomplices in attacked communities. This facilitates the attacks because they know the in and out of such communities. These bandits and kidnappers are not strangers; even if they are strangers to the communities, they are not foreigners. If the thesis of Osofisan in *Aringindin* is the need to conscientise members of communities against insecurity and immoral acts, the creation of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) by the Nigerian government in 1993 is, therefore, a response to the play. It is, however, paradoxical that rather than abating, the situation has deteriorated since NOA’s formation. This study thus points to the urgent need to look into the policies leading to the formation of the agency for it to accurately respond to the insecurity in Nigeria.

Another form of complicity in insecurity by the followers is the sheer attribution of security to the leaders, while the followers prefer merry-go-rounding in the day and sleep off in the night. Osofisan presents this through Kansillor when challenged by his daughter Yobi on why he has shirked the responsibility he owes the people who elected him:

All our people wish to do is to sleep, while some watchmen take control. They talk, but they do not wish themselves to be in charge. As long as they are allowed to dance their dance, unchecked and make their miserable coins in the morning market, and waste it all away again in the evening at some celebration. As long as the merry-making is allowed to go unchecked, as long will they never care about the man whatever that is in the saddle of power: and all who shout the words of warning in their ears will be brutally shoved aside (p. 173).

Osofisan, in this piece, thus dramatizes and resonates the cliché that “security is the collective responsibility of all”. He suggests the collective effort of the people rather than waiting for a messiah like Aringindin or the police who has consistently failed them. In other words, if a vigilante network or community police is to be set-up, it must be composed of the willing and responsible members of the society; not those coerced to join such groups. The community leaders must jointly organise it. The play reveals the failure of some vigilante groups that Nigeria has had because they emerge from the sole conception and ethnic bias of their leader, who often eventually use such groups as racketeers. Although Baale planted Oluode among Aringindin’s nightguards, it would have been better if Baale was in charge of calling the shots. He, however, could not because he did not subject Aringindin’s proposal to communal appraisal before endorsement, thus giving us the picture of the future of such an institution if carelessly embraced. Aside from minor allegations, Operation Amotekun in southwest Nigeria met this requirement and has attracted commendations because it was jointly advocated and formed by governors of the six southwest states after due consultation with the people in response to banditry and herders-farmers clashes in the region (Sowole and Kolawole, 2020; Nwoko, 2021). However, the ESN in the East has been faced with a barrage of allegations because its formation was not subjected to such consultation. The Benue Youth Forum is thus critical of the Miyetti Allah planned vigilante group by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) in the North because of fears that it could be hijacked to unleash terror in the middle belt region of the country.

Yobi, the heroine of the play and only female character not cowed by Aringindin stresses this need for unanimous acceptance of indigenous security outfit/ community Based Armed Group (CBAG) when she challenges Aringindin that: “one day, our people will be awake, and they will stop so calling helplessly for messiahs. They will be ready, everyone to assume responsibility for their own lives. And then true democracy will come” (p. 172). True to her prediction, the people eventually woke from their slumber. They unanimously conspired to have accepted Aringindin as their king but killed him on the day of his much-desired coronation and peace returned to the community. This shows that the people have the solution to their predicament if they really desire to address insecurity in their communities.

For any literary work to be successful, such work must be composed of certain aesthetic qualities (Ambanasom, 2007). Osofisan is not only mindful of this in his works, but this philosophy essentially inspires him in *Aringindin*. Therefore, the artistic dimensions of the play are telling just as Osofisan achieves his dramaturgy through dramatic metaphor. Meanwhile, Dramatic metaphor, according to Cash (2012) “is a complex device used by playwrights to draw a comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things, images or events”. Its deployment in the play allows the playwright to capture and bring to his audience’s memory the strange images of crime in Brecht’s *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI* (1941) and the brutal reign of Adolf Hitler while in power in Germany. He also spawns a metaphor for the future by artistically crafting familiar characters like Aringindin and plausible events in contemporary Nigeria’s insecurity. The play thus ignites familiar incidences and consequences, which are

elements of Lukacs theory of literary realism. By this, the audience and reader easily identify with the characters and incidences for facile comprehension and social decision. Aside from the dramatic metaphor upon which the play is enacted, Osofisan deploys the aesthetics of Satire, paradox, masking and orunmila motif to arrive at these sordid revelations. He employs Satire in the play, but contrary to his contemporaries' notion of Satire as a tool to criticise the rulers; he deploys it to chastise the followers. In the play, Ayinde employs the elements of Horatian Satire as he is vociferous in lampooning Aringindin, Kansillor, and, Oluode – who is a spy among the night guards. We see this when he challenges Oluode to disclose Aringindin's plan to take over the town from Baale:

AYINDE: He is afraid, can't you see! A man of his status and reputation. What is it that would make someone like Oluode tremble like this? Courage! All it needs, Oluode is a little dose of the courage that earned you your name (p. 180).

Osofisan reverses his satirical swipes rather than pitching them at the leaders; he directs them to unravel the secrets behind insecurity in Nigeria. The playwright, therefore, wants the people to be vociferous and expose the villains of insecurity in their midst. He further presents the thesis of the play with paradox. This is as a most incredible act is orchestrated by the assumed saint – Aringindin, in the community. He shows us that no one (including the leaders and followers) must be spared in the quest to get to the root of insecurity in Nigeria. He confirms this with a fictional portrait showing everyone in a mask, including Kansillor, who is the representative of the people in government and Aringindin, who pretends to be a lover of the people but, in reality, their arch enemy.

Osofisan, however, divests Aringindin's mask of deception with the orunmila motif rooted in the traditional Ifa divination corpus noted for exploring knowledge (Awodiya, 1995). Baale's consultation with Orunmila through the traditional Ifa oracle unravels and unveils the villain in the play. Aringindin is, by this act, discovered as the people's arch enemy. The people are initially helpless to arrest the situation until Aringindin meets his inevitable end in the hands of the same people he has victimised during his coronation. This discovery tells of a lacuna in contemporary Nigeria, which is the poor deployment of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for intelligence, investigation and security. It thus signals the increase in crime as the perpetrators know they cannot be easily discovered. The criminals' masks will therefore be divested with the deployment of hidden cameras, drones mounted with cameras and Closed-circuit Television, CCTV as Aringindin is discovered through traditional intelligence. The play is also a model in literary realist drama. It thus justifies Osofisan as a visionary artist with the eye of a seer and prophet who has written far back in history about contemporary happenings in Nigeria with real-to-life characters. Although it is observed that the situation has grown worse than the milieu depicted, the playwright has demonstrated the fact that literature is not limited by the chariot of time as it captures contemporary insecurity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has provided an alternative engagement paradigm to assessing and ending insecurity in Nigeria. The novel exploration of followership regarding security matters in the country undoubtedly suggests the need to begin to look inward in each community rather than concluding that crimes are exclusively perpetrated by external forces, the leadership or thinking security is the sole responsibility of leaders. Osofisan's investigation confirms this as the play shows through the character of Aringindin and his nightguards that some members of the society, like ex-servicemen, retired civil servants, traditional chiefs and other ordinary people

(followers), are accomplices to raging insecurity in Nigeria. The study also suggests that Nigeria is sitting on a keg of gunpowder, with the rate of insecurity in the land. Should the status quo remain unchecked, a state of anarchy is looming just as Aringindin toppled the Baale and took over power. The study, therefore, contributes to scholarship on vigilante groups. The proliferation of vigilante groups without legal frameworks and the Nigerian government's laissez-faire attitude to insecurity attest to this. The study is therefore suggestive of the need to subject existing CBAGs to investigation and conscientize the people to collectively discuss and propose the best way to address insecurity in their domain and not leave it for a single person or group to undertake.

It is further observed from the analysis that the Nigerian mode of intelligence gathering for security is still very far behind in the age of technological development. The traditional intelligence that aided the discovery of Aringindin is therefore suggestive of the need to deploy surveillance equipment and Information Communication Technology, I.C.T in terms of drones mounted with cameras and Closed-circuit Television, CCTV to nip in the bud insecurity in Nigeria. The government also needs to overhaul its National Orientation Agency (NOA) to sensitise Nigerians about the sanctity of life and the dangers of banditry, kidnapping and insurgency to fellow citizens. The campaigns and sensitisation of a revived NOA will help resist any attempt to draft the people into criminal outfits or get them indoctrinated into inhumane ideologies. The study also shows that the people must be decisive in sniffing out and prosecuting anyone found complicit in kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency to serve as a deterrent to others. Given *Aringindin's* contribution to emerging insecurity trends in Nigeria, this study concludes that Femi Osofisan is an avant-garde playwright and literary realist who is committed to a truthful depiction of his society with neither bias toward the leaders nor the followers in the bid to address challenges of development in Nigeria.

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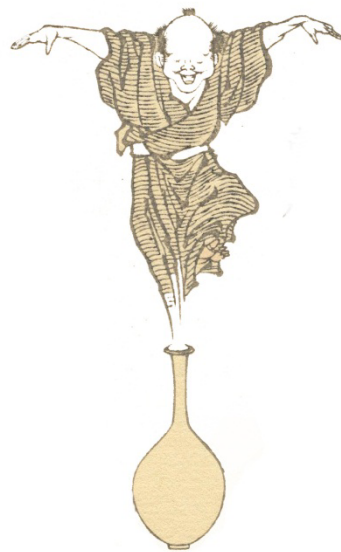
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Migration and Oil-Centric Life: A Study on Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*

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Abstract

The oil narratives bring in a gamut of perspectives that would redefine the outlook of life. Modern life is embedded in the discovery of oil and the usage of hydrocarbon fuels. Petrofiction offers a scope for understanding the representation of oil aesthetics in literature. The research paper aims to critically expound the transformation after the sudden boom of wealth in Kuwait due to the discovery of oil, and the migration of Palestine refugees from Iraqi camps to Kuwait in search of jobs to upgrade their living conditions with reference to *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani. The study authenticates the oil-centric life in *Men in the Sun* by understanding that oil is the base structure that governs the “push”, “pressure” and “stay” factors of a refugee in flight with theoretical support of kinetic model of exile, displacement and resettlement as proposed by Egon F. Kunz.

Keywords: oil-centric, migration, refugees, oil narratives, Palestine refugees, petrofiction

The diachronic study of human civilization has actively recorded various facets of life including great events like war, political shift, geographical change, economic front, and their creative representation is eloquently manifested in various art, literature and popular culture. Either be it the independence struggle or the Renaissance that redefined learning, the mantle of literature has become inevitable. As the times change, and scientific advancements redefine the day-to-day lives, the role of literature in accommodating technological advancements have become a deliberate necessity. This inclusivity has led to revolutionizing the various ways in which we understand the history of human developments, where due importance is given to major changes in social, political, economic and also the evolution in the energy usage and consumption.

Understanding literary history and remapping them based on the effects sufficing the discovery of oil is a new trend that has paved the way to the field of energy humanities. Rewriting history from the perspective of energy humanities has opened up a new field of describing, understanding and interpretation of life since the twentieth century. Oil metamorphosed life in the twentieth century as it portrayed the dialogue between power and commerce in a new political and economic light with cultural undertones. Petrofiction studies the representation of oil and other hydrocarbon products in literature.

Here, then, is a way to reconceptualize literary history, in terms of the shifts and dislocations of, and moments of resistance to, the extraction of human energy by global empire in the long twentieth century: a century that has outlasted its time and carried on into ours. (Makdisi, 2011, p. 320)

The significant role of fossil fuels in contemporary life has facilitated the oil narratives to open up conversations about the centrality of energy resources. In such conditions, the petrofiction acts as a reservoir of narratives that combine creativity, fact and fiction to provide an oil centric view of the world. Oil and the Orient survive in a complementary relationship, where the one is always defined and represented by the other. Soon oil came to be represented not only as an energy resource, but also as an entity with hegemony, cultural and ecological values as Stephanie LeMenager (2014) in her book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* says: “Energy systems are shot through with largely unexamined cultural values, with ethical and ecological consequences” (p. 4).

Within the premise of migration studies, the current research paper employs a critical inquiry of *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani to accentuate the role of oil in governing the movement of Palestinian refugees to Kuwait for employment with the theoretical support of *Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory* by Egon F. Kunz. In doing so, the paper adds migration and refugee studies also as a dimension of petrofiction.

Literature Review

As a significant narrative representing Palestine literature, *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani has been subjected to various literary and critical studies by the scholars. Shadi Saleh Neimneh (2017) examines the novella under the concepts of existentialism and naturalism in his work “Postcolonial Arabic Fiction Revisted: Naturalism and Existentialism in Ghassan Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*”. As a translation work as well as a film adaptation, the novella and the movie has been the focal study for the translators and the film critics and it is effectively carried out in the work of Marwa J. Aldous and Rashid Yahiaoui (2022) titled “Death on the Page, Rebirth on the Screen: Literature Between Translation and Adaptation, Ghassan Kanafani’s *Men in the*

Sun as a Case Study”. The translation of Hilary Kilpatrick and the film adaptation of Tawfiq Saleh are taken for reference in this case study. The article by Raed Ali Alsaoud Alqasass (2021) titled, “The Diasporic Narrative: Identity Crisis in Ghassan Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*” delineates the identity crisis faced by the Palestine refugees due to exile and displacement and examines how certain narrative techniques used by the author like split narrative and double plot narrative contributes to the overall thematic effect of the novella. He also credits that this exile and displacement has become an important part of Palestine narratives because, “The experience of diasporic existence has become a part of the Palestinian collective unconscious, developed either by first-hand experience or through oral narratives of what has taken place and handed down from one generation to another”. The works listed here facilitate a critical ground for analysing *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani, and an extensive review of literature helped identify that to study the novella as a petrofiction would only further extend the scope of the genre (Alqasass, 2021, p. 1).

Oil and the Orient

The study of the present topography of the Middle East as elaborated by Robert F. Mahfoud and James N. Beck in their article titled, “Middle East Geology: Why the Middle East Fields May Produce Oil Forever” (1995) published in *Offshore Magazine* reveals that the presence of hydrocarbons is governed by the chemical activity that takes place in the zones known as subduction or rifts. The sedimentary rocks that undergo subduction carry the hydrogen and carbon that combine to form the hydrocarbons or the fossil fuels, “The extensive literature on Middle East oils and oilfields, especially in the Persian/Arabian Gulf area, point out that hydrocarbons are formed from sedimentary petroliferous beds, mostly shales and carbonates” (Mahfoud & Beck, 1995).

After extensive geographical explorations carried out by George Bernard Reynolds, oil was discovered in Persia, present day Iran, in the year 1908. A year later, a subsidiary called Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) was formed, and it sold the company shares to the public. In the year 1914, through Winston Churchill, British Admiralty became an important customer of APOC as their navy fleet shifted from coal to oil powered ships to provide speed and assist better in warfare to gain upper hand in attacking the enemies. It recorded the entry of Britain into the oil economy and also aided in dominance, “Fossil capital launched industrial Britain into an era of accelerated economic growth, modernization, and labor exploitation, the economic regime of the Anthropocene” (Griffiths, 2018, p. 615).

The twenty years contract between APOC and the British government, naturally led to the British being the de facto power behind APOC. In 1935, APOC changed its name to Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The rise of nationalism during the Second World War re-evaluated the holdings of the British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and that led to nationalization of assets. In 1954, with several developments, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company changed to British Petroleum and put Iranian oil back on international markets. All the oil companies based outside the Middle East were jointly named as “Seven Sisters” dominated the oil exploration and controlled the majority of the oil reserves until the 1950s. They dominated the oil scene by commissioning exploration in the Middle East and Africa and produced two-thirds of the global oil supply: “Prior to the 1970s, relations between the Middle East oil-producing countries and the big oil companies worked decidedly to the advantage of the latter, mainly because of their exclusive oil agreements with the oil-producing countries”. After the Oil Embargo of 1973, the oil industry nationalized throughout the Middle East (Rose, 2004, p. 430).

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the ruler of Kuwait signed the oil concession grant in 1934. It was first granted to Kuwait Oil Company Limited formed in collaboration with Anglo-Persian Oil Company and Gulf Oil Corporation. On February 22, 1938, oil was discovered in Kuwait. In June 1930, the first crude oil export from Kuwait was initiated. A British tanker named Fusilier carried 10,567 tons of crude oil, loaded from the offshore pipeline. An agreement signed in the year 1975 by the State of Kuwait with Gulf Oil Corporation and British Petroleum gave Kuwait full control of its oil resources. The discovery of oil changed the economic atmosphere of Kuwait and provided abundant employment opportunities. The political turmoil in Palestine motivated the people to migrate to Kuwait in hopes of finding employment with the oil company that could provide them with a home and peaceful life.

The Palestine War from 1947 to 1949, the Palestine Exodus of 1948 and the Six Days War of 1967 witnessed the fleeing of Palestinians from their homeland, seeking asylum in countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Syria where they settled in the refugee camps. The squalid conditions of the camp, with no jobs and poverty, led to the refugees moving to Kuwait in search of jobs with the sudden boom of oil. In Iraq, the migrating Palestinians were provided with houses to live instead of refugee camps until the invasion of Iraq by the US and UK in 2003. According to the report prepared by *Nowhere to Flee* titled, “The Perilous Situation of Palestinians in Iraq,” there were 34,000 Palestine refugees living in Iraq prior to the Iraq war that began in the year 2003. Prior to the Gulf War there were around 400,000 Palestine people in Kuwait who later fled due to economic and political reasons. The pivotal role played by Palestine refugees in building the oil economy of Kuwait is mentioned by Susan Abulhawa in her novel *Against the Loveless World* (2020) where she highlights the temporariness of their life in association with oil:

The oil boom offered opportunity to build a new life there. Although Kuwait never allowed us more than temporary residence — making it clear we were always guests — Palestinians prospered and had a major hand in Kuwait as the world knows it now (p. 22).

One of the significant native voices that worked for Palestine and its legacy is Ghassan Kanafani who was born in Acre, northern Palestine in the year 1936. He is a novelist, short story writer, playwright and essayist. His family fled Palestine in 1948 and settled in Damascus. He was an active spokesperson for the Liberation of Palestine and the Arab Nationalist movement. His career as a writer includes five novels, five short story collections, two works of study on Palestine literature and two plays. He was assassinated in July 1972. Kanafani’s inspiration for writing came from the struggle of the Palestine-Arab, and he played a vital role in the Palestine liberation, making it into a pan revolutionary movement across Arabia. Kanafani became a refugee at the age of twelve and the trauma experience was represented in his writings: “His people were scattered, many of them living in camps or struggling to make a living doing the most menial work; their only hope lay in the future, and in their children, for whose education they made enormous sacrifice” (Kilpatrick, 1999, p. 10).

Men in the Sun by Ghassan Kanafani is a novella, which was first published in the year 1962 and tells the story of three Palestine refugees in Iraq, taking on the dangerous and fateful journey to Kuwait in search of a job to provide a better life for their family. The three men seek a smuggler who would help them illegally enter Kuwait, and the story talks about the difficulties that chaperones this journey that could prove fatal at any point of time. The certainty of death looms over the three men, yet they embark on a trail that so many have done before, hoping that they would find a job in Kuwait, a place with a sudden boom of wealth from oil resources. The three men, like several others, wish to get employed as the laborers possibly in

the oil rigs and send money back to their families. The story presents an insightful account of the migration of the Palestinians to Kuwait, and their migration patterns and motives can be deliberated in association with Egon F. Kunz's kinetic model of exile and resettlement in order to understand how oil governs the movement.

Push, Pressure and Pull

Kunz studies the pattern of exile and resettlement of the refugees in his theoretical work *Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory*. He identifies and groups the refugees into several categories based on the motive or circumstances behind each of them in choosing to flee their homeland and their replacement and resettlement pattern by seeking asylum elsewhere. The grouping of the refugees into five broad categories is carried out through the parameters of “push”, “pressure” and “pull”. The “push”, “pressure” and “pull” works at the basic level for all the five categories and determine the various reasons of why an individual or a community decides to flee their homeland and seek asylum in a completely alien land. Based on the intention for migration, which is determined by the three factors, the refugees are divided into five categories: anticipatory refugees, acute refugees, majority identified refugees, events-alienated refugees, and self-alienated refugees.

The kinetic model of displacement and settlement of Kunz describes the qualities of each category and explains the aftermath of the displacement, which varies according to the motives of the individual at flight. The risk factors are also calculated in this event of displacement, and the uncertainty and fatality both have an inevitable presence in every circumstance. The acute refugee movement is characterized by great political or military changes in a country. The refugees thus decide to flee from the country either as mass or groups or individuals with the prime objective of reaching safely to the neighboring lands to begin a new life. The acute refugees are also aware that this settlement is not a permanent one and that when the time comes, they must leave and settle elsewhere: “The emphasis is on the escape and at the time of passing through the border few refugees partaking in acute movements are aware that later further migration will become a necessity” (Kunz, 1973, p. 132).

While the circumstances determine the type of refugees, the decision to leave the homeland is influenced by these three factors. The “push” motive in this case places an important role in evaluation and decision-making for an individual or a community who is contemplating whether to stay or flee. Immediately after the decision to flee is taken, the journey of the refugee begins and it is accompanied by the birth of nostalgia and longing to return to the homeland. At this point, the refugee looks at all the dramatic events happening around and surrenders to the reality that the idea of returning is impossible. The “push” is followed by the “pressure” and it involves a refugee evaluating his living conditions that include surveying the refugee camps, searching for jobs, and the like. This “pressure” then influences the decision of the refugee to plunge, stay or return. The “push-pressure-stay” situations arise only when the refugees do not flee from the country of asylum and instead are granted official permission to stay there (Kunz, 1973, p. 134).

With inference to the characteristics of each category of refugee as classified by Kunz in his kinetic model, the movement of Palestinians from their homeland to Iraq and then to Kuwait in search of a job to provide a better living can be substantiated as a form of acute refugee movement. Hence, the Palestine refugees moving from the camps of Iraq to Kuwait in *Men in the Sun* by Ghassan Kanafani represent acute refugees who align with “push”, “pressure”, and

“stay” motives. They flee to Kuwait in search of economic stability to provide their family with a better and safe future.

The three Palestine refugees in Iraq namely, Abu Qais, Marwan and Assad decide to flee to Kuwait hoping to get a job with the oil reserves. Their means of fleeing is through illegal crossing of the Iraq-Kuwait border and Abul Khaizuran, the man with a lorry that has the permit, decides to smuggle them. The three men hide in the truck's water tank every time the lorry reaches various check posts. They stay in the airtight container for six to seven minutes until Abul Khaizuran returns from showing the documents to the officers. This goes successfully until they almost reach the border. At one of the check posts, Abul Khaizuran is delayed by the officers, and the three men in the airtight tanker die of suffocation. Along with them perish, their dreams of making it to Kuwait and earning money to provide for their family. Hence, the push factor is fueled by the presence of oil in Kuwait for the three men and it determines the importance and speed of the journey.

Oil and Migration

Abu Qais is introduced as lying flat on the damp land and could sense the throbbing of his heart beat. He also thinks about the River Shatt and Ustaz Selim, teacher of the Quran School in a village, that one night fell into the hands of Jews. This portrays Abu Qais as a refugee who is bound by nostalgia of his fallen village, the homeland and the lost wealth. Shatt River reminds him of his once bustling homeland that is suddenly lost due to political and military upheaval. On the other side of Shatt lies Kuwait, the land with wealth and a normal life that Abu Qais could only dream about. This nostalgia brings with it a sense of fragmentation and alienation to Abu Qais, who has fled his homeland to the safety of Iraq, only to be suffering in poverty. The poverty in Iraq pushed Abu Qais to consider another migration and Kuwait, shone as a possibility of better life to him and many other refugees because of its oil wealth, which had the power to bring dreams to reality: “Over there was Kuwait. What only lived in his mind as a dream and fantasy existed there” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 25). Thus, for Abu Qais, Kuwait was a land of possibilities, and it was the driving force behind him undertaking the onerous journey of illegally crossing the border for a better future.

The future as described by Abu Qais has so much uncertainty in it and is portrayed as a “black eternity” depicting a void (Kanafani, 1999, p. 22). The feeling of uncertainty for a refugee is governed by the environment they inhabit, which comprises the social, political and economic conditions that determine their living conditions. When they decide to migrate, the ambivalence includes the risk factors that accompany the refugee during the journey. For refugees like the three men in the story, unlawful crossing to reach Kuwait poses climatic challenges as well because of the harsh desert. Yet, they are willing to face the challenges to reach the glossy reality projected by the oil wealth. Under such circumstances, the presence of oil resources only widens uncertainty and dubiousness of the future of the three men. On the contrary, for countries like Kuwait, the presence of oil resources determines certainty, stability and growth because of their contribution to the holistic growth of the nation. Hence, oil plays an important role in determining the push phenomenon by motivating the refugees to move for better life opportunities and influences the stay factor by offering stability and peaceful life.

The main reason behind Marwan going to Kuwait is to work and provide for his mother, make his siblings study, and raise their living conditions. When his elder brother Zakaria stopped sending money from Kuwait, Marwan had to give up his studies to flee to Kuwait to earn money. He was young and willing to take up a job in Kuwait to fight poverty. Assad in his

middle age was the most practical of the lot and took responsibilities in matters of negotiating with Abul Khaizuran in the arrangement because Abu Qais was old and Marwan was too young for matters of money. Assad carried optimism within him about fleeing, and it is reflected in his thoughts about Kuwait and the money that waits there, which would help him pay off his debts. According to Assad, “A man can collect money in the twinkling of an eye there in Kuwait” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 32). The riches of Kuwait attract the Palestine refugees in Iraq to move there in search of a job, and it is fascinating to note that the primary factor governing the political, economic, and social conditions of life is oil. The discovery of oil in Kuwait, the oil business and the wealth changed the outlook of life and carried with it a new beacon of hope. Hence, the oil-centric life determines the “push-pressure-stay” factor of the characters in the story *Men in the Sun* because oil wealth becomes the reason and urge for migration to Kuwait. Thus oil is the base structure on which the political, economic, social and humanist superstructures are built.

The draggled living conditions of the refugee camps along with their will to return to the homeland has now become an impossible reality, determines the push factor of the three men in the story. The lines that Saad talks to Abu Qais trying to persuade the latter to move to Kuwait portray the underlying “push” in the movement of Palestine refugees from Iraq to Kuwait. Saad says,

In the last ten years you have done nothing but wait. You have needed ten big hungry years to be convinced that you have lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole village. People have been making their own way during these long miserable years, while you have been squatting like a dog in a miserable hut. What do you think you are waiting for? Wealth to come through roof of your house? Your house? It is not your house? (Kanafani, 1999, p. 26)

The unpredictability of the journey from Iraq to Kuwait does not hinder the progress of any men. The pressure factor is influenced by the intervening obstacles at physical and emotional levels. Here it is instigated by poverty, the uncertain journey of illegally crossing the borders, and the country of Kuwait itself. The men are willing to undertake all of this with the ray of hope brought by the oil wealth in Kuwait. The difficulty of the people fleeing from Iraq to Kuwait is heightened by the climatic conditions like the scorching sun and waterless desert, “If they had taken me to the desert prison, Al-Jafr, at H4, I wonder if life would have been kinder than it is now. Pointless, pointless” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 31). Nevertheless, the magnitude of difficulties that are determined using the “push” and “pressure” of Kunz did not impede the men in the stories who carried the dreams of a better future in Kuwait from making their journey. The money as an abstract presence, a dream, and a hope provides an optimistic turn amidst every obstacle, “He suddenly fell silent. Abul Khaizuran had begun to laugh. I’m glad you are going to Kuwait, because you will learn many things there. The first thing you will learn is: money comes first and then morals” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 42). Thus, the role of money in the entire story confirms that it is also one of the “pressure” factors because it alone has the power to rectify the poverty experienced by the Palestine refugees in Iraq. Yet, the reality of oil wealth is different,

The people eventually understand oil as a potential source of wealth, but wealth that is only ever realized via the accumulation of its money and commodity form by the Americans, the emir, and several designing individuals. For the workers receiving a wage, oil wealth remains obscure (Riddle, 2018, p. 56).

The three men in the story are the collective representation of various sad realities with the refugees across the world and their migration experiences. The “stay” parameter is governed by the voluntary migration of the three men, their acceptance of the uncertainty of the return and consent to make the great odyssey as a means of deliverance from poverty. Abu Qais, after being convinced by his friend Saad to move to Kuwait for a job, envisions a future where he would be able to send his children to school, buy olive shoots and set up a living shack. All these dreams have the potential to become reality one day, depending upon his safe return. In such a case, the presence of oil resources acts as the rivulet of optimism that has the power to evade the uncertainty that surrounds the life of a refugee. Despite all the struggles, he is fixed on going to Kuwait and staying there with the hopes of a better future. Abu Qais says about his vision of a better future to his wife and then utters, “‘Certainly.’ ‘If I arrive. If I arrive’” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 27). The author’s repetitive usage of “if” heightens the tone of uncertainty that looms over the three men in their journey through the desert

Similar to Abu Qais, Marwan’s situation is also bound by poverty. As a brother who must care for his family, he takes the journey with hopes of reaching and staying in Kuwait and earning money. The sudden abandonment by his father and elder brother, Zakaria, makes Marwan as the sole breadwinner of the family that is drowning in poverty. In order to improve their conditions, Marwan, young and in school, leaves everything to go to Kuwait in search of a job. The pressure of reality portrays his consent to stay in Kuwait and make better use of the circumstances. The money that he makes in Kuwait would deliver his family from all the miseries. “He would send every penny he earned to his mother, and overwhelm her and his brothers and sisters with gifts till he made the mud hut into a paradise on earth and his father bit his nails with regret” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 43). The vision that Marwan has of a better life that awaits in Kuwait serves as the pressure that is forcing him to take the difficult journey. While the vision is the driving force, the prosperity of Kuwait after the oil encounter is the sole motivation behind Marwan considering staying in the place as a migrant and improving the livelihood of his family.

By analyzing the migration of three men in association with the kinetic model, the presence of oil in determining the push, pressure and stay is established. Initially, the push for the three men begins with political turmoil in their homelands and as they reach Iraq, another displacement becomes inevitable because of the poverty. Kuwait as the destination is evaluated by the refugees based on the riches provided by the oil wealth. Hence, the presence of oil resources in Kuwait supports the push factor of these three men. Again, the presence of the oil resources also contributes to the pressure factor of the refugee. When the legal means to cross the Iraq-Kuwait borders is overruled, the unlawful crossing through the harsh desert without proper food, water and shelter adds more to the already difficult and unreliable journey. Yet, the presence of oil wealth and employment in Kuwait contributes towards the pressure to take up the journey. The willingness and determination of the three men to migrate despite knowing all the complications strengthens the stay factor. As the political, economic and social life has gradually improved because of the oil boom in Kuwait, the peace and stability that it promises influences the three men to stay there and improve their living conditions. Thus, the movement of the refugees in this novella is highly determined by the oil encounter in Kuwait, and it infiltrates into all the base structure of the kinetic model by Kunz, and corroborates its centrality.

Metaphoric Representation

The shift in energy resources directly increased the speed of the movement from one place to the other. The advent of automobiles that run on fossil fuels have become the mechanical

materialization of oil wealth. Along with it, the coming of cars and trucks created a new market for oil that increased the demand and supply and ended the dependency on coal. It resulted in fervent explorations especially in the Middle East, “These new vehicles would go on to conquer the pedestrian, the bicyclist, and the railways themselves, paving over their rights-of-way with smooth asphalt for their immense engines, creating a thirsty new market for the oil industry in the process” (Shah, 2004, p. 9). The automobiles have thus improved the speed of life and possibility of movement even into the harshest terrains. The discovery of oil resources facilitated movement while the prospective employment opportunities aided the migration, “The discovery of oil, the petroleum as the mode of fuel allowed for the mushroom growth of automobile industries and usage” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 26). Thus, the presence of oil resources is an integral part of the migration of the three men and it establishes the centrality of oil in governing the dynamics of life

The metaphor of oil centric life is heightened in the story by the presence of a lorry. So far, the oil resources contributed only to the dreams of better life for the refugees and had an omnipotent presence that governed the movement and decisions of each man planning to move to Kuwait. The presence of fossil fuels in determining the safe and successful movement of the three men can be delineated through the usage of automobiles. The lorry that the three men board becomes the mode of bringing their dreams come true. While the three men depend on it to safely reach Kuwait, the lorry is the means of income for Abul Khaizuran. Thus, the lorry, an automobile powered by oil-based fuel, on the road to Kuwait becomes the tool of deliverance to better life, thereby accentuating the dependence on fossil fuels for movement and wealth. The lorry also serves as a symbol of security for the three men as Khaizuran assures safe arrival at Kuwait:

The huge lorry was carrying them along the road, together with their dreams, their families, their hopes and ambitions, their misery and despair, their strength and weakness, their past and future, as if it were pushing against the immense door to a new, unknown destiny, and all eyes were fixed on the door’s surface as though bound to it by invisible threads (Kanafani, 1999, p. 63).

The oil motif expressed through the lorry and the dreams it carried makes a convincing portrayal of the change in the way of life after the discovery of oil. The oil encounter acted not only as a finding of a new energy resource, but also as a means of writing the history of human civilization from energy perspectives. Hence, the oil centric life adds one more lens to understanding social, economic and cultural developments across the globe.

The journey was not a successful one and the three men died right before the end of the journey. They almost reach the end, and this shows the other side of the oil-centric life. The failed dreams, the precarious labor, fatality, loss of culture and uncertainty of life are the flip sides of the coin reflected by Kanafani in his novella. The negative shift is portrayed by the change in the course of the lorry from the asphalt road made of bitumen, which is a hydrocarbon product from crude oil. Khaizuran’s lorry exited the asphalt road and drove through the sandy track of the desert to bury the three men and their dreams, “He turned his lorry off the asphalt road and drove along a sandy track that led into the desert. He made up his mind at noon to bury them, one by one, in three graves” (Kanafani, 1999, p. 72). Thus, the risk and uncertainty that accompanies the infrastructure where the oil resources occupy the center is expounded through the death of the three men, the lorry exiting the road and the grief of Khaizuran. Thus, in effectively recording the role of oil in the life of Palestine refugees, Kanafani’s novella *Men in the Sun* becomes an impactful narrative of petrofiction because, “Most oil fiction, for example,

contains certain thematic preoccupations: volatile labor relations and ethnic tensions, war and violence, ecological despoliation, and political corruption” (Macdonald, 2012, p. 31).

Conclusion

The negative and sad ending of the story does not seem to overpower the optimism and hope that the three men carried with them throughout the journey from Iraq to Kuwait. This thirst is governed by the oil wealth and the new life it promised. Thus, the novella of Kanafani shows how oil, the new-found wealth, directs the course of the “push”, “pressure” and “stay” of the refugees, becomes the symbol of hope for progression and finer life, and facilitates movement. As a cultural phenomenon oil wealth adds further to the study of its presence and effect on society, geography, politics, economy and art. Hence the reinterpretation of history from fossil fuel point of view becomes mandatory in understanding the works of the contemporary times and international relationships that contribute to global economy, peace and stability because,

Energy use has been central to the development of human civilization, society, and economy. As a first approximation, we can say that the story of human development has been the story of increased use of energy. Indeed, we can even think of human history as falling into epochs marked by the human ability to exploit various sources of energy (Jamieson, 2011, p. 16).

Oil narratives play a crucial role in understanding of life in the 20th and 21st centuries. The production, consumption, migration of people, precarious labor and several other stories surround the event of the discovery of oil from around the world. As such they provide testimonies of oil centric life that has transformed the social, political, economic, environmental and energy outlook of the present-day world. In the current Anthropocene age, in the matters pertaining to urgency surrounding the climate conversations around the globe, the relevance of oil narratives is heightened by their contribution to ecocriticism. While the environmental perspective often portrays the ramification of environment and culture that accompanies the monstrous exploration process and exploitation of the resources in the hands of the capitalist, speculative aspect of petrofiction depicts the ruined environment where fossil fuels have exhausted in order to produce a post-oil setting that is representative of the catastrophe that surrounds the oil dependent social order. In analyzing the novels, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, *The Windup Girl* (2009) by Paolo Bacigalupi and *Dune* (1965) by Frank Herbert as post-oil narratives, Heather I. Sullivan in her article “Petro-texts, Plants, and People in the Anthropocene: The Dark Green” (2019), writes “Oil becomes an impossible dream of the past”, and their absence shapes the dystopian setting and the lifestyle (p. 163).

Petrofiction provides a literary medium and voice to the reality after oil encounter. Amitav Ghosh in his work, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) highlights the importance of understanding and representing the oil aesthetics and their contemporary relevance in literature and it is necessary because, “For the arts, oil is inscrutable in a way that coal never was: the energy that petrol generates is easy to aestheticize—as in images and narratives of roads and cars—but the substance itself is not” (p.100). Hence, one cannot understand contemporary life without mapping the role of oil that is embedded into the day-to-day lives of everyone across the globe.

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