East West Journal of Humanities

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Humanities

Editorial

This is the fourth issue of the *East West Journal of Humanities,* a publication of EWU Center for Research and Training. The Center now publishes two journals: this one and the *East West Journal of the Social Sciences and Business.*

We welcome your contributions and invite suggestions for future issues. We intend to make ours the leading journal on the liberal arts in this region and look forward to your participation in our venture.

I would like to conclude by thanking Dr. Rafiqul Huda Chowdhury, Chairperson, EWUCRT, for advice and guidence, my Teaching Assistant Md. Muntashir Raquib for his help, and Aynun Nahar, Research Officer, and Shahla Sharmin, Departmental Secretary of EWUCRT, for their assistance.

Fakrul Alam

Editor
East West Journal of Humanities

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Discourse Structures in Bangladeshi Educational Advertisements: A Critique[1]

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Abstract

It is virtually impossible to get away from advertising, yet we know so little about it. Visual (pictorial) and verbal (textual) elements in advertisements mesh to send the appropriate message to the target audience. At times the ethical/unethical divide is unclear, raising questions regarding the subtle distinction between persuasion and manipulation. In Bangladesh, private universities use specific discourse structures in their admission ads comprising linguistic and visual elements to advertise to their target audience. In order to convince and influence the target audience, sometimes advertisers resort to particular choices of discourse structures that at one level aim to attain a communicative goal by providing necessary information, but upon critical analysis, at another level intend to attain a communicative goal through manipulative means.

Key words

advertising in Bangladesh, ethics in advertising, three-dimensional discursive model (TDM), communicative goal, discourse structures

Introduction

Advertising is an unavoidable fact for a consumer living in this era of information explosion. From a linguistic point of view, advertisements seem to constitute a genre with distinct features whose function is not only to inform but also to persuade and influence. By using the linguistic system as a tool kit in a creative manner, advertising discourse has become a type of public and coexistent communication, manifesting and mediating a mass folk culture (Koll-Stobbe, 1994). Bangladeshi advertisements too have unique structures, patterns and features, which have been evolving over the years in order to keep pace with

changes in consumer culture, communication technology and media industries in this region. One such change, based on consumer culture is quite apparent in educational ads, especially in private university admission ads.

Critical Implications

It seems that private universities in Bangladesh use specific discourse structures in their admission ads, comprising distinct linguistic and semiotic elements to advertise to their target audience. Such structures need to be analyzed and understood so as to be able to comprehend how ads communicate their messages to readers. In doing so, we as analysts need to deliberate, on the one hand, on whether advertisers breach the ethical boundaries of moral conduct, and on the other, whether such infringement depends on conscious or unconscious choice. From a Machiavellian perspective, it could be said that we need to determine whether the ads are based on the concept of 'the ends justify the means'. This concept is important because many universities tend to use unethical discursive strategies in their admission ads to lure student to their respective institutions under questionable pretexts for the profit, without trying to improve their quality of education. Bok (2003: 6) agrees with the commercialization of higher education; however, in order "to keep profit-seeking within reasonable bounds, a university must have a clear sense of the values needed to pursue its goals with a high degree of quality and integrity". On the other, the 'discursive techniques from advertising' (Fairclough, 1995: 6-7) seem to raise questions regarding the 'quality and integrity' of education in private universities. Fairclough (1995: 9-10) feels that there should be some degree of "accommodations and compromises between 'telling' and 'selling', reflecting the dilemmas of professionals in various domains faced with commodification and marketization and the pressure to use associated discourse techniques". This concept of 'selling' education seems to be quite prevalent in private university admission ads in Bangladesh.

This study investigates some private university admission ads using a three-pronged discursive model (TDM) to explain how linguistic discourse structures are employed to cater to the target audience, and to show why such structures could question the truthfulness of the claims made by these universities.

Advertising in Bangladesh: Scarcity of Local Literature

It may seem surprising that although some advertising agencies such as Bitopi, Asiatic, (previously East Asiatic) and Interspeed (previously Interspan) were in existence even before the birth of Bangladesh, advertising still does not seem to enjoy the status of a full-scale professional industry in its own right in our country (see Anwar, 2003). Prior to independence, there was very little advertising in the country due to inadequate industrialisation (Anwar, 2003). What is more perplexing is that though 42 years have elapsed since independence, there is hardly any study of the development of advertising in Bangladesh. The few studies that have been conducted from a consumer perspective are hardly accessible even to academic researchers; there certainly seems to be a dearth of research from a communication perspective. The need for further academic research at this point in time seems, more than ever, pertinent.

Though there is a substantial literature on the discourse of advertising that have focused on the linguistic and semiotic aspects of advertising from a communicative perspective (see Tolson, 1996; Myers, 1994; Cook, 2001; Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985; Goddard, 2001; Tanaka, 1994), there is little such literature on Bangladeshi advertising. Despite the scarcity of local resources, some studies have been conducted in Bangladesh, but not specifically on advertising *per se* from a discourse perspective. Meher (1989) for example, only looks at the role of advertising firms in marketing, with special emphasis on some firms in Chittagong, while Kashem and Rahman (1994) consider the ethical criteria of advertising by exploring malpractices in Bangladeshi advertising. Hasan (1989) looks at consumer response to advertising and attitudes towards products. A similar study was conducted almost a decade later by Alam and Rahman (1997), where they investigated students' attitudes towards advertising in Bangladesh.

Academic understanding of advertising in Bangladesh is deficient in the sense that there has been hardly any major studies on the discourse of advertising from a sociolinguistic perspective. In fact, with the exception of one private institution (American International University Bangladesh), which started its 'B.A. in Advertising' programme in 2007, no institution of higher learning in Bangladesh, public or private, offers specific programmes in the field of advertising. In most BBA and MBA programmes, advertising is a small component of 'Marketing' or 'Principles of Marketing' course(s). In some Mass Communications programmes, it may be offered as an independent course, but the course contents primarily focus on issues derived from Western texts. There is hardly any academic published material on advertising in Bangladesh.

Till now, only Al-Azami (2008, 2004) has empirically analyzed Bangladeshi advertisements from linguistic and ethical perspectives. He looks at commercial ads and shows how certain linguistic persuasive strategies are employed to manipulate consumers. However, despite focusing on linguistic and ethical perspectives in Bangladeshi ads, he does not mention anything about the need of a specific advertising code of ethics; nor does he concentrate on analyzing educational ads.

Advertisements: A Reflection of Society

Advertising is inescapable; it is everywhere—in streets, newspapers, the media, books and on transports, buildings, and so forth (See Goddard, 2001; Lewis, 2011; Bashir & Malik, 2009). Because it is everywhere, we probably do not pay that much attention or take the time to appreciate the amount of creativity that goes into creating effective advertisements. However, analyzing ads can be quite interesting in the sense that such attention could reveal contemporary thought and reflect the popular culture of a society. Ads may be transient and have short life-spans, but within a fleeting period they can mirror contemporary social life, even if they do so in an exaggerated manner.

However, at the same time, ads can reveal stereotypes that are prevalent and to some extent adopted, and practiced in a particular society. Stereotyping often arises from the generalization of a group of people based on a singular feature. Such stereotypimg is

usually considered discriminatory, marginalizing and exclusionary in nature and can lead to the practice of racism, sexism, ageism and elitism.

The Language of Advertising

Advertising is a form of communication that is transmitted by the media, be it print (newspaper, magazines), electronic (TV, radio) new (Internet) and/or social media (Facebook, Skype, blog, twitter, etc.). It is a process that is facilitated by a text, that is, the advertisement, which is made up of various elements that are meshed to communicate with a target audience. The grammar that constitutes the language of ads communicates through various discourse structures in the form of verbal, visual and textual elements, which help to draw the attention of the audience. Goddard (2001) categorizes them as image, verbal texts, and layouts; verbal texts can have their own paralanguage, that is to say typographical and phonological features. However, the paralanguage in print ads vary from the paralanguage in audiovisual ads. The paralanguage in Television Commercials (TVCs) may also vary, depending on co-text, situation, intertext, and participants (see Cook, 2001). Other attention-seeking devices comprise comparative reference, hook, intertextuality, buzzwords, logos, slogos and slogans (Goddard, 2001). Print ads can also communicate by employing elements of spoken discourse in order to achieve communicative goals with a target audience.

Appearance versus Reality: Ideological (Re) construct

The gap between appearance and reality tend to be more extensive in consumer-commercial ads than in educational ones. However, the extensiveness in the gap between appearance and reality in educational ads is gradually becoming as wide as in commercial ads. The extensivity between the real and apparent in advertising is brought about by construction and/or reconstruction. In *Mythologies* Barthes (1972) ideologically critiques mass culture in terms of everyday indulgences and/or necessities. The myth of the unreal is an ideological (re)construct—where the message is conveyed through discourse patterns. Advertisers tend to use patterns as attention-seeking devices such as image, text and layout, to draw the attention of the target audience, and to convey the "mythical" message. Barthes (1977) talks about these three messages his essay in "Rhetoric of the Image", where he analyzes a Panzani ad and explains how it communicates with the target audience by means of image, which can be linguistic in nature and/or 'a series of discontinuous signs'; although the signs may not always be linear. The image becomes operational by distinguishing between literal and symbolic messages; in advertising the literal image is never encountered in its pure state (ibid.). It is the symbolic message that tends to deviate from the real and literal meaning that consumer-commercial ads as well as private university ads tend to emphasize. Such deviation from the real to the unreal in advertising raises ethical concerns, particularly when institutions of higher learning endeavour to sell education to illiterate and/or intellectually illiterate societies.

Ethics in Advertising

The concept of ethics of course varies from context to context, individual to individual

or society to society. The criteria of ethical conduct might reflect one's personality or the ideology of an organisation, a culture, a society, a nation or even a group of nations. At a basic level, ethics in advertising can be defined as a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values, and virtues of character that inform and guide *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* conduct: that is, the conduct of people towards each other and the conduct of people towards themselves (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 2).

In terms of *universal public morality,* Kant's Categorical Imperative and Gewirth's Principle of Generic Consistency suggest that the concept of universality applies universally; this being the case, universal public morality claims that unethical advertising is universally wrong, both locally and globally, and not morally wrong relative to local customs, or to cultural, religious, social, or political norms (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 11-12). Hence, advertising practices that deceive consumers about products or services advertised would count as unethical irrespective of the idiosyncratic and specific cultural, social, religious, or political norms of the country in which the deception takes place (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 12). In this respect, the discourse employed by private universities in their admission ads that tend to influence and/or invite consumers, that is potential students, under false pretext or exaggerated circumstances may be considered unethical, because (un)consciously deception is being practiced. The unethical discourse practice in Bangladeshi admission ads is no doubt prompted by the fierce competition among the 80 private universities to rope in students.

Tertiary/Higher Education in Bangladesh

The first public university of Bangladesh came into being before the birth of this nation. The University of Dhaka was established in 1921 while Bangladesh was born in 1971 (see Karim *et al.*, 2008; Chowdhury, 2003). In the early 1990s, a growing number of students who wanted higher education could not be accommodated by the public universities then existent; consequently, many students went abroad for higher studies. For example, 75,000 of them went to India each year (see Karim *et al.*, 2008; Haque, 2004). Hence, the Private University Act (PUA) 1992 was implemented; it was then amended twice—in 1998 and 2010. The first private university was established in 1993 (see Haque 2008). Since then, 80 private universities (78 local, 2 international) have been approved by the Bangladesh Government and the University Grants Commission (UGC), as opposed to 34 public universities (see http://www.ugc.gov.bd/). Among the 80 private universities, 50 of them are in Dhaka. In the mid-2000s, many off-shore campuses of foreign universities started emerging in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka; 56 of them were identified by UGC as illegal private universities (see '56 Private', 2007). In 2008 there was talk about legalizing off-shore campuses (see 'Bangladesh Will Allow', 2008; 'New Ordinance', 2008); however, nothing has happened so far. The rivalry among private universities is quite intense, as they compete for tertiary level students. This rivalry seems to have prompted private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh to publish admission ads which employ distinctive discourse structures to promote their respective universities as unique or special to entice students (see Haque, 2004; Haque 2008).

Methodology

The study follows a non-experimental, exploratory, descriptive research paradigm. In doing so, the research endeavours to describe the linguistic / semiotic discourse structures in Bangladeshi educational advertisements. Data was collected over a period of three years (September 2007-August 2010) from four national daily newspapers. Furthermore, 100 personnel from 41 advertising agencies were interviewed in Dhaka (78), Chittagong (13) and Sylhet (09). The data was compiled, selected and then analyzed according to a three-dimensional discursive model (TDM) (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 1: Three-Dimensional Discursive Model (TDM)[2]

Theoretical Framework

This study intends to understand the discourse of advertising from a socio-cultural and ideological point of view. In order to do so, a three-dimensional discursive model (henceforth, TDM) was developed to analyze the date (Figure 1). This model was devised to analyze the data of this research, as other existing models do not comprehensively cater to the nature of the data under investigation. The TDM comprises three phases—investigative,

analysis, and comprehension (see Figure 1). The investigative phase consists of three stages, each with its own investigative elements. The analysis phase has three steps: discourse, ideological and societal analysis. The last phase comprises two levels of comprehension, that is, communicative and empowerment levels. This is a trans-disciplinary model, which has various stages, phases and levels, but one should keep in mind that all of these (i.e. stages, phases and levels) work simultaneously.

The first stage of TDM consists of two steps—dissection and correlation. In the first step a piece of discourse is dissected into its basic components. In this study, the ads are from private and public institutions of higher learning; more specifically, university admission ads. The ads are dissected in terms of attention-seeking devices—image, verbal text (linguistic features), layout, hook, comparative reference, and so on (see Goddard, 2001; Cook, 2001). Once the ads are dissected, the correlation among the dissected discourse elements can be explained; that is, how all these elements are connected with each other to convey the message of the ad.

Apparent and aberrant ideologies constitute the second stage of TDM. Apparent ideology deals with the set of values that are responsible for creating positive images of universities that advertisers (universities in this study) wish to project to the target audience. Aberrant ideology is based on the set of values that the advertisers do not wish to project to the audience, since such values may raise questions as to the claims made in the admission ads.

The third stage is probably the most important one because it explains the ongoing practices in society. In other words, it deals with societal practices, more specifically, 'discourse-ideological practice' and 'consumer-culture practice'. The discourse-ideological phase explains how discourse (in this case advertising discourse) is strategically employed to create the anticipated ideologies (i.e. positive images) in order to manufacture consent from the potential target audience. The consumer-culture practice is dependent on the creation of a good or perfect consumer through advertising, which Fairclough (2001) feels is based on the amalgamation of economic, technological and cultural conditions. Private universities in Bangladesh tend to be dependent on such consumer-culture practice; the evidence is everywhere to be found in university admission ads.

3.2 Sampling

The private and public university admission ads being scrutinized here cover a period of three years, that is, from September 2007 to August 2010, and were collected from four prominent national dailies. These include two Bangla (*Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Ittefaq*) and two English (*The Daily Star* and *New Age*) newspapers. *Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Ittefaq* were selected because they are among the most prominent Bangla newspapers and have the most ads and readership (see Rahman and Chapal 2009). Among English newspapers, *The Daily Star* and *New Age* were selected, as they are the preferred English national dailies for publishing ads. A sampling population of over 1000 ads was gathered, from which one fourth, that is, 250, were selected via lottery (see Kumar, 1996) for critical

analysis. It should be mentioned that the total number of university ads published during the data collection period could have exceeded 1000, because many ads were published repeatedly. Such ads were not, however considered as part of the data. It should be mentioned that the official duration of the East West University Centre for Research and Training (EWUCRT) funded research project was supposed to be from September 2007 to August 2008. Therefore, the print educational ads were initially collected, over a period of eight months (i.e. September 2007-April 2008), but subsequently when the data collection period was prolonged, the collection of ads continued for another 28 months (i.e. May 2008-August 2010). Thus, the entire data (i.e. university admission ads) was gathered over a period of three years, more specifically from September 2007 to August 2010.

Interviews were conducted with 100 personnel from 41 advertising agencies from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. Among the 41 agencies, 29 were from Dhaka, 7 from Chittagong, and 5 from Sylhet. Out of the total of 100 media personnel who were interviewed, 78 were from Dhaka, 13 from Chittagong and 09 from Sylhet agencies. Convenience sampling was used to select the agencies; that is to say, the agencies were selected based on their accessibility and the availability of their personnel. The media personnel comprised 52 copywriters, 11 art directors, 5 creative directors, 4 producers, 4 photographers, 3 media planning managers, 2 managing directors, 3 chief executive officers, 2 vice presidents, 3 general managers, 4 media researchers, 3 customer service employees, and 4 human resources executives. The interviews were short as well as elaborate, the duration depending on how much time interviewees could spare. However, between small talk, certain key questions relevant to the present study were asked.

Results and Discussion

Stage 1: Discourse analysis—dissection / correlation

If we analyze the ads studied, we can see two general emerging patterns—one from private university ads and the other from public university ones. Based on the collected data, the findings seem to suggest that public university admission ads do not publish coloured admission ads. In other words, they only publish black and white ads, with lots of text providing necessary information, apparently required by potential applicants sitting for the admission test. The language used was predominantly Bangla and was written in black with white background. The layout is very formulaic, with the name of the university or institution on the top written in large font along with the logo, and the rest of the information given below in smaller font. Some private medical colleges affiliated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University tend to use black and white pictures of their campuses. From the findings, it was apparent that public universities never publish images of their campuses.

Public university admission ads also never refer to their faculty members, libraries, cafeterias, or include anything regarding scholarships to lure students. They merely give relevant information about admission tests, with reference to:

- ■ Details regarding various units, e.g. 'K Unit', 'L Unit', 'M Unit', etc.
- ■ Where admission forms are available/sold
- ■ How much they cost
- ■ When the deadline for submission was
- ■ When the admission test would be held
- ■ When the results would be published

On the other hand, most private university ads are printed in colour. However, private university admission ads like public university ones are informative as well as communicative, so and appear to be more interesting. But a critical reading of the ads and interpretation of them in terms of the apparent and aberrant ideologies (see Stage 2 of TDM), suggest implied patterns of deception, half-truths, and commodification / commercialization of higher education. Such patterns are discussed in detail in Stage 2.

The first stage comprises dissection and correlation. Upon dissecting the data (i.e. admission ads), it was found that private and public universities used specific attention-seeking devices to attract and inform their target audience:

- ■ textual elements
- ■ visual elements
- ■ layout
- ■ hook—problem-solution format
- ■ comparative reference

Some of the attention seeking-devices appear generic (common), suggesting that they are employed more frequently that others, while others are not so generic (uncommon), as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1: Generic (common) and non-generic (uncommon) linguistic and semiotic attention-seeking features (private university admission ads)

Sl.	LINGUISTIC (AND/OR NUMERIC) FEATURES		SEMIOTIC FEATURES	
	Common (Generic) attention seeking features	Uncommon (Non-generic) attention seeking features	Common	Uncommon
1.	Scholarships: • *5% students will be awarded full free studentships* • *Chancellor scholarship* • *University president scholarships* • 100% IUB Merit Scholarship: —*GPA of 4.8 (without 4th subject) at HSC* —*Two 'A' grades in minimum 2A'level*	ISO 9001: 2000 certification: • *First and Only ISO 9001: 2000 Certified University in Bangladesh*	Colour combination	Different coloured internal baubles & shapes

2.	**Tuition waiver/discount:**
	• *Tuition Fees Waiver: 10%-100% on HSC GPA*
	• *One of the two siblings 50% tuition fee waiver*
	• *Special waiver for brothers/sisters, husband/wife (25%)*
	• *Full tuition fee waiver for top ten students in admission test*
	• *10% to 100% tuition waiver for meritorious students*
	• *10% special tuition waiver for female students*
	• *10%-100% tuition waiver based on semester result*
	• **Tuition Fee Discount:**
	  —100% tuition fee discount for top 3 students in IUB Admission Test
	  —30% tuition fee discount for students having GPA 5.0 in both SSC &
	  HSC (with 4th subject)
	  —50% financial discount for siblings
		Rating/ranking:
		• *Rated as the best private university in Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum*
		• *Graded as one of the top universities in Bangladesh by Govt.*
		• *Ranked No. 1 Private University in Bangladesh by "Webometrics"-Spain*
			Pictures/images of campus(es), convocation, students, potential business executives, etc.	Pictures/images of students, staff, equipment, etc.

3.	List of graduate and/or undergraduate programmes	Questions	Layout	

4.	Sometimes programmes are highlighted in different combinations:
	• *All undergraduate level programmes*
	• *All graduate level programmes*
	
	Sometimes only a particular programme is highlighted, for instance:
	• *MA in ELT*
	• *MA in TESOL*
		Questions-answer or problem-solution format:
		• *Want world class education?*
		  Want excellent environment?
		  Want to be taught by renowned Professors?
		  UIU-the right answer to all your questions.
		• *Want to have a degree in Business Economics just on time for a very modest price?*
			Different fonts & typefaces	Size of the ad—full page (Stamford)

5.	University Grants Commission (UGC) and/or Government approval: • *UGC & Government Approved* • *Govt. & UGC Approved* • *Gov. & UGC approved since 2003* • *Government Approved*	Tag lines: • *We bring out the best in you* • *Discover a good degree accepted all over the world…* • *Education for tomorrow's world* • *Future will be better than the past*	Explicit logo(s)	Implicit logo(s)

6.	Accreditation with foreign universities:
	 • *Collaboration with:*
	  —*Winona State University, MN & University of Texas,* **USA**
	  —*TAFE, South Western Sydney Institute,* **Australia**
	  —*AIT & SIAM University, Bangkok,* **Thailand**
	  —*JNU Delhi & IIIT Allahabad,* **India**
	 • *Academic collaboration maintained with many reputable foreign universities*
		Quality education:
		 • *Quality Education Guaranteed at Affordable Cost*
		 • *Quality Education*
		 • *Ensured Career*
		 • *Quality education at affordable cost*
		 • *Everyone promises quality…*
		 Who keeps it truly?
		 Visit UIU *before you take a decision…*
		 (Paralinguistic features to appeal to our emotion)
				Guarantee seals for (quality education, ensured career)

7.	Foreign trained faculty members / academics	Tuition fees of graduate & undergraduate programmes		
8.	Guest lecturer	Cafes: • *Lake-view cafe*		
9.	Prominent public university academics/professors	Hostel facilities: • *HOSTEL FACILITIES FOR BOTH MALE FEMALE STUDENTS*		
10.	Narrative/descriptive passage: *Explore a job-oriented degree in English.* *Designed in North American model, this degree boosts you career in a number of ways. With this degree you can become a business executive, liaison officer, banker, teacher, editor, interpreter and many more…....*	Separate campus: • *SEPARATE & SECURE FEMALE CAMPUS*		

11.	Digitized libraries and labs: • *Has the first fully automated and online digitized online library in Bangladesh with over33,000 books, 5700 bound volumes of journals and magazines, 1269 CD-ROM, DVD and good number of other information resources* • *Computer labs for each school/Digital Electronic*	Sense of urgency: • *LIMITED SEATS – HURRY UP!*		
12.	Credit transfer: • Worldwide credit transfer—accepting up to 42 credit transfer for Diploma Engineers • Credits completed at NSU are transferable to reputable foreign universities	Numerous campuses: • Kakrail Campus, Gulshan Campus, Motijheel Campus, Chittagong Campus, Rajshahi Campus		

Textual elements are based on not merely, what is said, but more importantly the 'font', 'font size' and the 'style' of the written text. Goddard (2001) does not categorize the three elements, but uses the general term 'typographical' to explain the different type faces in written texts, which she refers to as 'verbal text'. The reason why the 'font', 'font size' and the 'style' are important is that these factors prioritise textual information. Hence, these textual elements determine the order in which a reader or potential consumer will read/interpret an advertisement.
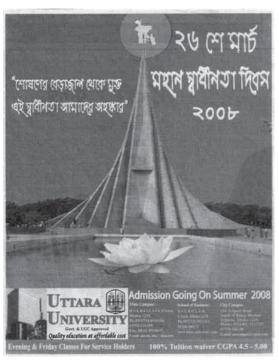

Ad 70

Figure 2: Prominence of textual elements— 'font', 'font size' and 'style'

All ads tend to use textual elements to a greater or lesser extent to draw the attention of the potential target audience. Figure 2 (Ad 70) is a good example, in which the three textual elements ('font', 'font size' and 'style') can be distinguished. This advertisement uses six different types of font—Times New Roman, Arial, Arial Black, Ariel Narrow, Albertus Extra Bold, Monotype Corsiva. These fonts have been used in different sizes; in this particular ad (Ad 70) the font sizes range from approximately 20-8. The text has been written in different styles—for instance 'Normal + Monotype Corsiva, 20 pt, Bold, Orange'; 'Normal + Arial Black, 20 pt, Bold, White'; 'Normal + Arial Narrow'; 'Normal + Albertus Extra Bold, 14 pt, White'; 'Normal + 20 pt, Bold, White'; 'Normal + Ariel Narrow'; 'Normal + Arial, 14 pt'; 'Normal + Arial, 8 pt'; 'Normal + Arial, 14 pt, Italic,' and so on. Apart from various combinations of the three elements ('font', 'font size' and 'style'), the text can adopt various cases—like Sentence case, lower case, UPPER CASE, Title Case. Furthermore, the texts may be written in bullet points, and complete sentences, and with or without appropriate punctuations (Figure 2).

In the early stage of modern print advertising, there was more emphasis on text and less on visuals. However, in the last couple of decades with advancement of media technology, the fast pace of life and increased competition, visuals have become a vital component of commercial advertising. This may be because good, unexpected, shocking visuals, and sometimes images unrelated to the dominant themes of ads can almost instantaneously draw the attention of the target audience. The strategy of using visuals or images is quite common in private university admission ads in Bangladesh, although public university ads never use them.

Ad 59

Figure 3: Image that is not directly related to education

In Figure 3 (Ad 59), the image of the Jatio Smriti Shoudho (National Martyrs' Memorial) symbolizes the courage and the sacrifices that Bangladeshis made in the 1971 Liberation War, in order to break free from Pakistan. 26ᵗʰ March 1971 is considered the official Independence Day of Bangladesh. Since Ad 59 (Figure 3) was published in the month of March, the administration of Uttara University decided to use the motif of nationalism to highlight its national responsibilities, implying that such awareness and concern for the country is altogether commendable. However, a sceptic is bound to ask how is Jatio Smriti Shoudho (National Martyrs' Memorial), Independence Day of Bangladesh or the theme of nationalism related to education, more specifically tertiary education? If the university had an image of Buddhijibi Smriti Shoudho (Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial) commemorating the genocide of intellectuals of Bangladesh in 1971, such an image could have been indirectly related to education and the sacrifice that was made by our intellectuals. The big colourful image of Jatio Smriti Shoudho, which takes up more than three-quarters of the advertisement, is no doubt designed to draw the attention of the audience surreptitiously.

Ad 73

Figure 4: Image connoting knowledge

The image in Figure 4 (Ad 73) is indirectly related to education and directly to knowledge. Socrates of course was a Greek philosopher and the embodiment of knowledge. But one should keep in mind that not eve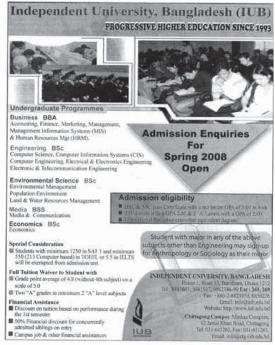ryone in our country can recognize Socrates merely from the image, and without a written discourse/text. Nevertheless, like Figure 3 (Ad 59), the big black and white sketch of Socrates' bust has been designed cleverly to attract the attention of any audience.

Private university admission ads in Bangladesh thus primarily employ a combination of images and texts to draw the attention of the target audience. Besides textual and visual elements, layout is another important attention-seeking device that is used especially in commercial creative advertisements to draw the attention of the audience. However, in public university admission ads, very formal and symmetrical layout is used. Private university admission ads in general are formal and symmetrical, but occasionally they use asymmetrical layout in order to be noticed. For instance Figure 5 (Ad 46) uses seven different shapes with various colours containing different information.

Ad 46

Figure 5: Layout containing seven different shapes with various colours containing different information

The different shapes take up more than three-quarters of the advertisement. Due to their unique shapes and internal colours, the ad catches the eye of the audience. Figure 6 (Ad 106) shows two rectangles overlapping each other. The bigger rectangle contains information regarding the university, its tuition fee waiver criteria, and admission date, while the smaller rectangle, which overlaps the bigger one, provides information regarding the graduate and undergraduate programmes of Eastern University.

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Ad 106

Figure 6: Layout—Admission ad using overlapping rectangles

Even though Ad 106 (Figure 6) is a simple black and white advertisement, the unusual shape (i.e. the overlapping of the two rectangles) helps to make it stand out and attract the attention of readers.

The 'hook' uses a problem solution-format to advertise a product, service, organization or institution. Figure 7 (Ad 28) raises the issue of quality education, which a number of

Ad 28

Figure 7: Implicit hook—Admission ad employing an indirect problem-solution format

private universities have been accused of not dispensing or maintaining. Ad 28 (Figure 7) makes a statement 'Everyone promises quality…" and then asks the question "Who keeps it truly?". By asking this question, the reader is presented with a problem, to which the answer is obvious. In other words, the university is raising the issue of quality of education ('Everyone promises quality…') by framing a question ("Who keeps it truly?"), and presents itself as the indirect answer or solution with the words "Visit UIU before you take a decision …" (Figure 7). The hook or problem-solution format is even more obvious in the admission advertisement published by the same university a couple of years back, which can be seen in

Figure 8: Explicit hook—Admission ad employing a problem-solution format

Figure 8. This is an example of an explicit problem-solution format because the answer has been clearly suggested by the ad. The advertisers or the concerned university asks the reader(s) a series of questions and then gives the one answer to them by mentioning its own name:

> *Want a world class education?*
> *Want excellent environment?*
> *Want to be taught by renowned professors?*
> *UIU – the right answer to all questions.*

This advertisement tries to create a sense of urgency by using a seal stamped onto the ad that says 'LIMITED SEATS – HURRY UP'. By using a hook, the advertisers not only arouse the curiosity of the readers, but also indirectly project the name of the university into the minds of readers.

Comparative reference uses linguistic attention-seeking devices to compare a product or service with other products and services, but without making any direct or specific comparisons. For instance, words like 'brighter', 'cheaper', 'brighter', and so on, may be used to compare a particular product or service being compared with the rest of the products/services in the market (see Goddard, 2001). In Ad 69 (Figure 9), such comparative reference is implied. The responses to the question "*Why study ELT in East West?*" in Ad 69 (Figure 9) invite implicit comparison with other ELT programmes in the market. In other words, the question prompts a comparison between EWU and other universities, and justifies the reasons for studying the "MA in ELT" programme in this university over other ones.

Ad 69

Figure 9: Comparative reference—Admission ad using implied comparative reference as attention-seeking device

Stage 2: Ideological analysis—apparent ideology/aberrant ideology

Intellectuals have defined ideology in different ways. It is usually seen as a set of beliefs believed or adopted by a group of people, organization/institution, community, country, and so on, to express or project a certain viewpoint/image (see Haque and Khan, 2004). This part of the analysis looks at the apparent image that are projected and the aberrant image that are not projected by universities. Each university wants to project a positive image in order to attract the target audience; it does so through various types of media discourse, be it the electronic media (television & radio), the new media (Internet—web-based discourse) or the print media (newspapers, magazines & brochures—advertising discourse of admission ads). This positive image in the context of this study is referred to as 'apparent image'. The image that a university may not want to project, as it could be misread or misunderstood, is referred to as 'aberrant image'.

Based on the data, it seems that some of the ways that private universities in Bangladesh try to create a positive image are by offering scholarships and tuition waivers/discounts. Most universities of course suggest that they offer quality education. This is done through a formula that Haque (2004) has pointed out in his earlier investigation of private university web pages:

International atmosphere + state-of-the-art-facilities = quality education

A critical analysis of the admission ad data indicates widespread use of this formula. An international atmosphere is explicitly and implicitly implied in a number of ways. Sometimes it is explicitly stated by naming accreditation with foreign universities, as can be seen from some of the following examples:

- Membership of International Accreditation Bodies—AACSB International; The Association of Advanced Collegiate of Schools of Business; The Association of Collegiate Schools and Programs, Kansas, USA (Ad 16, Ad 24)

- Collaboration with: Winona State University, MN & University of Texas, Dallas, **USA**; TAFE, South Western Sydney Institute, Australia; AIT & SIAM University, Bangkok, Thailand; JUN Delhi & IIIT Allahabad, India. (Ad 20, Ad 36; Ad 129)

- Academic collaboration maintained with many reputable foreign universities (Ad 41)

- Academic Collaboration: The University of Michigan-Flint, USA; The American University in London; Bangkok University; Kingston College, Canada; College of Hotel & Tourism Management, Cyprus (Ad 58)

- Overseas credit transfer facilities to University of Bedfordshire, University of Worcester (Ad 131)

International atmosphere is implicitly stated through the names of universities, which are predominantly in English, without any Bangla equivalents. When the data was collected, in total there were 56 private universities in Bangladesh, all approved by the Government and University Grants Commission. In the collected data, the admission ads of all private universities are not present. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that most have English names, as can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2: Private universities with English names

Sl.	Private Universities with English Names
1	Prime University
2	Eastern University
3	Northern University, Bangladesh
4	Primeasia University
5	Victoria University of Bangladesh
6	The University of Asia Pacific
7	American International University, Bangladesh
8	North South University
9	Independent University Bangladesh
10	Stamford University
11	International University of Business, Agriculture & Technology (IUBAT)

12	World University of Bangladesh
13	University of Information Technology & Science (UITS)
14	ASA University of Bangladesh (ASAUB)
15	University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
16	Presidency University
17	The People's University of Bangladesh
18	United International University
19	East Delta University
20	Leading University
21	BRAC University
22	Bangladesh University of Business & Technology (BUBT)
23	Daffodil International University
24	Uttara University
25	Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology
26	Primer University
27	International Islamic University Chittagong
28	University of Science & Technology Chittagong (USTC)
29	Manarat International University (MIU)
30	Bangladesh University
31	The Millennium University
32	City University
33	Green University
34	State University of Bangladesh
35	Southeast University
36	Uttara University
37	East West University
38	Darul Ihsan University
39	Asian University of Bangladesh
40	Royal University of Bangladesh
41	University of South Asia
42	Sylhet International University
43	Dhaka International University
44	Eastern Medical College
45	East West Medical College
46	Central Medical College, Comilla
47	Central Women's University

Furthermore, some universities try to project an international atmosphere by advertising their accreditation with foreign universities, or by highlighting foreign-trained faculty members / academics, prominent public university academics/professors, rating/ranking, ISO 9001: 2000 certification, state-of-the-are-facilities, and so on.

Stage 3: Societal analysis–discourse-ideological practice/consumer-oriented practice

The third stage, that is, societal analysis, comprising the discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices of the three-dimensional model (TDM) is more complicated than the previous two stages. This stage combines the findings of the first two stages to explain how in a consumer-oriented society one is made to be the perfect consumer, and considered gullible enough to be attracted by admission ads of private universities, which can be based on half-truths.

In Bangladesh, even though most people are poor and the gap between the rich and poor is wide (see Khan *et al.*, 2011), the affluent few are predominantly the target audience of private universities. However, various types of scholarships, tuition waiver, and/or discounts are offered as enticements, although advertised to suggest the altruism of the university (see Table 1):

<u>Scholarships:</u>
- *5% students will be awarded full free studentship*
- *Chancellor scholarship*
- *University president scholarship*
- *100% IUB Merit Scholarship:*
  —GPA of 4.8 (without 4th subject) at HSC
  —Two 'A' grades in minimum 2A'level

<u>Tuition waiver/discount:</u>
- *Tuition Fees Waiver: 10%-100% on HSC GPA*
- *One of the two siblings 50% tuition fee waiver*
- *Special waiver for brothers/sisters, husband/wife (25%)*
- *Full tuition fee waiver for top ten students in admission test*
- *10% to 100% tuition waiver for meritorious students*
- *10% special tuition waiver for female students*
- *10%-100% tuition waiver based on semester result*
- *Tuition Fee Discount:*
  —100% tuition fee discount for top 3 students in IUB Admission Test
  —30% tuition fee discount for students having GPA 5.0 in both SSC & HSC (with 4th subject)
  —50% financial discount for siblings

While the above looks good, what needs to be noticed too is that all the scholarships, tuition waiver, and/or discounts that are being offered by the private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh are conditional. These conditions are not mentioned in the admission ads, which give a partial view to parents or guardians who finance their

children's/ward's education. In general, the scholarships and tuition waivers are never for the entire duration of studentship. In many instances, students who cannot afford to study in private universities enter such institutions as they have been offered scholarships based on their secondary and higher secondary results, admission test results or freedom fighter quotas. However, after a couple of semesters, they loose such scholarships because they are unable to maintain a particular CGPA, which is a precondition of such scholarships. What is noteworthy is that such conditions were never mentioned to them before admission.

In a consumer-oriented society, almost everything seems to be packaged and can be purchased with money. Before a transaction is made, universities endeavour to build a relationship between themselves and their clients, and try to maintain this connection through customer satisfaction, which in due course ensures continuous flow of income. In other words, a symbiotic relationship needs to be established and sustained over a prolonged period. Private universities often establish this relationship through admission ads, where they use advertising discourse to try to project a positive image about themselves by means of various strategies. At the same time, they try to assure readers that they offer quality education to students through an application of the following formula:

International atmosphere + state-of-the-art-facilities = quality education

Using these strategies, admission ads try to address some of the fears and concerns of their potential clients regarding private higher education in Bangladesh.

Sometimes parents and guardians have concerns regarding the legitimacy of particular institutions. To quash their fears, most private universities stress in their admission ads that they have approval from the Government and University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh. This is done to indicate that they are not one of the 56 illegal universities (see, '56 Private', 2007), which was published in national dailies by UGC. In order to address the concern that private universities do not have enough qualified teachers and operate with part-time public university teachers, specific statistics is provided by some (private) universities in their ads regarding the following:

- full-time and adjunct teachers
- Ph.D. holders
- Professors, and sometimes Associate and Assistant Professors
- countries from where higher degrees were obtained, with specific mention of North America, UK, and Australia

The competition for ranking has become a global phenomenon. Since there is no official ranking provided by the Government of Bangladesh or UGC, certain universities try to come up with their own ranking to magnify this image. Few tend to use texts like 'First private university in Bangladesh', 'The First Private University in Bangladesh established in 1989 by Darul Ihasan Trust'. In such a situation when two private universities both claim to be the first private university in Bangladesh, one might wonder as to which one has the right to claim such an honour, and which one is lying. Few universities might employ 'research'

as a selling point, as in the ad 'Leading 14 years in teaching and research', which claims top honours for research ('... is ranked the top private university in Bangladesh'). Some will highlight their ranking position according to Webometrics, a Spanish global university ranking website. However, the criteria that Webometrics employs to rank the universities has caused concern to the discerning since it tends to rank universities based on the number of 'web pages', which though important, may overlook other important criteria in determining the quality of education that more widely recognised ranking organizations employ. This concern is expressed by Obasi (2008) regarding the confusing ranking criteria of Webometrics:

> Although 'web presence' of universities is important in today's globalized world driven by the forces of information and communication technology (ICT), it is not however the most critical measure of institutional success in benchmarking exercises. However, one undeniable fact that emerged from the publication of the Webometrics ranking was that it generated a significant level of confusion among many people, some of whom mixed its league table with those of the existing prominent world ranking bodies namely, *The Times Higher Education Supplement* of London, and the Institute of Higher Education of the *Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU)* of China. It therefore became clear that many academics do not understand the different ranking systems that now dot the international higher education landscape.

The problem with most ranking systems is that some universities will come up with their own ranking system/format that has no legitimacy, like 'Rated as the best private university in Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum'. In the Bangladeshi context, those who are socially conscious and are aware of quality education will know that the university which claims that it is the best according to 'Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum' is far from being one of the best in Bangladesh. However, not everyone has this knowledge. Most people in our country will be influenced by discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices based on the concept 'seeing is believing'. When they see that a university has been ranked the best by some body or forum, they will not investigate or assess the legitimacy of that ranking body or forum. For these people, 'seeing is believing'.

Universities which tend to use manipulative discourse do so because in Bangladesh there is no specific 'Advertising Code of Ethics', a document for protecting consumers/common people from malicious, manipulative, and discriminatory advertisements. This seems to support the responses of the majority of the 100 personnel from the 41 advertising agencies. A few have mentioned that Bangladesh Television (BTV) has an advertising policy, but not one advertising agency could produce the hardcopy of such a policy. If a policy is not made available to advertising agencies, how will they abide by the rules of such a policy when making an advertisement? Based on the interviews, the author can state that the Bangladesh print media has no 'general' or 'specific' 'Advertising Code of Ethics'. As a result, advertisers have the liberty to print whatever manipulative discourse they choose. Furthermore, the interviews reveal that the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB)

is almost non-functional, and seems to have very little leverage or power in challenging advertisers and protecting the rights of consumers.

Advertisers are quite aware of local and global consumer practices. They are also aware of the lack or improper implementation of policies needed to protect the ordinary consumer. Based on the evidence from the analysis of university admission ads and the responses of interviewees, one can conclude that advertisers are well versed in consumer interests and societal practices, especially in the Bangladeshi context. With this knowledge, they seem to be taking advantage of the ignorance of consumers, particularly people who are not alert or are uninformed of certain social practices. Due to the lack of proper policies of advertising in Bangladesh, they also seem to be taking advantage of the negligence of the lawmakers as well as UGC.

Addressing the Critical Implications

Advertising is a complex phenomenon. In general, advertisements are not so easy to decipher. Advertising has many layers as is exemplified by Barthes (1977) in "Rhetoric of the Image". Advertisers tend to use these layers to cater to their target audience, which can vary from community to community, and country to country.

The finding of this study suggest that advertisers use a number of linguistic and visual attention-seeking devices in different combinations to form various discourse structures. These structures in turn help advertisers to attain their communicative goals. In general, the linguistic and semiotic discourse structure through which a communicative goal may be attained can be represented by the following formula: *Verbal (attention seeking device) + textual (attention seeking device) + layout + hook + comparative reference = Communicative goal.* Very few of the collected admission ads employ the entire combination. Most (admission) ads use visual and textual attention-seeking devices to attain their communicative goals. Various attention-seeking devices are used to not only attract the attention of the potential target audience, but also to convince and influence them into taking admission into private universities. However, in order to convince and influence the target audience, advertisers sometimes tend to resort to particular linguistic and semiotic discourse structures that may at one level help to attain the communicative goal by providing necessary information, but upon critical analysis, at another level may be designed to attain communicative goal through manipulative means. The findings from the interviews and the discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices, along with the notion of 'seeing is believing', all seem to support the manipulative theory. The socio-ethical implications in the choice of linguistic and semiotic discourse structures may be based on a number of factors: lack of awareness of the manipulative consumer-culture practices of advertisers; lack of general and/or specific 'Advertising Code of Ethics; lack of implementation of policies on behalf of the Governmental bodies as well as the UGC; and lack of initiatives taken by the very weak Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) to protect the rights of the common consumer. It is through research of the kind undertaken here that scholars can contribute in amassing a volume of critical and analytical communicative research-data that could serve the interest of the research community.

The use of attention-seeking devices such as textual elements, visual elements, layout, hook/problem-solution format and comparative reference in admission ads make consumers interested in a particular university, and are calculated and strategic measures employed by universities/advertisers to not only ensure that effective communication is taking place, but more importantly to also make certain that the advertisers' intended message is being conveyed to the target audience. However analysts or researchers can raise questions as to whether moral ethics is being breached, and whether claims made by private universities in admission ads are based on half-truths and exaggeration. In order to satisfy and accommodate the needs of consumers, private universities in general tend to adopt questionable discourse structures, which manipulate consumers into believing what may not be accurate or authentic.

Conclusion

The discourse of educational advertising is a complex phenomenon. In Bangladesh, it seems that private universities use specific discourse structures in their admission ads, comprising linguistic and semiotic elements in order to achieve communicative goals, which at times tend to breach the ethical/unethical divide and adopt the concept of 'selling' quality education. The mechanics of such a concept dwell on the McDonaldization of society (see Ritzer, 2007) and contexts where termologies such as 'Commoditization' or 'McDonaldization' of education are unavoidable (Daniel, 2002). Higher education is a 300 billion dollar industry (see Dennis, 2007), which keeps growing glocally, particularly in third world countries (see Cheung, 2003) and everyone wants a piece of that pie. Even though it is difficult to deny that education is a commodity, as is quite apparent in private university admission advertisements, should not society try to resist the advances of a commodified consumer-culture that screams out 'higher education is no longer a right but a product'?

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Endnotes

[2] This model has been developed by the author to analyze the data of this study, but is loosely based on Faircluogh's (1995) three-dimensional framework.

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The Effect of Accent(s) and Pronunciations(s) of English on Bangladeshi English Language Learners' Listening Skill Acquisition Process

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Abstract

Listening, the most vital skill in language acquisition, is often regarded also as the most difficult skill to attain by second language learners. This study investigates Bangladeshi English language learners' problems in acquiring listening skills in connection to pronunciation(s) & accent(s) of English and its possible connection to the motivation of learners. To conduct the study, a number of 255 first year undergraduate students from twenty universities in Bangladesh were selected as subjects. The findings of the study suggest that native accent(s) and pronunciation(s) of English play a critical role in listening skills acquisition process and that motivation to learn listening skills among English language learners in Bangladesh is affected by native pronunciation(s) and accent(s) of English.

Introduction:

Listening is a very crucial skill in the process of second language acquisition (SLA) (Dunkel, 1991; Rost, 2001; Vandergrift, 2007). However, second language learners are very often found to hurdle with this skill which becomes some sort of 'stressor' to them (Noro, 2006). Research in second language studies suggests that comprehensible input is critical for language acquisition as well as comprehensible output (Swain, 1995). In fact, a large part of the acquisition of a second language is caused by a learner's ability to successfully communicate and in this process listening plays a vital role. In this connection Rost (2001) observes: "a key difference between more successful and less successful acquirers relates in large part to their ability to use listening as a means of acquisition" (p. 94). This comment clearly indicates the importance of listening skills in the acquisition of a second language.

However, despite knowing that the skill of successful listening is indispensable in learning a second language, second language learners consider it as the most difficult skill to learn (Hasan, 2000; Graham, 2003). As a practitioner of English in a second language setting in Bangladesh, I have found first year undergraduate students doing foundation courses hurdling over practice texts for listening as they find "native" accent(s) and pronunciation(s) of English alien and alienating. My students are from BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration), CSE (Computer Science and Engineering) or EEE (Electrical and Electronic Engineering), or are English department first year undergraduates studying in a private university. According to these students, this situation sometimes demotivates them from learning English as a second language. However, I have also noted that when teachers speak with them in English, they do not find it that difficult to understand them. When I interviewed some students, they mentioned that since Bangladeshi English language teachers have a non-native pronunciation and accent, they find it easier to comprehend them. Taking this issue into consideration, this study attempted to find out whether "native" pronunciation(s) and/or accent(s) really act as negative factor(s) resulting in demotivation in second language learners to learn a language. If so, to what extent does it affect the second language learning process?

Literature Review:

Listening is the most crucial skill in the process of second language learning since the learners are basically unfamiliar with the pronunciation and accents of a non-native language. Keeping the fact into consideration, diversified researches done in the past few decades in the field of second language acquisition have focused on the challenges of listening instruction and the factors that influence or affect listening comprehension of second/foreign language learners. Recent research has found out that the development of listening comprehension depends on various factors such as metacognitive knowledge, lexical knowledge and prosodaic cues, stress and intonation, and affective factors like anxiety and motivation (Kurita, 2012). For the purpose of the present study, I would like to discuss some of the major and relevant findings on the issue of pedagogical and affective studies.

Overview of Research:

One of the most notable issues in second language listening research is pedagogy. There have been various research projects carried out on varied aspects of teaching and learning listening skills. For example, a study relevant to the current one has been done on Chinese ESL learners (studying in Singapore) by C.C.M. Goh. In her 1998 study, she includes the five most important factors that affect a learner's listening comprehension. These include: vocabulary, prior knowledge, speech rate, type of input, and speaker's accent. Among these factors, a speaker's accent is most relevant. It was found in Goh's study that 68% of those interviewed reported that the speaker's accent affected their listening comprehension. They mentioned that as learners they had to struggle whenever they found any accent which was not familiar to them and which they thought was not "standard" e.g. accents apart from British or American. This problem occurred because the subjects of Goh's study were much exposed to standard British or American English.

In another study on marine learners of English by Hooshang, Salehzadeh & Saed presented in the International Maritime English Conference (2011), researchers found that a factor affecting the perception of spoken language was unfamiliarity with the pronunciation of words because of recognition problems which researchers call "Pronunciational Problems". It was mentioned in the study that the third highly reported difficulty was students mishearing and non-recognition of words in connected speech streams. According to these researchers, this problem could be due to two reasons. First, students may not know the pronunciation of some words or perhaps they know a wrong pronunciation. Secondly, the phenomena of elision and assimilation heightens the difficulty of recognition as locating word boundaries become quite challenging for non-native listeners. In the study the researchers expressed their view that less experienced listeners need to practice the cadence of the target language to improve their ability in word segmentation.

Kurita (2012) notes that Buck (2001) found numerous difficulties encountered in listening tasks, such as unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rates, and unfamiliar accents (Chang & Read,2008). Another study by Elkhafaifi (2005) concluded that since the listening process is easily disrupted by anxiety and listening tasks themselves may cause listening anxiety, reducing student anxiety and providing a less stressful classroom environment might help students improve both the listening comprehension proficiency and overall course performance.

Noro's (2006) study on Japanese students reveals that the main sources of listening difficulties are rate of speech, vocabulary and pronunciation. According to Noro, affective reactions in the face of listening difficulties are irritation, lack of concentration, aversion, sense of resignation and loss of self-confidence. He concludes that second language learners must recognize that the listening anxiety comes from listening difficulty in speech recognition and that they should use appropriate strategies to cope with the problem.

Some other recent researches have found that there might be a positive relationship between listening tasks and listening anxiety. In a study, Chang and Read (2008) found that different types of listening support affect learners' performance in different ways and a metcognitive approach is effective in reducing listening anxiety.

Studies on Affective Factors:

However, as listening is a skill which is reciprocal in nature, requiring both 'conscious attention and involvement' (Rost, 2001), the relationship between acquiring this skill and motivation is deep-rooted in connection to the second language learning process. Various researchers have seen and investigated this particular phenomenon. It has been suggested by many of them that listening skills, motivation and successful language learning are essentially interconnected in increasing comprehensible input (Kurita, 2012).

Vandergrift (2005) has examined the relationship among motivation, metacognition, and proficiency in listening comprehension in a study which shows some

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positive connections among these factors. Certainly, there is some evidence to indicate that there is a positive relationship between motivation, use of metacognitive strategies and listening success. (Vandergrift, 2005)

A recent study by Kemp (2010) concerning motivating autonomous learning clearly demonstrates how keeping a listening log can motivate learners to engage with and reflect on their experiences. According to Kemp, by making learners listen according to their choice we can motivate them to listen with more metacognitive strategies to help them continue learning. He also points out that keeping a listening log allows learners to think about their motivation, learning process, metacognitive awareness and involvement in learning.

The literature review thus presents a basis for the present study since it also deals with the acquisition process of listening skills and its possible connection to motivation and native accent(s) and pronunciation(s).

In fact, the present study is an attempt to investigate whether native accents(s) and pronunciation(s) play a role in the acquisition process of listening skills of English language learners of Bangladesh. More specifically, it strives to find out whether there is a connection between native accent(s) and pronunciation(s) of English and the motivation to learn listening skills among English language learners.

Research Question:

The research question of the current study was:

Is there a relationship between a learner's motivation to learn listening in English with native accents and pronunciation of the language?

Research Design:

To conduct the study, a number of 255 first year undergraduate students across faculties from 20 Bangladeshi universities (7 Public and 13 private) were chosen as subjects. Those interviewed were in their first year and were students majoring in subjects such as BBA, English, Law, Journalism, Political Science, CSE and EEE. The rationale behind choosing these students as subjects was that since they were in the first year of their studies, they were attending foundation courses of English involving language skills in their respective universities. Not surprisingly, learning listening skills was also a part of these foundation courses.

The method used for the presents study was quantitative. A questionnaire with 10 items was sent to the subjects (255 students) where they could either agree or disagree or remain undecided. A certain rank was assigned to each option, e.g. Agree (5 marks), Disagree (5 marks), and Undecided (0).

Respondents	Survey Questionnaires	Document Study
1st year undergraduate students of 20 universities from the faculties of Humanities Business Studies Engineering Journalism Film and Media	255	✓

Target population:

The target population was first year undergraduate students of public and private universities in Bangladesh who attended or were attending compulsory English foundation courses on listening skills.

Sampling procedure:

A breakdown of how various representative samples of the target population were selected for the current study is given below:

Respondents		Instrument Survey Questionnaire	Number
Public universities (7)	University of Dhaka:		20
	Jahangirnagar University		20
	Chittagong University		15
	Jagannath University		15
	Shahjalal University (Sylhet)		15
	Rajshahi University		10
	Comilla University		10
Private Universities (13)	BRAC University		10
	East West University		10
	North South University		10
	University of Liberal Arts		10
	Stamford University		10
	Eastern University		10
	University of Asia Pacific		10
	State University		10
	University of Development Alternative (UODA)		10
	IUBAT		10
	BUBT		10
	Daffodil University		10
	South East University		10
Total			255

Research Findings:

The study was a quantitative one where the questionnaire was analysed using pen and paper. It was found from the responses given to the questionnaire that the subjects of the study are exposed to native speakers through various media like TV programs, internet or the tape scripts provided as listening practice books like the ones in the Headway series.

Table 1: Analysis of the survey questionnaire.

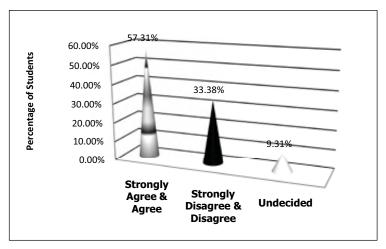| Item no	Description of the item	Responses of the subjects		
		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Native pronunciation and accent creates uncomfortable feeling in ESL (English as a Second Language) learners.	57.31%	33.38%	9.31%
2	ESL Learners feel anxious while listening to native speakers	51.69%	45.18%	2.13%
3	ESL learners have to struggle to understand each word while listening to any English native speakers due to their native pronunciation.	61%	37.84%	0.92%
4	Sometimes learners feel stressed when they don't understand English spoken by native speakers.	65.23%	34.76%	0%
5	ESL learners find native accents of English very difficult to understand.	56.92%	34.46%	8.61%
6	Sometimes learners feel helpless when they don't understand localized pronunciations and accents of English of its native speakers.	59.08%	40.92%	0%
7	Learners feel demotivated to learn listening skills in English properly (by practicing) due to its pronunciation/ the way it is spoken by native speakers.	83.58%	13.86%	2.56%
8	When learners listen to any text in English by non-native English speakers, they find it easier to understand.	89.02%	10.98%	0%
9	Learners feel that texts selected for learning listening comprehension should be texts spoken by non-native speakers of English, which according to them are easier to understand.	71.07%	26.47%	2.46%
10	Learners do not feel demotivated to learn listening comprehension in English if the text for practice is by non-native speakers.	82.15%	6.27%	1.58%

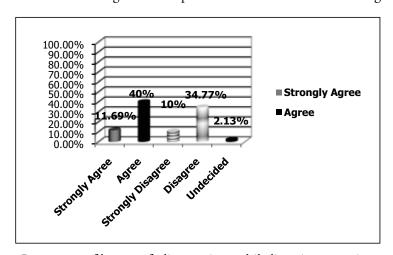Chart 1: Listening to native speakers arise uncomfortable feeling

Chart 2: Percentage of learners feeling anxious while listening to native speakers.
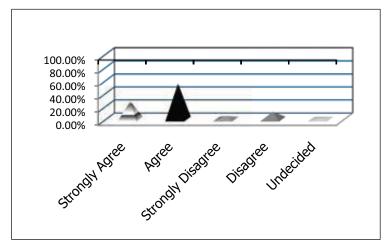

Chart 3: Attitude of students on the effect of native pronunciation and accents on demotivating them towards learning listening skills as ESL learners.
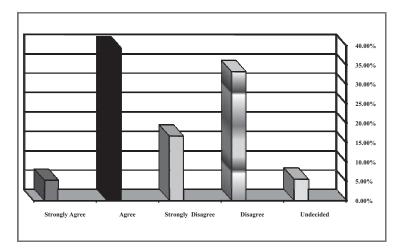
Chart 4: English spoken by non-native speakers do not demotivate learners.

The findings suggest that native pronunciation and accents of English cause anxiety in learners, resulting in de-motivation in learners in some cases. Clearly, the analysis of the survey results on the basis of the questionnaire (Table 1) and the charts show that most students have discomfort, anxiousness, difficulty and a sense of helplessness while listening to native speakers of English (Chart 1). It was suggested by the subjects of the study in the questionnaire that this is due to their lack of exposure to real-life interactions with non-native speakers. As a result, most of the students interviewed (83.58%) mentioned that they feel demotivated to learn listening comprehension and thus fail to acquire this important aspect of second language learning. Hence, the subjects (71.07%) of this study felt that while practicing listening to texts to learn listening comprehension, the texts selected for them should be by non-native speakers (Chart 4). Thus, it was agreed upon by the subjects (82.15%) that they would not be demotivated to learn listening skill since according to them (89.02%), the texts spoken by non-native speakers are easier to understand.

Suggestions and Conclusion:

Taking the results of the study into consideration, I would like to suggest that the level of listening comprehension of the students actually depends on the level of exposure to native speakers. In other words, to understand a language from its native speakers' mouth is quite difficult for anyone who has never/ or has had little exposure to native speakers in real- life situations. As a result, in the classes when teachers use a listening practice /exercise tape scripts where the book comes from a native background and the tape scripts have recorded texts/conversations by native speakers, students feel that they are listening to an "alien" language coming from the mouths of aliens.

Consequently, the author would like to suggest that teachers in ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts can select listening texts that are spoken by non-native speakers as teaching materials so that students can develop their listening skills and do not get demotivated. Perhaps when students have developed their listening skills to a certain level,

teachers can select texts spoken by native speakers as teaching materials. Only when they follow such a course will students not feel uncomfortable, anxious and demotivated at the initial stage of the learning process of acquiring listening skills.

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Court vs. Courtship in Jane Austen's *Emma*

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Abstract

The paper examines the royal dedication of Jane Austen's *Emma* as a critical engagement with the regency crisis. Austen decided to comply with a royal request to dedicate *Emma* to the Prince Regent and inserted it almost as a last-minute adjustment, even though she had the option to include it in one of her future works. I shall argue that this inclusion of the dedication is far from an accident. While the novel's preoccupation with marriage and courtship probably hides its courtly interest, the textual treatment of contextual foils and foibles, disease and decadence directly implicate the 'regency crisis'. The paper adopts a new historicist approach and claims that *Emma* is an Austenite search for an ideal ruler at a time when the court was troubled by the deficiencies in the reigning monarch.

Of the six novels written by Jane Austen, *Emma* is the only one to feature a dedication page. It is indeed remarkable for a novel, which does not even have its author's name printed in the first edition, to get the royal permission of getting the insignia of the Prince Regent on its spine and a formal dedication in favor of the future King of England, George IV. The humble tone and regal manner of the dedication poses itself as one of the many conundrums found in the novel. On the one hand, it belies the Tory sympathizer Austen's apathy towards the regency, which relied heavily on a parliament controlled by the Whigs. On the other hand, the royal endorsement of an 'incognito' writer (identified simply as "the author of *Pride and Prejudice*") appears to be an appreciation of a heroine whom Austen herself thought "no one but I will much like" (Austen-Leigh 157). The irony becomes even more intense once we go beyond the novel's explicit theme of courtship and start considering Austen's work as a representation of the regency period. The false air of vanity of an heir who has accidentally become the governess of the house at the expense of an ailing father bears uncanny resemblance to the Prince Regent to whom the book is

dedicated. However, Emma's charm lies in her failed attempts to understand the visual and verbal clues that surround her; her seeming control over her social setting is upset once she begins to recognize the true scope and nature of a ruler in society. Austen's royal dedication thus offers a contextual dilemma that contributes to the novel's prevalent textual dialectic between the exterior and the interior.

The title-heroine of Austen's novel, Emma Woodhouse, is a frivolous girl who wants to control her surroundings. In her imaginative world, Emma plots events, manipulates situations, and dreams and designs the future. She considers herself responsible for the marriage of her governess Miss Taylor, whom she has helped to move into the social ladder and get her new identity as Mrs. Weston. She has a scheme of finding a suitor for her protégé Harriet Smith. She makes a portrait of Harriet, and thereby turns her into an object of her female-gaze, a subject of her art, and an eventual mantelpiece. Her snobbery is evident in her reservation about independent characters like the yeoman Robert Martin or the wage-earner governess Jane Fairfax; and in her raillery against Miss Bates. Emma asserts her authority and tries to script the narrative of everyone that surrounds her; yet her prominence comes at the expense of her ailing father.

Interestingly, the 'surrogate author' of the narrative, Emma ultimately dedicates herself to George Knightley--a name heavily laden with Englishness. While George is the name of the patron saint of England (not to mention the name of the ruling king), Knightley echoes the chivalric code of Middle Age romance or the crusade. Emma's espousal of George Knightley at the end of the novel forces us to rethink the role of the title heroine in the novel. In particular, we are forced to reconsider Austen's view of an ideal ruler. Her criticism of Emma and eventual approval of Knightley offer a possible allegorical reading of Emma in which Austen is promoting certain aristocratic, albeit conservative, values needed for the consolidation of the regency.

In October 1815, Austen was staying with her brother at Han's Place in London with the double duty of nursing her brother Henry who had fallen sick and negotiating with her 'civil-rogue' publisher John Murray (Le Faye, "Letter 121" 291). Henry's doctor Charles Haden was an acquaintance of one of the physician's of the Prince Regent. Austen's presence in town was reported to the Prince who in turn asked his librarian Rev. James Stanier Clarke to arrange for her a guided tour of his Carlton House residence. During this tour, Clarke suggested that Austen could consider dedicating one of her future books to the Prince Regent. Austen later wrote to Clarke, asking whether it was 'incumbent' upon her "to shew my sense of the Honour, by inscribing the Work now in the Press, to HRH" ("Letter 125 D" 296). Clarke replied, "It is certainly not incumbent on you to dedicate your work now in the Press to His Royal Highness; but if you wish to do the Regent that honour either now or at any future period, I am happy to send you that permission" ("Letter 125 A" 296). Instead of deferring the dedication request for a future publication, Austen acted on the suggestion to include a dedication page for a book that was already in the press, and even asked her publisher to make specially bound copies for the Prince Regent. The publisher made presentation copies in scarlet with the Prince of Wales's feathers on the

spine of the volumes and, as instructed, sent them to Clarke three days before the book was publicly available. One wonders, why Austen, not a big admirer of the regency anyway (an idea to which I shall return), went ahead with the dedication request for a book that was in the press, rather than deferring it to one of her future publications. Was there anything in the text that Austen thought would be relevant for the regency?

The dedication page was made as a last minute adjustment. It is inserted in the front leaf where normally the half-title page appears. Because of this late inclusion, the half-title page is found at the back leaf of the first volume.[1] Austen wrote to Murray asking him to include the dedication on Monday December 11, 1815 (the book was advertised to be published in the coming Saturday ("Letter 130" 304). Her ignorance, if not indifference, to royal protocol is evident in the letter in which she instructed Murray: "the Title page must be, *Emma*, Dedicated by Permission to H.R.H. The Prince Regent" (ibid.). Fortunately for Austen, Murray saved her from a potential protocol "blunder" by rewriting the title page, to read, "To His Royal Highness, The Prince Regent, This work is, By His Royal Highness's Permission, Most Respectfully Dedicated, By His Royal Highness's Dutiful and Obedient Humble Servant, The Author." Austen was quick to thank Murray for "putting her right," adding: "Any deviation from what is usually done in such cases is the last thing I should wish for" ("Letter 131" 305).

The royal librarian graciously acknowledged receipt of the "handsome copies" of the novel on December 21, stating that the copies have "gone to the Prince" ("Letter 132 A" 307). He went on to request Austen to write a book on the House of Saxe Cobourg from the perspective of a clergyman with a dedication for his new master, the Prince's new son-in-law Prince Leopold. Austen made light of the situation saying that she would keep to her own style as she had no plan of writing a historical romance, and thereby avoided the possibility of any further royal dedication.[1] While Austen maintained correspondence with Clarke, she showed little enthusiasm over royalty. When Clarke informed Austen of his promotion in the household of Prince Leopold, she curtly replied: "The service of a court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of Time & Feeling required by it" ("Letter 138A" 311). Austen's characteristic irony makes it difficult to ascertain whether this comment is actually meant as a compliment on Clarke's success or on her own failure to avoid the Prince Regent's dedication, which had earned her nothing more than a "fine compliment" ("Letter 128" 300).

The "disreputable and somewhat ludicrous" Prince Regent was far from popular in his time.[2] The Prince of Wales was handed with the permanent Regency when the King, suffering from recurrent delusional fits probably due to a disease known as Porphyry, was declared unfit by the Parliament. The regency crisis was worsened by the prince's reckless behavior in both private and public spheres. In a letter to her friend Martha Lloyd, Austen shared her dislike for the Prince Regent, especially for his treatment of his estranged wife, Caroline of Brunswick. The prince had earlier launched a "delicate investigation" to pry into his wife's secret love life just to get a formal divorce; he also declared his wife unfit and unworthy of receiving visits from their daughters. Caroline wrote a letter to the Prince,

which was published by her Whig supporters (including Lady Oxford) in the *Morning Chronicles* (Sales, 1994 68). Responding to the double standards of the Prince Regent, Austen wrote in February 1813:

> I Suppose all the World is sitting in Judgement upon the Princess of Wales's Letter. Poor woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she is a Woman, & because I hate her Husband — but I can hardly forgive her for calling herself 'attached & affectionate' to a Man whom she must detest ... I do not know what to do about it; but if I must give up the Princess, I am resolved at least always to think that she would have been respectable, if the Prince had behaved only tolerably by her at first. ("Letter 82" 208)

While Austen's apathy towards the prince is based on a mere sisterhood (the bond that she felt towards the Princess of Wales), it is also possible to make a case for Austen's reaction to the idea of the public disciplining of a wife. I think Samuelian has it right in contextualizing this letter vis-a-vis Austen's most celebrated novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, which came out 1813. She wrote: "This assumption of ultimate male responsibility for female behavior. ...is at the heart of *Pride and Prejudice*'s conservative ideology, and the paradigmatic figure for identifying and controlling feminine impropriety is Darcy, the idealized private gentleman whose ability to enact his impeccable will on the social landscape is perfected and extended by his eventual union with the hybrid Elizabeth" (283). The constant disciplining of Emma offers a similar possibility. However, Emma does not render any straightforward surrender to a central figure of authority. Her assertion of imaginative power problematizes the issue of control.

In June 1814, the Prince Regent offered a huge banquet for several heads of states in commemoration of one of his victories over Napoleon. The celebration was followed by an extravagant parade to which Austen responded, "I long to know what this bow of the Prince will produce" (qtd. in Sales). Austen was in the middle of writing *Emma* at that time; she "composed Emma in only fourteen months, from January 21, 1814 to March 29, 1815" (Copeland et al eds. 1997 24). It is strange that Austen, who is not shy to express her abhorrence for the Prince Regent, concedes the royal request and dedicates the book to someone whom she detests. Records show that she consulted at least with her sister Cassandra, brother Henry and publisher Murray before making that decision. Probably, she thought the royal insignia would help enhance the sale of her books. Austen's dilemma is evident in her letter written to Cassandra: "I *did* mention the PR in my note to Mr. Murray, it brought me a fine compliment in return; whether it has done any other good I do not know, but Henry thought it worth trying" ("Letter 128" 300). Austen is way too 'sensible' to be flattered by Clarke's claim that "The Regent has read and admired all your publications" (296) or the Prince Regent has a set of all her books in all of his residences.[3] Although it is not clear whether the Prince had actually read Austen's novels, Clarke maintained, "Lord St. Helens and many of the Nobility who have been staying here, paid you the just tribute of their Praise" ("Letter 138A" 311).

The admiration for Austen's works by men who are at the center of power brings us to the issue of Austen's readership and reception. While Austen's marriage plot and regulated women made her popular among nineteenth century female readers, her reception by the male readers has been skeptically treated by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. For them, "Austen's story is especially flattering to male readers because it describes the taming not just of any woman but specifically of a rebellious, imaginative girl who is amorously mastered by a sensible man" (qtd. in Byrne 70). By the same token, is it possible to view Austen's consent to add the dedication in her book as a similar act of submission? The argument does not hold water if we take the ending of the novel as the match of two equals. After all, Emma espouses Knightley as an equal, and thereby saves herself from degrading into the role of governess like her foil Jane Fairfax. Nevertheless, the name of her spouse Knightley offers a possible allusion to the court.

Janine Barchas, in her *Matter of Facts in Jane Austen*, mentions that Austen names her characters after those found in England's most prominent political families (e.g. Darcy, Emma, Anne). This, for Barchas, is more than a mere display of her familiarity with English history; it demonstrates her "authorial ambition for the type of audience she wished to court with her fiction" (5). The "redeployment" of famous names would appeal and delight the aristocratic audience who could relate to these names in their memory. Austen's hatred for the Prince Regent did not necessarily take her interest away from the English monarchy; after all, at the age of fifteen, she had written the burlesque "The History of England," which was illustrated by her sister Cassandra.

Austen's obsession with historical, and particularly royal figures, is obvious in the naming of her characters. Emma's surname Woodhouse dates back to the thirteenth century aristocratic family of Yorkshire, Wentworth of Woodhouse; one of the founders of the family Robert Wentworth marries a rich heiress named Emma Wodehouse (Barchas 3). The surname of Jane, Fairfax may refer to Thomas Fairfax, a Parliamentary general during the English Civil War. Like him, Jane Fairfax is sickly but honorable; even Charles I, whom Fairfax helped depose, called him a man who "ever kept his word" (qtd. in Gentles). And John Milton made the name famous in his poem "On the Lord Gen. Fairfax," and urged him to use his "firm unshak'n vertue" (l.5) to clear "the shamefull brand/ Of Public Fraud" (ll.12-13).

Jane Fairfax's secret marriage to Frank Churchill hints at a scandal that stained her namesake. At the same time, the secret marriage can allude to the Prince Regent's scandalous first marriage to Maria Fitzherbert. The public row over marriage that Jane Austen's generation experienced could also be traced in the Box Hill episode in which Frank Churchill dramatizes the public display of a private marriage. As readers, we know that Frank's comments on the Eltons are actually intended for his secret spouse in the audience:

> "How many a man has committed himself on a short acquaintance, and rued it all the rest of his life!"
>
> Miss Fairfax, who had seldom spoken before, except among her own confederates, spoke now.
>
> "Such things do occur, undoubtedly."—She was stopped by a cough.

Frank Churchill turned towards her to listen.

"You were speaking," said he, gravely. She recovered her voice.

"I was only going to observe, that though such unfortunate circumstances do sometimes occur both to men and women, I cannot imagine them to be very frequent. A hasty and imprudent attachment may arise— but there is generally time to recover from it afterwards. I would be understood to mean, that it can be only weak, irresolute characters, (whose happiness must be always at the mercy of chance,) who will suffer an unfortunate acquaintance to be an inconvenience, an oppression forever" (*Emma* 281-2).

Regrets over public marriage could be a subtle reference to the Royal wedding fiasco. The Prince Regent was no stranger to the suffering from "an unfortunate acquaintance." The Prince's marriage was troubled from the beginning. The Prince Regent had run into serious debts because of his extravagant lifestyle, which prompted parliament to intervene. A parliamentary grant was agreed to on the condition that the then Prince of Wales would marry someone who would furnish the country with an heir. Although already married to someone below his stature, the Prince Regent was compelled to marry his first cousin Caroline in 1795 despite his disliking for her. The prince was disgusted by his "ugly and unhygienic" wife from whom he remained estranged, except for his drunken honeymoon night. His attempt to bring charges of female impropriety against Caroline did not go well with the general public.[3]

The Prince Regent is also credited with bringing an end to the Napoleonic War in Waterloo in 1815. Yet, he had little to do with its outcome. Similarly, in the comic inversion of Austen, Emma's attempted marriage missions come to a surprise ending over which she has little control. References to the Corn Law and to the abolishment of slavery are few other avenues through which contemporary politics and historical events enter the ante-room of Jane Austen's domestic novel, *Emma*.

However, the most obvious political reference in Austen's comic world is the inverted gender role. The 'sickness' of society is present in the figuration of the effeminate figure-heads that allows Emma to assume her domineering role. Analogous to Prince Regent's assumption of power against the backdrop of an invalid father, we find Emma Woodhouse becoming the mistress of the house with her ageing father settling for a relegated role in the household. In the House of Enscombe, Mrs. Churchill is also an ailing governess who wants her son Frank Churchill to take over the estate (Frank has to keep his marriage secret until the demise of his mother).

Mr. Woodhouse's sickness is described as hypochondria. But one of the riddles that he shares, from a book written by Garrick, involves a 'kitty, a frozen maid' (62). Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, in her influential *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions—Subversive Language, Embodied History* has argued that the riddle is about men with venereal diseases who used to copulate with virgin girls in search of cure. Anne K. Mellor, while reviewing Heydt-Stevenson, puts it succinctly:

> Unpacking and solving this riddle, which depends on the folk belief that syphilis could be cured by intercourse with a virgin, she [Heydt-Stevenson] shows that the novel, like the riddle, is fundamentally engaged with questions of male impotence, venereal disease, and the commodification of women. In *Emma*, a woman too easily becomes the sexual possession of a man—the penniless Jane Fairfax is likened to a slave, and even Emma is finally but a "notch" in the larger estate of Donwell Abbey.[4]

Mr. Woodhouse is health condition suggests that he too suffers from a disease that is not uncommon among English monarchs. In other words, Emma inherits a certain invalidity of her father that has to be cured for the betterment of society. Her marriage to Knightley promises the supplement required for the future health of Highbury. Significantly, the honeymoon takes place at Weymouth, a seaside resort near Dorset, where George III and his Queen stayed in 1789 (Le Faye 619).

Mr. Knightley is sixteen years older than Emma. Knightley's maturity is something that Emma requires in a relationship. But when Emma earlier considered whether her relationship with Mr. Knightley is that of a brother or not, she was quick to dismiss the idea; "brother and sister, no, indeed" (250). The idea of marrying a cousin echoes the Prince Regent's marriage with his cousin Caroline of Brunswick. Incidentally, George Knightley's brother John resides in Brunswick Square. Northcote notes that this could actually allude to the Princess of Wales (56).

Before Emma finally settles for Knightley, she has a momentary fling with Frank Churchill. Frank makes his characteristic advances to Emma by appreciating her eyes. Emma, after all, has "'the true hazle eye--and so brilliant!'" (31), and when Frank desires his future wife to have "'hazle eyes,'" Emma thinks of Harriet, "[h]azle eyes excepted" (282). Emma, being too obsessed with her marriage mission of finding the right suitor for her protégé, could think of Harriet Smith only. Emma's gullibility makes her unfit for becoming the ideal ruler of her society. She needs someone with the insight necessary to see through Frank Churchill's "aimable" scheme. Knightley's estimate of Frank offers one such example: "No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very 'aimable', have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people" (105).

Although Knightley is dismissive of Emma's word-play, he himself uses the pun that makes us aware of the tension about the aftermath of the French Revolution, and the suspicion with which the English aristocratic class viewed the French. The distinction between 'amiable' and 'aimable' is what separates Mr. Knightley from Frank. Frank's pseudo-frankness of purpose--his gallantry-- is loaded with an aura of artificiality that can be identified with courtly dandyism. Alistair Duckworth in *Emma and Her Dangers of Individualism* points out: "Churchill's game -playing is not to be dismissed as venial. It is symptomatic of a world in which once given certitudes of conduct are giving way to shifting standards and subjective orderings. Churchill rejects an inherited body of morals and manners for a little world he himself creates" (in Byrne 66).

George Knightley and Frank Churchill have been identified with England and France respectively. Byrne posits: "Whereas Knightley (his name itself the same as St George, the patron saint of England) epitomizes the 'true English style' of few words and 'nothing of ceremony', Frank Churchill is associated with French gallantry, verbal wit and charm, especially by Knightley whose jealousy manifests itself in his 'Frankophobia'" (2004 9).

Knightley's criticism of Frank (read France) alludes to the general mood of Francophobia that the English nobility feared following the French Revolution. The novel's final outcome confirms her Tory sensibility as she seems to idealize a true English 'gentleman'. For Austen, the real man is the one who finds his bond with the land and the one who is courteous to his family and his people. Austen's love for the land is not driven by a Romantic urge of disregarding city-life and returning to savage nature; she views the land as a pastoral setting where she can materialize her Utopian dream; a land where women enter into a courtship without surrendering her rights and where the landed gentry keep on patronizing farmers. Knightley, for Austen, is the ideal aristocratic figure as he keeps on mentoring Robert Martin the farmer about farming. In order to bring true solidarity to England, a certain pragmatism is required and that we find in Mr. Knightley; he is not even ashamed of accepting women as equals. Thus when Emma says that she must stay back in Hartfield to look after her ailing father, Knightley readily agrees to the proposal of moving in to her wife's house once they are married.

Emma, on the other hand, by courting Knightley makes sure that she remains dutiful to her ailing father and her future spouse is okay with that. Mrs. Weston's response to Mr. Knightley's renunciation of his home is couched in Mary Wollstonecraft's ethos championed in the *Vindication on the Rights for Women*. For Mrs. Weston, the solution makes "all right, all open, all equal. No sacrifice on any side worth the name" (354). Claudia Johnson reads Knightley's decision to come to Hartley after the wedding as an endorsement of Emma's rule. "In moving to Hartfield, Knightley is sharing her home, and placing himself within her domain, Knightley gives his blessing to rule" (in Byrne 81).

The novel on courtship suddenly appears to be a courtly one, and the first name of Emma's husband, George, which is the same as that of the incumbent King, acquires added significance. Interestingly, Emma has always preferred addressing George as Mr. Knightley. Right before the formal proposal, Emma recalled that she once tried to offend Mr. Knightley by using her Christian name. "I remember once calling you 'George' in one of my amiable fits, about ten years ago. I did it because I thought I would offend" (Ch 53). Emma, 'the queen of her society' has married someone who shares the name of the king. Johnson's observation on Mr. Knightley as "an ideal" is pertinent here as in him we find "a 'humane' rather than 'gallant' hero" (in Byrne 86). Knightley is the kind of hero who ensured fluidity and mobility, "...tolerance of past and future classes, or part of the sensibility that helped England avoid a French revolution" (in Byrne 69).

There are so many allusions in *Emma* that involves the Regency politics that it is almost impossible to consider the dedication as a mere coincidence. Austen was deeply

engaged with the political milieu while composing the story of the "rich, clever and handsome" (5) heroine, Emma. Austen was aware of the deficiencies in her heroine just as she was aware of the follies of the Prince Regent. Emma's ultimate surrender to a figure of wisdom can be a coded desire for an ideal ruler who will embrace sense and sensibility, understand the social stratification, and remain not gallant, but humane. I think Anne K. Mellor, who was commenting on the Regency women writers, has it right to claim that with the dedication, Austen "presented her monarch with a heroine who, by learning from her own mistakes, could teach him how to rule with more wisdom, benevolence and justice than was his wont" (47).

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Endnotes

[1] In the catalog entry for the rare first edition, Keynes notes that "the collation of the first volume is peculiar in that the first sheet consisted only of the title-page and the dedication to the Prince Regent, while the half-title was printed on the last leaf, which would otherwise have been blank." http://www.abebooks.com/

[2] Austen made fun of Stanier Clarke in her "Plan of a Novel," written before the publication of *Sandition*, using some of the exact words that they used during the correspondence regarding the dedication of *Emma*. See Michelle Levy's article "Austen's Manuscripts and the Publicity of Print."

[3] Thomson, David. *England in the Nineteenth Century.* Baltimore: Penguin, 1950. p.21.

[4] Mellor, K. Anne. Book Review: Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions—Subversive Language, Embodied History. *Romantic Circle.* http://www.rc.umd.edu/ Accessed on April 22, 2014.

[5] Jane Austen has long been considered as an ahistorical writer. Craik's observation provides an example: "A twentieth century reader of Jane Austen may deduce from what she writes that the Romantic revival in literature is well underway, but would probably not be able to postulate all that is implied by the word 'regency', or even the existence of prince Regent, to whom, at his own request, she dedicated Emma. ...The whole world of national politics, of the industrial revolution, of Europe inflamed with revolutions and struggle for power, the world containing Cobbett, Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon, Blucher, and Prince Metternich is apparently ignored" (Craik, 1969: 8). However, as Looser has pointed out, "Nowadays it may seem difficult to fathom, but Jane Austen was once branded an ahistorical writer" (qtd in Barchas, p.10)

[6] I don't think Roger Sales's observation that "The Dedication may be best read as an ironic statement and therefore placed alongside the mock-dedications that were such a distinctive feature of the *Juvenalia*" (1994, p.71) is accurate in this context. While I agree with the ironic aspect of the Dedication, I do not think the Dedication could be a mockery; after all, it was written by the publisher Murray--not by Jane Austen.

[7] Kristin Flieger Samuelian in her article, "Managing Propriety for the Regency: Jane Austen Reads the Book," argues that Austen responded to the debate of 'female impropriety' by shaping the character of Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* after the injured queen Caroline. But this does not support Austen's letter to Martha Lloys, which Samuelian too quotes, in which the author expressed her unending support for the queen. *Studies in Romanticism,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (Summer, 2009), pp. 279-297. www.jstor.org/stable.

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Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Imagination: Nation, Gender, and Global Justice

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on Tagore's increasing activism and his bid to persuade his readers in his later works of the importance of thinking globally and abandoning exclusionary perspectives. It shows how he strove in his writing to alter mentalities underlying the politics of domination and division in the world he lived in. The paper also attempts to draw out the implications of his critical approach to imagination and emotion and the way he used emotion-and affect-enhancing literature to oppose divisive and instrumental attitudes and to bring people together by transcending nation or gender divisions.

While Rabindranath Tagore is well-recognized in South Asian Studies circles and in the mainstream as an aesthete or even a mystic, he is alleged to have increasingly distanced himself from the pressing political issues of his day. Notably, he is thought to have become uninvolved with the struggle against the colonizer. Disagreeing with this position, I argue that Tagore moved by way of an active engagement in the Indian freedom struggle into thinking more globally about how to change exclusionary attitudes. He sought to alter mentalities underlying the politics of domination and division in his world—i.e., of the subordination of some people, races, lands and resources by other groups. As I show below, it is the critical approach Tagore took to imagination and emotion that offers lessons about global activism relevant even today.

My claim is that, later in his intellectual life, Tagore increasingly came to hold the position that, unless the divisive viewpoints and emotions underlying the hierarchies of nation, empire, and capital could be changed, one power structure invariably would replace another in the course of world historical tussles. And it is in this regard that Tagore's own experiments with emotion- and affect-enhancing literature and arts became germane. In

the context of the heightening historical turmoil of the early 20th century, Tagore urgently examined how aesthetic practice created emotional appeal *for* divisive and instrumental attitudes. And he sought for ways to re-educate emotions, imaginations, and minds in order to foster attitudes bringing people together.

In this activist approach to imaginative appeal, Tagore's thought comes very close to critical philosophers of our day. Note that, in her most recent book, the well-known feminist postcolonial thinker Gayatri Charavorty Spivak addresses the importance of aesthetic education along similar lines. She emphasizes that in our day (of emotion-arousing media) we are greatly in need of "training the imagination to make it ready for implementing global justice and democracy." [1] Whereas Spivak focuses on critically implementing the western humanist framework of democratic justice, from the grounds of semi-modern India Tagore differs from such an agenda. He wants to incorporate regional literary and metaphysical legacies into his secular vision of training the imagination to implement harmonious justice on a global scale. Tagore's regional approach to aesthetic training goes through two major phases, growing increasingly complex and altering in response to world historical changes .This altering trend in Tagore's thought reinforces the argument I have made elsewhere that "culture and language are . . . fields of social activity made and changed by human agents" (Niyogi De b 19). At the same time, a consciousness textualized in language is permeated with conflicting value judgments, some of which are bound to be complicit with power and capital. Within the limited scope of the present discussion, I focus on the critical aspects of Tagore's thought.

We encounter the first phase of Tagore's thoughts on artistic imagination and global harmony at the turn of the 20th century. Radically critical of western colonization, Tagore turns at this stage to the visions and values born of Hindu agrarian civilization to find the key to human togetherness. To begin with, he avers that true literature transmits humankind's deepest ideal (*gabhirtama adarsha*)—the notion of being *yukta* or connected with a collectivity and with the world. This literary vision of connectedness, notes Tagore, is encapsulated in the Sanskrit term for literature, *sahitya,* which is rooted in the word *sahit,* meaning "unite and harmonize" ("Vishwasahitya" 770). Here, Tagore is drawing on an assumption of syncretism then current in his multilingual India that languages are open semantic systems permitting the revitalization of original texts in new verbal orders and semantic spaces (Devy 187). Note that this concept of the open semantic system is constitutively at odds with the power hierarchy between an original text and its copy that one finds in monolingual and monocultural systems—a hierarchy that has produced the modern idea of intellectual property. Underlying the syncretistic assumption that languages are open and malleable systems of meaning, on the other hand, is the Hindu metaphysical belief that the "repeated birth [of the soul or significance] is the very substance of all animate creations"(Devy 187).

While the Hindu metaphysic of the migrating soul is endorsed by his philosophical writings, Tagore's way of linking it to harmony-creating *sahitya* demonstrates what Subaltern historian Ranajit Guha has characterized as Tagore's "unfettered" (85) habit of implementing

religious concepts in a secular framework. Tagore is appropriating the civilizational logic of creative revitalization, bred within a long history of multilingual exchange, and he is positing the concept as an ethical norm. The normative ideal of *sahit*-conducing imagination, in turn, is pitted in Tagore's early writings against a different ideal. This is the *virodhmulak* or antagonism-rooted ideal he finds primarily in European imaginations that propagate imperialist attitudes. For instance, in 1901, Tagore imputes that European children's literature pits "godlike" Europeans in contrast to the "bestial" races of the East ("Virodhmulak Adarsha" 882-883)—i.e., that this literature is catalyzing in European children emotional appeal for Social Darwinist attitudes. Elsewhere, Tagore faults some rising nationalist authors of his Bengal for adapting the same imperial reasoning to their own *virodh*-driven attitude of elitism ("Chhele Bhulano Chhara" 579).

In his well-known essay "Vishwasahitya"/ "World Literature" written in 1906, moreover, Tagore clearly interlinks the attitude of *virodh*/antagonism to possessive mentalities. He criticizes imagination which looks upon others and nature as instruments to be used for an end, in his words, as *bina betaner chakar* (wageless servants) (762). Combined, statements such as these imply that an alternative logic of human *sahit*—prevalent in imagination and in practice--is to be found in *bharatiya* (Indian) civilization which not only is multilingual and syncretistic but attuned to nature and non-utilitarian.

This implication stands out in an essay (1901) contrasting Shakespeare's *Tempest* to the Sanskrit dramatist Kalidas's *Abhijnanam Shakuntalam*. In this piece, Tagore maintains that the imaginative layout of *The Tempest* rests on the "basic idea" of strife over *adhipatya* (sovereignity). It generates aesthetic appeal for the reactionary strife of the displaced sovereign—the one who *swarajyer adhikar haite bichyuta haiya mantrabale prakritirajyer upar kathar adhipatya bistar karitechhen* (deprived of control over his own kingdom, spreads his power of magic on the kingdom of nature to impose a severe domination)("Prachin Sahitya" 622-623). On this reading, the Shakespearean play justifies a masculinist, territorial, and ecologically destructive attitude through its literary appeal, with magic coming to stand for a technology of instrumentation which aids a scientific ruler's expansionist agenda. Against this *virodh*-based imaginative layout, Tagore posits the Indian playwright Kalidas's *Shakuntalam* as a *suparinata drishtanta* (fully developed instance) of literary imagination, that is, as a work that perfectly envisions and conduces human *sahit*.[2]

Three core ideas comprising Tagore's early notion of harmonious imagination, based on Hindu civilizational traditions, emerge in his treatment of *Shakuntalam* as a template for imaginative training: (a) The core of human concord is to be found in a work such as this rooted in a non-utilitarian, agrarian framework: the attunement of the mind with the world, the human with the non-human. (b) Kalidas's use in this work of the un-modern Sanskrit aesthetic of *rasa* (relish)--an aesthetic which portrays personal desires only through "hints" (*abhas*) and therewith distills a delicate balance of *de*personalized emotions—is peculiarly well-suited for clarifying a vision of interpersonal concord. (c) The woman Shakuntala exemplifies this ideal of concord through embodying the *rasa* of a feminine love attuned to nature.

Very soon, these three ideas merge in Tagore's enthusiastic nationalist poetry as he throws himself full force into the nationalist Swadeshi Movement in 1905. This movement surged against the first attempt made by the colonial state to partition Bengal, known as the Bangabhanga. It is as if the pleasant, forebearing, and self-yielding Shakuntala of Tagore's earlier essay reappears in his swadeshi songs as the all-protective and all-giving mother Bengal. Seen as the incarnation of bountiful nature, she is imagined as the Hindu mother goddess (combining elements of Durga, Lakshmi, and Kali). Noteworthy in this respect, is a song depicting a Hinduized image of a supremely beautiful, multi-armed mother goddess rising from the heart of Bengal, and coming to be revealed to the transfixed eye of the devotee: *Aji bangladesher hridoy hote kakhon aponi/ Tumi aei aporup rupe bahir hole janani . . . Ogo Ma tomay dekhe dekhe ankhi naa phire/ Tomar duar aji khule gyache sonar mandire* (From the heart of Bangladesh when, on your own/Do you emerge in this unsurpassed beauty, Mother . . . O my Mother, looking and looking upon you, my eye turns not away/ Your doors have opened today into the temple of gold). Without a doubt, the affect of an extra-sensory and self-surrendering *darshan*—replete with the *rasa* of ecstatic worship—is invoked by this song.

Dipesh Chakrabarty explains that imagination such as this invokes nationalism as a *rasa* – an imaginative relishing of emotions which enables the "cessation of the ordinary historical world"(173). As such, *rasa* invokes a culture of imagination which, according to Chakrabarty, is different from the "subject-centered" analytical imagination driving historical decisions in the modern world. Imaginative *rasa* penetrates beyond logic that classifies, possesses, and divides lands, peoples, and bodies. Following Chakrabarty's insight, we can conclude that these swadeshi songs by Tagore, depicting the motherland, indeed, aim to train the imagination of the Bengali patriot. The patriot is trained to "bypass . . . the distinction" between subjects and objects (175). It is assumed that in this process he will transcend the *virodhmulak* logic of the impending Partition, which at the time was fracturing the people of Bengal and causing chaos all around.

Only two years later, however, we get from Tagore a far more critical assessment of nationalist imagination--uncontainable in Chakrabarty's emphasis on cultural difference. Thus, Chakrabarty's approach limits Tagore to an early stage of his (Hindu nationalist) thought, disregarding the more critical and globally-poised phase of his intellectual development. An essay written in 1907 on literature and aesthetic beauty—"Sahitya O Saundarya"—captures the global turn in Tagore's thought. Launching a broad critique of divisive imaginations, Tagore maintains in this essay that authors who produce images of *saundarya* (beauty) and *suchita* (bodily purity) in a bid to identify the *utkarsha* (essence) of a person or a people reinforce *samprodayik* (sectarian) attitudes (775-780). The implication is that subjects located in the historical world and harboring sectarian attitudes are the ones who author the *rasa* of nationalism, and that they deploy essentialist images of beauty and purity as instruments to reinforce the divisive *rasa*.

What worldly conditions drove Tagore to rethink his view about artistic imagination at this moment?

Uma Dasgupta answers the question most completely for us. She notes that, on the one hand, Tagore suddenly withdrew from the Swadeshi Movement "at its height "(4). He resigned from every swadeshi committee on the same day (Dasgupta 4). This was his way of protesting against the outbreak of communal violence within the movement, since at this moment, Muslims were being attacked in the name of mother Bengal. The attacks being leveled on Muslims in the very names of swadeshi and mother Bengal. Soon thereafter, Tagore turned to the active work of educating both Muslim and Hindu tenants in his family's agricultural estates (Dasgupta 5). On the other hand, Tagore was bearing witness to the escalation of separatist nationalism in Europe leading up to the First World War. In view of these world historical trends, he began to disavow traditionalist nationalism. Instead, "he argued that the Great War had ushered in a 'new age' whereby the need of the day was for cooperation between peoples, not isolation"(Dasgupta 7) and civilizational separatism.

Tagore himself puts his evolving cooperative viewpoint best when he says in his "Russiar Chithi"/Letters from Russia (1930) that the "local problems of a people are a part and parcel of humankind's" (*swajatir samasya samastha manusher samasyar anatargata*). His post-swadeshi work grows increasingly concerned with the interconnected problems of "*prabhu-dasher samparka*"/master-slave relations (1928) in various locations of world history. In a remarkable critical essay titled "Narir Manusatya" (The Humanness of Woman) written in 1928, Tagore reflects on how social justice movements challenge these asymmetrical relations by imagining every person to be a "*byektibishesh*" or distinctive individual. Clearly, he was being inspired in this new line of democratic thought by the Euro-American Women's Movements as well as the Women's Suffrage Movement in India. The Bolshevik Movement and Soviet Russia also gave Tagore food for reflection, even as he critiqued the totalitarian institutions of the Russian state.

In what ways does Tagore alter his viewpoint on training the imagination so as to use it to implement harmony hand in hand with democratic justice? In my view, his ideas about imaginative training flow along two parallel paths in his post-swadeshi writings. I look in turn at each path and present some quick examples.

Some of his later works bring images and authors face to face. Categories of person who are typically used in nationalist and imperial discourses as one-dimensional images symbolizing essence or deviance, bodily purity or pollution come to life in these late writings by Tagore. As realistic characters, they act within specific historical circumstances, and they talk back at their essentialist and biased authors (who also appear as characters in the stories). On occasion, the characters talk responsibly about their own involvement in the processes which reduce human lives to one-dimensional symbols, and which use symbols as instruments to reinforce master-slave relations inter-nationally or inter-communally.

Take, for example, the first great political novel Tagore wrote after the swadeshi movement, *Gora* (1910). The novel ends with a Hindu Brahminical nationalist's self-discovery: the man finds out that he is actually Irish by birth, [having been] adopted by

a Brahmin couple during the Sepoy Uprising. This discovery brings about a moment of epiphany. The man Gora realizes that, until now, he had authored for himself an imaginary *bharatbarsha* (India) tinted with emotional *bhava* (569). He has been clinging to a mere image of the motherland, and thus failing to recognize that he is reinforcing divisions in the name of national unification. Now Gora is able to admit that he used to perpetuate caste prejudice by secluding his brahmin body from other *Bharatiya* bodies. Moreover, when we encounter Gora the Irishman criticizing his own homogenous and divisive imagination, we are, of course, also hearing the *gora* or white man talking back at (self-critiquing) imperial European authors.

As stated in the essay titled "Virodmulak Adarsha", Tagore maintained that European writers cultivate the roots of racial/nationalist antagonisms worldwide by the way they uphold appealing pictures of racial superiority—i.e., of "godlike" white men--in their works.

The novel *Gora* is followed by a series of creative works which revolve around articulate women characters. We find a series of articulate women characters in Tagore's creative works. These women are shown to be talking back to prevalent images of femininity from their various historical locations. They question the use of women's images as symbols of purity, modesty, and self-sacrifice. And they challenge conventional (Hindu) nationalist representations of women as pleasant goddess-mothers, poised to reproduce a pure nation/race.

In his second great anti-swadeshi novel, *Ghare Baire/The Home and the World* (1914), Tagore's woman protagonist Bimala (literally, the Pure One) recalls in monologue how she became established as the Queen Bee of the Swadeshi Movement (21). She was positioned as an embodiment of the *Bande Mataram* or Hail-to-the-Motherland mantra through the impassioned *kalpana* (imagination) of the principal nationalist activist, Sandeep (literally, the Ignited One). Bimala describes how Sandeep had looked upon her with eyes ignited like the bright stars (*nakhatra*)(11), and had hailed her as the Hindu goddess of the bountiful land, Annapurna (13). Later in the narrative, Bimala herself turns out to be critical of her own self-identification with this passionate imagination of the mother-as-land. In retrospect, she impugns her support for the crimes (*pap*) committed by orthodox nationalists—both Bengali swadeshis and Europeans--against others in the name of purifying imagined motherlands (15-16). Moreover, she delineates the way she had trapped herself into Hinduizing the purity of the motherland. In the heat of patriotic passion, she had joined voice with Sandeep in calling Bengal by the names of the goddesses Durga and Lakshmi (15). The novel suggests that this mother-goddess imagery is deployed to mask the "reign of fear" (*bhayer shasan*) (78) imposed upon impoverished tenant farmers, including Muslims, by elite Hindu nationalists (98-99).

By the late 1920's, Tagore is even more clear in speaking, as he put it, *narider pakhya niye* (from the side of women) ("Narir Manusatya" 24). He inveighs against the controlling attitudes and images he finds in the *kalpana* (imagination) of both male

European imperialists and Indian nationalists (21). The historical events grounding this clearer transition to feminist critique in Tagore's aesthetic thought, in my view, are the growth of a distinct feminist voice in India hand in hand with the controversies in India as well as in Britain over Indian women's suffrage (leading to women's enfranchisement in Bengal in 1926) (Forbes 92-103).

Following this, in 1932, we hear the female protagonist of a Tagore poem challenging the nationalist author Saratchandra Chatterjee. The new woman portrayed in *Sadharan Meye* ironically pleads with the male novelist to refrain from making her into another Shakuntala in the vein of Kalidas's iconic heroine. She refuses to follow Shakuntala down the path of self-sacrifice (*tyag*) and sorrowful forbearance ("Sadharan Meye" 669). Clearly, the challenge here also is self-directed. Tagore is talking back at his own portrayal, earlier on, of a self-surrendering Shakuntala who upholds the harmonious values of Hindu agrarian civilization. The new woman of 1932 instead wants to be recognized for her autonomous needs and wants. Soon thereafter, we are to hear an even more radical woman's voice in a Tagore work. The latter exposes the master-slave relations underlying the Hindu caste system's (racialized) perceptions of bodily purity and pollution. This radical new woman demands that she be both imagined and related to in a holistic way—as a fully valued *manab*/human both in the spirit and in the body.

Dismantling the symbolism of a pristine Bengali peasant life attuned to nature—found in so many of his own earlier works—in the play/dance-drama *Chandalika* (1933, 1936) Tagore makes a peasant girl from the untouchable caste give voice to the discrimination and dehumanization riddling the village. While at first it appears that a Buddhist monk by the name of Ananda has in fact broken down the taboo of bodily purity and pollution by naming this girl as an equal human being and accepting water from her hand, soon the question rises if the naming of equality will remain at the level of essentialist imagination only. Reinstated by the monk's imagination as an equal, Tagore's low-born woman begins to talk back at her humanist creator and to want him as her partner both in the spirit and in the body. She maintains that the elite man must return to reciprocate her full desire for partnership, lest otherwise she loses touch with her new found self-value: *nijer ami mulya bhuli* (174). This *mulya* or value lies in her developing sense of autonomous worth, which has been authored in her by the humanist man's equalizing attitude. The implication of the low-born woman's demand is that the principle of human equality must appear on the cultural horizon not simply as an essentialist and depersonalized image. It must be actualized in the form of social practice. Only through such pragmatic, hard-hitting portrayals of radical social change could the audience is imagination be emotionally retrained so as to think against ingrained (caste/race-based) biases regarding bodily purity and pollution.

Does all this mean that we are actually seeing the post-swadeshi Tagore move away from his earlier interest in training the imagination in the depersonalized aesthetic of the *rasa*—the regional spiritual aesthetics of depersonalization that bypass the historical world and its subjective biases? Is Tagore taking the position that for the imagination to be trained

for use in enabling global justice it ought to be schooled to implement and critique only western humanistic values (of equality and autonomous worth)? No. What Tagore seeks in later works is a combined approach. He wants to posit as secular historical norms; first, the habits of syncretism born of a region with a long legacy of multilingual and multiracial flows; and second, an allied metaphysical vocabulary of spiritual oneness. Illustrating this combined approach, some of Tagore's late works take a second path. Therein, the regional concepts of syncretism and spiritual union are invoked as ethical norms in whose light divisive and self-serving attitudes can be exposed and cast aside.

As our first example of this second path, let us return to the closing of the novel *Gora*. We hear Gora declare that only by discovering his alien birth—and being released from his prior Hindu Brahminical nationalism—has he been able to land on the true ground of *bharatbarsha*. His body and mind no longer inscribe any "*virodh* between the Hindu, the Muslim, or the Christian *samaj*" (i.e., social economy) (570). The point to note is that; whereas Gora's imagination of the *bharatiya* has to be displaced from nationalism before it is able to embrace the regional ethic of human oneness, the ethical norm itself is practiced by his mother in everyday life. Gora's mother is portrayed to be living cooperatively and embodying a syncretistic attitude on a daily basis upon the shifting grounds of a multilingual, multi-communal, and multiracial region. In this endeavor, she had worked hand in hand with an indigenous Christian nursemaid who suckled Gora.

Allied to these practices of cooperative living and syncretistic exchange in Tagore's partially modernized India were the popular aesthetic and spiritual traditions connected to the *bhakti* legacy (particularly strong in Tagore's eastern India). Images of the self-surrendering *bhakta* or devotee also appear in a number of Tagore's late works, especially those written in the genre of allegory. Invariably, Tagore's *bhakta* emerges not simply as the traditional world renouncer and rather as an actor in secular history. He/she is a responsible agent who mobilizes against the crimes committed by humans upon humanity—specifically, upon the spirit of cooperation and harmony (*sahit*) which Tagore saw as fundamental to human community. Let me end by quoting parts from one such allegorical work, a deeply gloomy anti-war poem Tagore wrote in the midst of the First World War (1916). In my view, this poem encapsulates Tagore's combined approach. It melds ideas about human oneness and cooperation drawn both from the spiritual monism of the *bhakti* tradition and from the historical monism of the humanistic Enlightenment (which emphasizes equality, justice, responsible activism).

In this anti-war poem titled *Jhader Kheya,* on the one hand, we meet an anguished collective of people striving in unison to transcend destructive historical conditions. In the vein of *bhakti* imagery, the notion of spiritual oneness is depicted as a journey of many across the sea of worldly tribulations—in pursuit of deliverance (*moksha*) and under the commandment of the divine helmsman (the *paramatman*).

Hear you not from afar the roars of death,
O you who are wretched, O you who are callous?

Those tumultuous cries,
The gushing of blood from million breasts—
[*Dur hote ki shunis mrityur garjan, Ore deen*
Ore udaseen—
Oi krandaner kalarol,
Lakshya bakshya hote mukto rakter kallol. . . .
The commandment has come, at this time the ties of the harbor must end,
. . .
From all corners, people leave home and rush forth with oars in hand
. . .
Even then must we row on against the grimmest obstacles,
With the world's heart-rending moans ringing in our ears,
Bearing upon our heads wild stormy days,
Clinging in our hearts to hope without end.
[*Esecche adesh, bandare badhankaal ebarer mato holo sesh.*

. . .
T r t ri tai ghar cch ri ch ridik hote d nr h te cchute se d nri

. . .
Tobu beye tari sab thele hote habe p r, kane niye nikhiler hahakar,
Shire laye duranta durdin, bakshe laye asha antaheen.] (*Balaka* 88-91)

On the other hand, we see the influence of the Enlightenment in what turns out to be a portrayal of responsible agents mobilizing against the causes of war. The *bhakta* or devotee is shown also as a historical subject striving in secular time to be accountable for crimes against the intrinsic human spirit of concord. For every person going on the journey is invested with subjective interiority: with self-doubt and self-critique.

O my companion, whom do you slander?
Hang your head [in shame].
These crimes are mine, and they are yours—
The cowardliness of the coward,
The arrogant wrongs of the mighty,
The cruel greed of the greedy,
The daily-agitated spirits of the deprived,
The conceit of race,
These many insults of the godly in human.
Ore bhai, kar ninda karo tumi?
Matha karo nato.
E amar e tomar p p . . .
Bhirur bhiruta punjya, prabaler uddhata anyaya,
Lobheer nisthur lobh,
Banchiter nitya chityakhobh,
Jati abhiman,
Manaber adhistatri debotar bahu ashamaan. (My translation) (92-93)

In this vision of Tagore's, all subjects of history are being called upon to try to correct the criminality of the self-interested and divisive attitudes underlying historical strife. The collective struggle to take on responsibility--to fulfill the godly spirit of concord embedded in the human--is portrayed as an unending historical endeavor. It is a "training" of minds and bodies in which activists from every corner of the globe must take part.

In totality, the poem encapsulates Tagore's key ideas about global concord. As stated elsewhere, Tagore held that practices of harmony and justice are not limited to one civilization. We must travel across various "seas of knowledge" ("swadeshi samaj" 699) to understand different ways of practicing justice and to learn from them. As such, "peoples' history" or *manusher itihas* will not end (*Ghare Baire/ Home and the World* 102) for it constitutes a cumulative, visionary struggle to build a harmonious whole.

The implication I draw overall from Tagore's evolving critique of historical perspectives is that progressive endeavors to realize the human inclinations for being at one with others and the world must be recognized on a global scale. They must be exchanged and relearned, combined and challenged by individual everywhere. This non-reductive and, in a way, pragmatic vision of global harmony and justice, in my view, is what lay behind the life-long endeavors of Rabindranath Tagore, the philosophical writer and performing artist.

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Endnote

[1] http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674051836

[2] PS 662. For an extended discussion of the 1901 piece, see my essay "Decolonizing Universality."

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The Theme of Crisis in the Poetry of Yeats and Eliot

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Abstract

W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot demonstrate the crisis of modern society in their poetry. Both poets were concerned about the disorderly and fragmented social condition of their time – a time of political turmoil, anarchy and chaos. They yearned for the more humane, cultured and promising times of the past, as their contemporary chaotic world endangered peace, happiness, and solidarity of its people. Their poetry presents a gallery of characters, whose ideological conflicts, cultural differences and racial discrimination revealed the crisis of modern society. Both poets deplored the fragmentation of modern society, which once had strong traditions, customs and values. For them, the absence of ethical and religious values gives rise to perennial anguish, disquiet and chaos. However, though both Yeats and Eliot handle the theme of crisis, the ramifications of their treatment are strikingly varied. This paper seeks to explore the theme of crisis as a split in society that they highlight in their poetry by bringing a contrast between some common binaries such as past/present; ideal/corrupt; colonized/colonizer; love/lust; fertility/infertility.

I

W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) demonstrate the crisis of modern society in their poetry. The poets focus on the cyclical, linear, or even chaotic contemporary events that underlie the poetic vision of each. Yeats, who is considered a "ghost that haunted Modernism", is the pioneer (Albright 63). But both were aware of the disorderly and fragmented social condition of their time – a time of political turmoil and anarchy, which their poetry investigated with exceptional discernment. However, though they expressed the theme of crisis or tension of modern society in their poetry, the delineation of the crisis in their poems varied. Each had distinctive characteristic. Being the most significant poets

writing in English during the first half of the 20th century, they explored the theme of crisis as a split in society through a variety of binary opposites. A close examination of the binary opposites reflected in their poetry brings to surface a split in the society.

The term 'binary opposition' is a term by which we, in general, define two theoretical opposites set off against each other. Paul Innes defines the term as "[a] relationship of opposition and mutual exclusion between two elements: […] masculine/feminine, cold/ heat, or up/down" (74). The origin of this term is in Structuralism, and Structuralist analysis uses the notion of binary opposition in terms of both words and codes of a text. Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, says that "[t]he binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not" (qtd. in Sorcha 122). According to Structuralism, a sign's meaning is derived from its context and the group to which it belongs. An example of this concept is that we cannot conceive of 'good' if we do not understand 'evil'. The term is also connected with Hegelian dialectic – "the synthesis of opposites", "a new concept which … resolve[s] the conflict" and unifies "the opposing concepts, retain[ing] what is true and valuable in each" of the opposites (Lavine 210, 211). It is indeed a "framework for guiding our thoughts and actions into conflicts that lead us to a predetermined solution" (Raapana and Friedrich 1). Yeats and Eliot, following the Hegelian dialectical approach of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, analyze the conflicts of their world in terms of the pairs of binary opposition, and try to find a solution, through what Hegel called synthesis. By depicting tensions between past/present; art/life; integration/disintegration; fertility/infertility; concrete/abstract; men/women; ideal/corrupt; they unravel the futility and anarchy of present society.

II

W. B. Yeats "dreamed in his youth of being a great popular poet, of writing epic and dramatic cycles to give back to Ireland, perhaps through Ireland to the world, an integrated vision of perfection" (Stock 161) and, was concerned from the beginning of his poetic career with opposites, with dichotomies which he considered to be central in experience. In his earlier poetry he explored the contrasts while later he found poetic ways of resolving them. Marjorie Howes says, "His thought was profoundly dialectical; for nearly every truth he made or found, he also embraced a counter-truth: a proposition that contradicted the first truth, was equally true, and did not negate it" (1). Yeats' poetry is, in fact, an exploration of tension between a series of oppositional binaries: age/youth; mortality/ immortality; colonized/colonizer; ideal/corrupt; fragmented/unified; rational/irrational; art/nature; body/soul; passion/wisdom; time/eternity; being/ becoming; the heroic/ the non-heroic and so on. Within these binary opposites, "one set of meanings in a poem or complex of poems function, either consciously or unconsciously, to disarm or deconstruct another and opposite or near-opposite set of meanings in a poem or complex with a tension that jams any sense of a precise understanding the reader may attempt" (Olsen 215-216). The poet alluded to distinguished personalities, persons close to his heart and events of his contemporary period. He was concerned about Ireland, the British Empire, mythical heroes, corrupt and opportunist politicians, as well as political violence. All these elements

influenced his personal life as well as his poetry. Throughout his career, "dialogue appealed to him because it allowed him to stage conflicts between opposing principles, voices, or moods" (Howes 2). His dialectical vision enabled him to assess people, events and social phenomena with discretion and judiciousness. In his poems, he lamented for more humane, cultured and promising times of the past, as the present chaotic world imperiled the peace and solidarity of its inhabitants. His poetry presents a gallery of characters such as Augusta Gergory, Maud Gonne, Olivia Shakespear, John Synge, O' Leary, William Murphy, O'Duffy and many more. Moreover, Coole Park and Thoor Ballylee – where he spent most of his time- also occupy a vital part of his poetry. Through the presentation of his characters' ideological conflicts, cultural differences and, racial disparities, he depicts the theme of a crisis in his world. Yeats' political poems like "Easter 1916", "September 1913", "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" focus on binary oppositions that reflected the crisis in contemporary society.

One of Yeats's ways of portraying the crisis of modern society is the representation of the conflict between ideal political heroes and corrupt and opportunist political leaders. He praised heroes like O' Leary, one of the guiding spirits of the Irish Renaissance, as "an embodiment of a romantic nationalism based on respect for artistic distinctiveness" as he believed that only "enlightened leadership and denigrating influential figures" can bring back peace and stability for a nation (Allison 190, 186). Yeats was afraid that "the narrow nationalism he earlier identified with Paudeen was helping to shape a rigid, confessional state controlled by a triumphalist Church guided by moralistic zeal" (Allison 196). The poet measured the distance between heroes like Parnell, O' Leary, and modern Ireland's political leaders like Murphy, Cosgrave, O' Duffy, who were unsympathetic to the poet's dream of the Unity of Culture. For the poet, ideal political leaders like Roger Casement, Arthur Griffith and Kevin O' Higgins were guided by their strong will and tough minds in their endeavour to attain their political goals. He believed in the immortality of their great souls. In the poem "September 1913" he says: "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, / It's with O' Leary in the grave" (7-8). Modern leaders were unable to comprehend the true greatness of these ideal leaders and were too busy with "add[ing] the halfpence to the pence" (3) since they were greedy "fumble in a greasy till" (2). Their mercenary attitudes and crass materialism had made 'Romantic Ireland' seem dead and gone, although the great heroes of the past had dedicated their lives to the service of their country. The ideal leaders were moulded in the spirit of the highest heroic ideals of 'Romantic Ireland', but the opportunist politicians of the present were 'petty-minded' and vile. For Yeats, both Unity of Being and Unity of Culture are necessary for a great nation, for what he terms in the poem "Under Ben Bulben" an "Indomitable Irishry" (V.16). He was concerned with Unity of Being and with achieving Unity of Being through art. To him, such unity is not confined to any one time. He believed that certain wholeness can be achieved if the distinctions of past, present and future can be dissolved. In Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium" he thus declares: "… I have sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium" (15-16), because to him, Byzantium is a place above time. It is an ideal blend of culture and wisdom, and a kind of capitol of art. The opportunist and corrupt political leaders devalue and defame the old men, old values and old customs because they are "[c]aught in that sensual music

… neglect [ing] / Monuments of unageing intellect" (7-8). So the poet wishes to voyage to the holy city of Byzantium that stands for the unity of all aspects of life. As he writes in "A Vision": "if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave it to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium … I think that in Byzantium, … religious, aesthetic, and political were one, that architect and artificers … spoke to the multitude and the few alike" (qtd. in Arkins 70). For him, Byzantium is a symbol of Paradise as well as the Purgatory of man's mind; it is a place of cleansing flames. Here, the mind or soul dwells in an eternal form. This poem is truly "a picture of a voyage from the material world to the holy city of eternity" (Pinto 122). This holy city might symbolise a New Ireland breaking away from its masters to develop its own philosophical, religious and artistic destiny. The poet in this poem imagines such a country where art will attain ultimate greatness. After all, it is art by which he wanted to achieve his doctrines of Unity of Being and Unity of Culture. To the poet, Unity of Being is an ideal valid both in time and Eternity. Frank Kermode says: "The dissipation and the despair that are the inevitable lot of the modern artist, who must live in a world where what Yeats called Unity of Being is impossible – a world of division, where body and mind work separately, not moving as one, where the artist's motive and subject is his struggle with himself" (qtd. in Unterecker 38). Yeats' poetry shows that ideal leaders are concerned about the Unity of Being and the Unity of Culture, whereas corrupt leaders are indifferent to both unities which are prerequisites to bring back order and harmony and to get rid of the crisis of modern life. Yeats has used the word "abstraction" – the isolation of occupation, or class or faculty – as the opposite of Unity of Being (qtd. in Allt and Alspach 397). The heroes of "Easter 1916" suffer an abstraction which Yeats associates with not only "modernity, logic and materialism", but also "rhetoric, propaganda, Marxism, and much else" (Allison 194). For him, "abstraction" does not mean aesthetic failure; rather, it means fundamental poverty at cognitive and political levels.

The ideological conflict between Maud Gonne and Lady Augusta Gregory, who are two important characters in the poetry of Yeats and who played a vital role in his life, has further intensified the crisis in his poetry. Yeats' poetry vividly describes these two personalities, who hold diametrically opposite ideological views and positions. Maud Gonne, an Irish Nationalist revolutionary, activist and "fierce political agitator" was determined to bring back freedom to Ireland even at the expense of bloodshed and actively took part in the Anglo-Irish war (Pinto 100). In contrast, Lady Gregory, an Irish writer, playwright, a guiding light of the Abbey Theatre, and "a woman of considerable literary ability with a great enthusiasm for the arts and a wide knowledge of Irish legend and folklore", who played an important part in reviving interest in Irish literature at the beginning of the 20th century, believed in getting back the liberty of Ireland not through violence but through the parliamentary process (Pinto 100). Many of Yeats' poems including "Adam's Curse", "No Second Troy", "Among School Children" and "A Bronze Head", represent Maud Gonne, who is described as "Helen, Leda, Pallas Athene, The Countess Cathlees, Rose [and] Phoenix" (Conner 72), by which the poet delineates a rigid, extreme and destructive woman, but nowhere in his poetry has he evaluated Lady Gregory with such epithets. In "A Bronze Head" the poet writes how he regrets the political activity and agitation of Maud Gonne. For him, Gonne's political fanaticism could bring nothing but ruin and degradation

to Ireland. The poet writes in the poem: "I saw the wildness in her and I thought / A vision of terror that it must live through / Had shattered her soul" (16-18). The 'wildness' and the 'terror' that the poet observed in the personality of Maud Gonne would bring misery to Ireland, so he continues criticising her thus: "An intellectual hatred is the worst" ("A Prayer for My Daughter" 57). To Yeats, she debased herself by resorting to political violence and taking part in irrational party politics. In front of Maud Gonne, there were two possible ways to be taken; one being "broomstick" the other is "distaff" and she chose the broomstick which means "the witches' hats" (Unterecker 28). In contrast, Lady Gregory figures as the embodiment of natural aristocracy, aristocratic grace, dignity, equanimity and so on. Poems like "Coole Park, 1929", "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931", "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing", and "My Descendants", picture Lady Gregory positively. Her qualities are nurtured in time-honoured customs and ceremoniousness. "She became for him an image of aristocratic courtesy, too well-bred not to be humble, too assured not to be simple and direct in speech" (Unterecker 29). The poet thought that Lady Gregory was a source of strength for him as is clear from a letter he wrote to Mario M. Rossi after Lady Gregory's death. He writes in it; "I have lost one who had been to me for nearly forty years my strength and my conscience" (qtd. in Conner 79). She had a steadfast personality and Yeats was blessed with her firmness and care. To Yeats, both her estate and her person seemed a survival of an aristocratic past more esteemable than the present-day world. In "Coole Park, 1929" the poet writes that he "meditate[s] upon a swallow's flight / Upon a[n] aged woman and her house" (1-2). This "woman's powerful character / Could keep a swallow to its first intent" (18-19). She was the source of all "Great works" (5) and her house was where "traveler, scholar, poet" (25) could use as a resource. In this poem, Lady Gregory is seen as a fixed "compass-point" (21) around which other idealist leaders were "whirl[ing]" (21) because to them she was a "laurelled head" (32). Inspired by Lady Augusta Gregory, Yeats longed for a "spiritual and intellectual unity of self to be achieved by seeking one's opposite – the anti-self" (Allison 186). In fact, the ideological difference between two kinds of people had created another conflict in his society and so Yeats tried to portray the conflict created by political leaders who could be "caricatured as Paudeen" (Allison 186). Throughout his life, the poet was in favour of the kind of cultural nationalism that was fostered by both Lady Augusta Gregory and her son, O' Leary. In the poem, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" the poet writes, "My country is Kiltartan Cross, / My countrymen Kiltartan's poor," (5-6). He uses the figures of Irish Airman and Lady Gregory in his poetry both as individuals and archetypes. He emphasized personalities such as Lady Gregory because he believed that art and cultural nationalism are much more important than political fanaticism, revolutionary agitation and insular nationalism.

The crisis depicted in Yeats' poetry has also been expressed by a contrast between the glorified past and the degraded present. For him, whole the past was ennobling, the present is ignoble. In "The Gyres" the poet writes that "… ancient lineaments are blotted out. / Irrational streams of blood are staining earth" (4-5) and "we that look on but laugh in tragic joy" (8). Though the 'ancient lineaments' are gone, we (modern men) "[he]ave no sigh" and "no tear drop[s]" (11); therefore, the poet laments for the nobility of the past: "A greater, a more gracious time has gone" (12). Yeats observed that people suffered from

agony and frustration. Everything was degenerating and people from every walk of life were sinking lower and lower in corruption. The values, norms and traditions of the past were gradually decaying: "Ancestral pearls all pitched into a sty / Heroic reverie mocked by clown and knave" ("A Bronze Head" 26-27), so Yeats urges his contemporaries and successors to hold onto the tradition of glorious work which the Indomitable Irish had upheld over the years. The poet urges:

> Irish poets, learn your trade,
> Sing whatever is well made,
> Scorn the sort now growing up
> All out of shape from toe to top,
> Their unremembering hearts and heads
> Base-born products of base beds. ("Under Ben Bulben" V. 1-6)

Being bewildered, 'the sort' or 'now growing up' artists desecrate and mutilate Irish art. Artists of the past were a source of inspiration and led people to the Unity of Being and the Unity of Culture, while the 'now growing up' artists mislead people with their 'base-born products'. In 1901 Yeats wrote in his essay "Ireland and the Arts" that he desired to "recreate the ancient arts, the arts as they were understood . . . when they moved a whole people and not a few people who have grown up in a leisured class and made this understanding their business" (152). The poet was disillusioned with the present world because it was sordid and materialistic. Sordid materialism compels him to escape to the world of fairies in Irish folklores. He always contrasts between the Irish folklores or faery land and the urban life or work-a-day world. Faery land is free of the toils and anxieties of the present-day world. In the real world life without conflicts and frustration is impossible and so the poet in "The Stolen Child" writes:

> Come away, O human child!
> To the waters and the wild
> With a faery, hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand. (9-12)

The complexity of modern life creates crisis and this world is 'full of weeping'. The theme of crisis through the oppositional binary between the noble past and the ignoble present is also revealed in the poem "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen". The poet opens the poem saying "Many ingenious lovely things are gone" (I. 1), a theme which he continues in subsequent stanzas. Yeats wrote this poem during the 1920s when the violent Anglo-Irish War had broken out. The poet's lamentation over lost peace and lost hope is obvious when he writes:

> Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
> Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
> Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
> To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
> The night can sweat with terror as before

> We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
> And planned to bring the world under a rule,
> Who are but weasels fighting in a hole. (I. 25-32)

What is clear here is that there is no peace in the world now. Sleep is ruined by nightmares. Bloodshed is everywhere. The drunken soldiers are untouched even after murdering a mother. Night becomes a time of terror. People cannot but sweat and tremble due to the panic happenings of night. No man is any longer a man rather he/she becomes a weasel – the symbol of cruelty. Liberal hopes have gone up in smoke, since we all become weasels fighting in a hole. Today, all men are helpless and their walk is controlled by the "barbarous clangour of a gong" (II. 10). Those who "dreamed to mend / whatever mischief seemed / To afflict mankind," (III. 26-28) are now "crack-pated" (III. 30) because, not only the "winds of winter blow" (III.29) around them but also "evil gathers head" (VI. 5) and "Herodias' daughters have returned again" (VI.6). Here, Herodias's daughters signify destruction. Throughout the poem, we see that the poet explicitly manifests the contrast between the noble past and the ignoble present.

The contrast between the colonized and the colonizer; between Ireland and the British Empire; the dominated and the dominant further underscore the crisis in contemporary society depicted in the poetry of W. B. Yeats. In the poem "Leda and the Swan" the poet explicitly shows how the weak are suppressed and, exploited by the strong, and depicts the mythical seduction of Leda by Zeus. Though the later is an established theme, the exploitation of the powerful over the weak cannot be denied. One of the themes of this poem is that Ireland, being a colonized country, was dominated, exploited and oppressed by England. If we interpret it from gender consciousness, we see that a woman is seduced or raped by a man, which also focuses on the contrast between the oppressed and the oppressor. Terence Brown evaluates the poem thus; "'Leda and the Swan' … contextualize[s] the contemporary violence and terror" by dramatizing "a moment of brutal assault and rape" (441). Masculine violence and colonial aggression are clear when the poet says, "A sudden blow: the great wings beating still" (1). The quoted line deserves our attention. The phrase 'sudden blow' indicates sudden attack, which in terms of colonial perspective shows the British invasion of Ireland. Moreover, it is an act of aggression of men against women. In both cases, we see the contrast between the dominated and the dominant or the oppressed and the oppressor, which ultimately brings out the theme of crisis. In the sestet of this sonnet the poet writes:

> A shudder in the loins engenders there
> The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
> …………………………
> Being so caught up,
> So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
> Did she put on his knowledge with his power
> Before the indifferent beak could let her drop? (9-10, 12-15)

The images of 'broken wall' and 'burning roof and tower' directly expose the political relationship of Ireland with England. These images also recall the images of "My wall is loosening" ("Meditations in Time of Civil War" VI. 4) and "Incendiary or bigot" (Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" I. 45) with which the poet depicts the identity crisis that Ireland faced at that time. Declan Kiberd rightly comments about the poem when he writes "it [is] an allegory of Yeats's complicated feelings about England's relation to Ireland" (qtd. in O' Neill 162). What is clear is that the British Empire had imposed its imperial outlook over the Irish. The engendered identity crisis among the Irish afterwards spurred them to fight against British rule. Yeats was thus in favour of a nativism which is "a form of nationalism that is anti-imperialist yet derived from imperial structures of thought; like imperialism, it insists on an absolute distinction between the colonizer and the colonized, but it praises the colonized rather than denigrating them" (Howes 207). Colonialism, in fact, "crippled Irish culture by suppressing the native traditions, importing a vulgar English popular culture to Ireland, and ensuring that such art would serve nationalist propaganda rather than the vision of the individual artist" (Howes 218). Irish writers, suggest Yeats, should not try to cater to popular tastes or advocate political causes in their work; rather, they should have "no propaganda but that of good art" (Howes 218). The cost of British rule in Ireland was material in a conventionally political sense, involving wars of extermination and persecution. Though the British colonial power invaded the Irish social, cultural and political life and tried to destroy their identity, Irish nationalist leaders like O' Leary, and Robert Gregory fought against the oppression of the British rule to assert their cultural nationalism. The poem "Easter I916" was written in response to the uprisings against British Rule taking place in Ireland during World War 1. In this poem Yeats describes how Irish patriots had enacted a heroic conflict with England to get freedom for the country because the obsession with the liberation of Ireland made Irish Republicans an unchanging object in a world of change and flux. The heroes of the rebellion – "MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse" (76-77) – become symbols of heroic martyrdom and their history becomes blood-soaked. The lines "What is it but nightfall? / No, no, not night but death; (66-67)" evidence nothing but bloodshed. Throughout the poem, Yeats' use of the refrain "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born" also indicates bloodshed because the beauty which is born out of these deaths is born at the expense of life. Marjorie Perloff aptly comments: "What has been born is indeed a terrible beauty – sublime, awful [and] irreconcilable" (238). The poem, in fact, reveals a conflict replete with atrocity, violence and killing between the dominated and the dominant and thus highlights the crisis evident in contemporary society. Allison says, "The final instance of the oxymoron "terrible beauty" might suggest admiration and renewed hopes of redemption, but the poet suggests revolutionary action has been achieved at too high a price" (193). In the poem, the poet unveils the exploitation of the British and the emancipation from exploitation of the Irish.

The projection of anarchy of the modern world, the spiritual emptiness and the conflict between civilization and barbarism and between the modern world and the ancient world reveals the extent of the theme of crisis in the poetry of Yeats. In his poetry, he illustrates how mankind becomes a helpless victim of impersonal forces and how humanity

is in constant crisis within the cyclic repetition of the phases of the Great Wheel, which Yeats expresses by the term 'gyre'. In the beginning of "The Second Coming" the poet writes:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity. (1-8)

The above excerpt describes the present state of the world – its political upheavals, the chaos and cynicism of modern civilization and the haphazard brutality of contemporary culture. The falcon no longer hears the falconer, which signifies civilization's loss of authority, and the spiritual crisis of modern people who no longer believe in Christ. Christianity is itself out of the control of Christ. So a world is seen which is disintegrating and witnessing blood being shed and where mortal existence is in crisis. Anarchy is everywhere, and chaos has taken over. Violence and hatred have spread, evil advances and the only law the world knows is disorder. The use of the passive voice in lines (4-6) illustrates the chaotic scene. As Smith comments "the passive voice gives the impression of a process in which human agency is no more than a helpless instrument and victim of vast impersonal forces" (qtd. in Fletcher 24). An atmosphere of fanaticism and violence has spread and the best lack all conviction and the worst are overburdened with passionate intensity. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet represents the birth of Christ and a new era which must face the same crisis because the second coming is "A shape with lion body and the head of a man" (14) who is "pitiless" (15). Moreover, the second coming is envisioned as a "rough beast" (21), so the birth of the new era will also be destructive. This might be an intimation of World War II. Thus, the new birth will not be a release for mankind / humanity; rather it will initiate more trouble, ugliness, cruelty, bloodshed and anarchy. Therefore, "'The Second Coming' encapsulates the era's mood of crisis" that is everlasting. (Holdeman 77)

The preceding discussion leads to the conclusion that multifarious tensions and conflicts between various sets of binary opposites serve to substantiate the theme of crisis in society. Yeats believed that life is a dramatic tension between contradictory entities. It is the tension between opposite principles which creates the movement of the cycles, which is "Yeats's explicit statement of the theme of cyclical historical narratives of creation and destruction and the rise and fall of civilizations. The present is a nightmare of terrible bloodshed, chaos and destruction" (Drake 93). All the binary oppositions stated above present the world depicted by Yeats as chaotic, anarchic, conflicting, filthy and destructive. For him, to achieve deliverance from this chaotic situation of modern society, people should be imbued with the spirit of cultural nationalism or idealist nationalism rather than any cheapened form of nationalism or nativism.

III

Eliot, the most influential poet of the modern age, seeks to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century. Modernist writers like Yeats intended to capture a world, which they perceive as fractured, alienated, and denigrated. Eliot too also saw society as fragmented and sterile, and imagined that culture was crumbling and disintegrating. In his poems, especially in *The Waste Land,* he spontaneously blends myths with present situations to show the disintegrated state of modern world. George Watson says, "When a great poet dies, myths crowd in. In Eliot's case the myths began years before he died, which in natural enough when you [we] remember that he lived the life of an established poet for over forty years" (47). He was also interested in the divide between high and low culture, which he articulated through musical analogies. He believed that high culture, including art, opera, and drama, was in decline while popular culture was on the rise. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot blends high culture with low culture and shows that the people of both cultures are sexually frustrated or dysfunctional, unable to cope with either reproductive or nonreproductive sexuality. Eliot's Fisher King thus represents damaged sexuality, Tiresias represents androgynous, ambiguous, and puzzling sexuality, and the women chattering in "A Game of Chess" promiscuous, unscrupulous and unbridled sexuality. Eliot uses fragmented images of historical and literary narratives such as the quest for the Holy Grail, the Bible, Dante, Shakespeare and many more to mirror his society's reliance on old traditions, customs, and aesthetic styles in the process of reformation of a new Europe. He did not choose to write in a fragmented way arbitrarily; rather, he chose a medium and a style that would look to replicate what he saw in the world around him. Eliot's fragmentation and assemblage of historical narratives create a poem with new meaning out of something old. *The Waste Land* incorporates certain recurrent thematic motifs, most of which are pairs of binary oppositions. Some of the most common themes are Life/Death; Fertility/Sterility; Love/Lust; Voice/Silence; Past/Present; Sight/Blindness; Antiquity/Contemporaneity and so on.

Eliot, indeed, pursues a poetic scheme of antinomies and contraries to develop his theme of crisis in society. Cleanth Brooks remarks: "The waste land is built on a major contrast – a device which is a favorite of Eliot's and is to be found in many of his poems, particularly his later poems. The contrast is between two kinds of life and two kinds of death. Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awakening to life" (129). Eliot's contrast between life and death demonstrates that the people of the Waste Land, losing their spiritual values and ethos, are fascinated with death rather than life. "Death is the ultimate meaning of the Waste Land, for a people to whom its explanation is only a myth, for whom sex is destructive rather than creative, and in whom the will to believe is frustrated by the fear of life" (Williamson 129).

Both "The Burial of the Dead" and "Death by Water" sections of the poem refer specifically to the attractiveness of death. Death and rebirth for Eliot are integrally related to each other. In Eliot's poetry, water symbolizes death, which is a contrast with the common concept of water – a symbol of resurrection or life. In his portrayal of modern society, due to the wastelanders' lost-meaningful-contact with time-honoured beliefs and traditional

World War I generation. The world that Eliot portrays in *The Waste Land* is one in which faith in divinely ordered events and a rationally organized universe has been totally lost. Traditional order and fertility are replaced by sterility and waste. The poem is not just a reflection of individual hopelessness and despair, but a view of the total spiritual exhaustion that has overtaken the modern world. Sterile, modern-day human society is waiting for a revival or regeneration that may never come. In fact, the sterility of the modern waste land is emphasized through a range of parallels and contrasts, as Eliot draws on his wide knowledge of European culture and world religions. Eliot uses a network of references throughout the poem to highlight the sterility of London life and the London milieu which "represent a linked series of painful memories, regret, loss, resistance to life, and sordid sex" (Haffenden 384). He projects an image of degradation antithetical to the freshness and vitality of the past. The poet also represents the contrast between good and evil as well as past and present by three women characters, viz. Marie, the Hyacinth girl and Madame Sosostris, who are "presented so as to expose and dismiss any lingering hopes of renewal through a cultured aristocracy, through the experience of romantic love and through what is no more than a superstitious version of spirituality" (Wilson 84). Countess Marie, a woman with aristocratic background, the confidante of Empress Elizabeth of Austria, turns into a rootless refugee having no connection with family, community and nation. Her present rootlessness is obvious in the following lines:

> … coming over the Starnbergersee
> With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade
> And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
> And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
> Bin gar keine Russian, stamm aus Litauen, echt deutsch[1]. (8-12)

Although the story of the hyacinth girl and her man is a story of romantic love, it truly represents sterile love because their love is devoid of fertility. They live like "neither / Leaving nor dead" (40-41), which emphasises that Marie, a symbol of aristocracy, is leading a meaningless life. The last example the poet gives in the poem to outline the spiritual crisis of modern people is that of Madame Sosostris, a cunning and false fortune-teller. Despite her claims to foretell the future, neither of the cards she uses in fortune telling exhibits optimism; rather, every card she uses is a symbol of crisis in modern society. The card of the "drowned Phoenician sailor" (47) indicates something destructive, "Belladonna, the lady of the Rocks, / The lady of the situations" (49-50) is a sexual pimp, "the man with three staves" (51) refers to the Fisher King who is lusty, and "the one-eyed merchant" (52) denominates the modern man whose eye for commerce has survived although the eye of religion/ morality/ethics is blind. The final card which she does not find is "the Hanged Man" (55). This denotes that Christ is absent from this modern world. It might be pointed out that Eliot's characters are not only particularized and individualized but also appear as voices that express the monotony, ennui, inertia and uncertainty of modern people.

One crucial predicament that wastelanders confront is the constant failure of communication, which again delineates the theme of crisis. This is first illustrated in the Hyacinth girl scene (35-41). She indicates that she is unable to speak, and therefore cannot communicate with the protagonist. Similarly, the poor woman says "Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak" (112). She feels the need to communicate but does not know how. The wastelanders are all locked up in their prison cells, thinking of the keys that will release them, yet failing to get release from prison. Their egotism, vanity and selfishness keep them from understanding each other. Finally, the encounter between the typist girl and the young man reinforces the problem of selfishness. Neither the typist nor her visitor is interested in each other. The typist girl, who like other wastelanders is "trapped in complicity, in misery, [and] suffering", is quite careless about sex because it is loveless, routine work (Haffenden 383). Eliot expresses the distaste of the typist girl thus: "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over" (250). They just want to please themselves. Because of this narcissistic focus on the self, there is no communication between them. All these people are types. Therefore, their personal agony and suffering stand for the universal problems of human beings. David Seed thinks that in *The Waste Land* Eliot persistently implies "the absence of verbal communication reflect[ing] a lack of emotional contact. Love is referred to … as something missing or degraded" (104). Near the beginning of Section II Eliot refers to the story of Philomel who is transformed into a nightingale and who filled the entire desert with her "inviolable voice". "Inviolable" is a very important term here because it sets up a contrast between the purity of Philomel's voice and a sterile landscape; even more importantly, it leads to a contrast with the dirty ears which hear her song.

The contrast between love and lust by which Eliot exposes the corruption of sex in modern society also depicts the theme of crisis. Sylvan scene depicts the change of Philomel, who was raped by King Tereus, husband of her sister Procne. Eliot states, "And still she cried, and still the world pursues" (102). The change of Philomela took place many centuries ago; yet it is still happening today. A second instance of sex, which is unendorsed by Christianity, occurs in the pub scene (140-172). Albert wants a good time and he does not care who he hurts to get it. He is not concerned about the possibility of his wife dying in childbirth. The attitude prevalent in society is that lust must be gratified, no matter what the consequences are. This theme is also seen in the sexual encounter of the typist girl and the young man (222-256), who "become human specimens enacting a meaningless sexual ritual" (Seed 101). The typist is bored and tired. The young man is flushed and decided. Eliot states, "His vanity requires no response, / And makes a welcome of indifference" (III. 241-242). He is not interested in exciting or pleasing her; he is only obsessed with his own satisfaction. 'Love' in modern society is not really love – it is merely the loveless gratification of carnal desire. It is practical, boring, and meaningless. Love was once treasured, but is now reduced to sex for pleasure and nothing else. In addition, Eliot contrasts the love of Elizabeth and Leicester (279) with lovers of the present day (represented by the Thames daughters). The love of the past was enduring and real, while the love of the modern world is transitory and phony. Cleanth Brooks says:

Love is the aesthetic of sex; lust is science. Love implies a deferring of the satisfaction of the desire; it implies a certain asceticism and a ritual. Lust drives forward urgently and scientifically to the immediate extirpation of the desire. Our contemporary waste land is in large part the result of our scientific attitude – of our complete secularization. Needless to say, lust defeats its own ends. The portrayal of the change of Philomel, by the barbarous king' is a fitting commentary on the scene which it ornaments (138-139).

Moreover, Lil's position is grim and hopeless. Utterly worn down by poverty, pregnancy and abortion, she is nevertheless expected to make herself 'a bit smart' and give Albert 'a good time'. Her plight resembles the sad condition of Ophelia and they both become objects of pity. In this corrupt world of sensuality, they cannot expect happiness; rather, they are seen as tortured, cheapened and denigrated beings. We can behold a contrast between man and woman in which the later is subjugated by the prior, revealing a crisis in power relations.

The poem's constant shifting from the present to the past and vice versa further underscores the theme of crisis. The ancient myths, classical legends, allusions to old literary masterpieces, landmarks in world history are all frequently juxtaposed in the context of contemporary events and personalities, casting a fresh and illuminating light on both the past and the present. Eliot was acutely aware of the conflicts, contradictions complexities and fragmentation taking place in his society. He offers a more general and much more complex contrast between the present and past by focusing on the symbol of the river Thames, where we see a depressing picture of the modern river in winter. In Eliot's poem the Thames is filthy and its 'nymphs' have used it for their sordid and clandestine sexual encounters. This past experience is linked ("Mixing / Memory with desire" 2-3) with a present yearning. Eliot writes, "And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke / Marie, hold on tight. And down we went (II. 13-16). The adult Marie is socially well-established and outwardly secure but she is inwardly restless and unsatisfied; she represents the typical individual of the chaotic modern world. Clarie Saunders comments: "Marie seems to me [her] by the social and political upheaval of the First World War but everyone, man or woman, whose apparently flourishing existence is, in fact, rootless" (48). In the central section of the poem, 'The Fire Sermon', the linking of present and past is achieved through the figure of Tiresias. In classical mythology Tiresias was distinctive for having experienced life and love both as a man and a woman. Eliot is utterly disillusioned about the society he has described as a waste land, but he does offer hope and a means of recovery. In Part V "What the Thunder Said", the three keywords of DA - Datta (give), Dayadhvam (sympathize) and Damayata (control) – are the keys to new life for the Waste Land. They are the antithesis of modern problems. If people learn to give, sex will gain new meaning as an expression of emotion and it will no longer be debased. If they sympathize with each other, they will be able to communicate their true feelings and listen to those of others. Finally, if they develop self-control, their faith will revive and they will no longer fear life or death.

"The Hollow Men" which is "a poem about the dilemmas of belief" and sometimes considered to be a mere appendage to *The Waste Land* also explores the theme of crisis (Cooper 55). This poem is charged with binary oppositions that spectacularly picture the crisis of hollow men of the modern waste land. The earth is itself a 'dead land' and the people living here are the 'living-dead'. The epigraph of the poem contrasts the soul and body: "Mistah Kurtz – he dead. / A penny for the Old Guy". Mister Kurtz, as we see in the novella, *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, is a European slave trader who had travelled to Africa in order to conduct his business; he is a character who lacks soul. So he is a true hollow man. And Old Guy Fawkes is a dummy/ puppet without body. Both represent physical and spiritual emptiness. At the very outset of the poem, the poet, showing the difference between the ideas of lack and abundance (hollow/stuffed), wants to voice what men lack and what they have in great quantities. The poem starts thus: "We are hollow men / We are the stuffed men. . ."(1-2) where hollow/ stuffed is a pair of binary opposites by which the poet shows the two different types of men or we can say double-standard of human mind – one being denuded of spirituality, the other is "Headpiece filled with straw" (4). This duality of human mind creates a crisis in society and gradually leads it to the dissection of its bond.   In the fifth part of the poem, the poet shows the opposition between 'idea/ reality', 'motion/act','conception/creation','emotion/response','desire/ spasm', 'potency/ existence' and 'essence/ descent', which comprehend both expectation and achievement together with failure in the last verse – 'falls the shadow' (68-90). To the poet, the people of this 'cactus land' do not have real value or significance, and so there are conflicts and crises everywhere. These conflicts and crises are responsible for demoralizing humanity and for destroying understanding, sympathy and respect. The outcome is an inescapable and inevitable split in the social fabric.

To sum up this section, we can say that by his use of myths, art of characterization, and description of the present situation of the world Eliot explores the theme of crisis as a split in society. His ideas are varied – "abstract and concrete, general and particular; and, like the musician's phrases, they are arranged, not that they may tell us something, both that their effects in us may combine into a coherent whole of feeling and attitude and produce a peculiar liberation of the war" (Miller, *Land* 157).

IV

We can conclude that Yeats and Eliot explore the theme of crisis in their poetry by pointing out conflicts or contrasts between Nature / civilization; faery land / present world; past / present; antiquity / contemporaneity; sterility / fertility; body / spirit; life / death; fire / water; resurrection / death; hollow /stuffed; low society / high society; rich/ poor; bourgeois / proletariat; men / women; voice / silence; active / inactive; good / evil; reality / appearance; pure / corrupt; natural / unnatural; philosophy / myth; master / slave; dominance / subordination; power/ weak and so on. They deplore the fragmentation of modern society, which once had strong traditions, customs, values and the like. The poets are unhappy because the modern world is not conducive to equality, fraternity, and solidarity – values essential to foster a sense of well-being, wholesomeness and harmony

in society. In modern society, like Eliot nobody– including Yeats– can connect anything. Everything is disjointed: "On Margate Sands/ I can connect/ Nothing with nothing" (*The Waste Land* 300-302). These two poets maintain that "what once was a unity, gathering all together, has exploded into fragments. The isolated ego faces the other dimensions of existence across an empty space. Subjects, objects, words, other minds, the supernatural – each of these realms is fragments of a broken world" (Miller, *Reality* 2). They have eloquently shown that in modern world, "the unseen God of Arnold or Tennyson becomes the dead God of the Nietzsche" (Miller, *Reality* 2). The absence of moral and ethical values gives rise to perennial anguish, disquiet and chaos. It is, however, noteworthy that though both Yeats and Eliot handle the theme of crisis, the ramifications of their treatment are strikingly varied. Individual and distinctive inflections in their treatment of the same theme resulting from such ramifications lend a special potency, relevance and significance to their literary achievements.

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Endnote

[1] "I'm not a Russian woman at all; I come from Lithuania, a true German."

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Re-presenting the margins: revisiting the Scottish countryside in L. G. Gibbon's *Sunset Song*

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I

In his *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* Raymond Williams comments on the gradual institutionalisation of the dominant (Anglo-American) version of modernism and the cooption of its subversive possibilities by the capitalist market dynamics, which it at least in some forms tried to challenge, or bypass, in the initial phase of its emergence in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century (*Politics* 35). As several critics have amply demonstrated, one of the defining features of this 'established,' market-governed tradition of modernism was a many-pronged ideological ambivalence in its response to social modernity. [1] Such ambivalence or inbetweenness of the modernists, which stands in conspicuous contrast to their aesthetic radicalism, as Williams has argued, was a part of the broader 'structure of feeling' of dominant cultural formations in their clash with emergent ones at a specific historical context. Hence Williams' suggestion that artistic and other institutional practices, 'these laws, constitutions, theories, ideologies, which are so often claimed as natural, or as having universal validity or significance, simply have to be seen as expressing and ratifying the domination of a particular class' (*Problems* 36-37). The dominant modernist discourses, more often than not, either prioritized the middle classes over the working classes, the masculine over the feminine, the urban over the provincial, the elite over the popular, or took an ambivalent stance in times of conflict between the two poles of these dyads. [2] The crises the hegemonic class, gender or space faced at the turn of the century and the culture of negotiations, new compromises and new institutional practices the crises generated have been subjects of extensive critical enquiry in several disciplines. The historian Eric Hobsbawm, for one example, has devoted an entire chapter, 'Who's Who or the Uncertainties of the Bourgeoisie' in his *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (165-91) to understand the nature of the culture of ambivalence which was one of the products of this crisis.

Williams considers the possibility of tracing 'an alternative [modernist] tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century' (*Politics* 35) that could fruitfully counter the ideology of ambivalence of the canonized metropolitan tradition of modernism. The politics of market economy has to be challenged, if at all, from outside its space, that is to saying the imperial metropolis in the age of modernism. The hegemony of the discourses of the centre has to be interrogated through discourses from the margin. This alternative tradition, it is hoped and believed, would be much closer in spirit to the late-nineteenth century avant-garde futuristic vision of making it new, its 'intent . . . to reintegrate art in the praxis of life' (Burger 86). In other words, for Williams, it would be 'a tradition which may address itself . . . for all our sakes, to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again.' The works that foreground perspectives of the working classes (and the peasantry), women, non-Anglo-American 'fringe' spaces, provincial/ rural cultures, through extensive use of modernist formal innovations, can make some salutary interventions in this regard. Such modernist works, apparently paradoxically, can also make the paradigm of the 'non-modern'/ 'regressive' spaces question the paradigm of the 'progressive' 'modern,' and thus help us understand better the grand narrative of modernity, whose pitfalls are increasingly evident in the alienation, fragmentation and anomie of our times.

In the context of these few initial comments on the culture of modernism, this paper seeks to explore how the Scottish 'modernist' novelist Lewis Grassic Gibbon (pen-name of James Leslie Mitchell, 1901-35) adopts various marginal ideological perspectives in *Sunset Song* (1932), the first novel of his trilogy *A Scots Quair* (1932-'34), in order to create an 'alternative' provincial discourse of modernism at the time of gradual institutionalisation of its dominant metropolitan tradition. Since it is not possible within the limited scope of this article to undertake a detailed discussion of all possible aspects of the author's ideologically 'non-modernist' aesthetics within a modernist stylistic framework, I wish to concentrate on a small set of interrelated issues pertaining only to one aspect of the novel, the problem of rural/ regional 'reconstruction' and its thematic, formal and ideological ramifications. The issues of class and gender, of course, will appear occasionally, for Gibbon's treatment of the Scottish rural and provincial space as a category of identity formation cannot be altogether separated from his exploration of other such categories. Not only does Gibbon's endeavor, the paper seeks to argue, offer a critique of the dominant modernist tradition by hinting at the possibility of an 'alternative' (marginal) modernism, at the same time it is marked by a departure from certain Victorian Realist fictional conventions. The Victorian Realist tradition abounds in novels set in the countryside and therefore offers rich ground for spatial imagination of the rural; but the discourses of the countryside presented in such novels, as Williams has shown, invariably foreground the perspectives of the absentee landlord, the gentry or the middle class, perspectives celebrated in the long pastoral tradition. I shall try to show how Gibbon not only contributes to a marginal provincial discourse of modernism—a movement that has largely been seen as a product of the metropolitan artistic sensibility—but also, in the process, departs from the dominant pastoral and middle-class tradition of dubious representation of the countryside.

II

L. G. Gibbon was born and brought up and lived his life in a socio-cultural location of multiple marginalities. This marginal location largely shaped his negotiations with the aesthetics and ideology of the contemporary culture of metropolitan modernism and modernity. Economically a member first of the peasantry and then of the working/ lower-middle class, spatially belonging to a peasant community (born in Aberdeenshire in the rural Scotland into an impoverished crofter family), culturally inhabiting the fringe space of Anglo-American modernism, he was shaped to participate in as well as interrogate the prevalent politico-ideological and literary-cultural discourses of his time. His Scottish national identity only contributed to this all-round condition of otherness. The traditional economic and cultural hegemony of England over 'backward' Ireland, Scotland and Wales reduced these three, in the formulation of Eric Hobsbawm, to the status of 'the Other Britain.'[2] Hailing from a rural place in a culture far away from the locus of power and groping for its identity within the Great British 'family,' Gibbon chooses as the theme of *A Scots Quair* the material, emotional and spiritual struggle and evolution of marginal peoples—first, the Highland Scottish peasantry and then the industrial working class. The reality of the peripheral class and cultural location of the author and his subjects is, again, mediated in the fictional framework through the dominant perspective of Chris, another marginal entity—a woman in a rabidly patriarchal culture. Here is one of a few instances of a male author writing an entire trilogy with a woman's as the most prominent, if not the 'central,' perspective. Gibbon's narrative space in the trilogy is thus teeming with possibilities of multi-layered interventions in the hegemony of the dominant metropolitan middle class masculinist discourses of modernism.

Whether this is a consciously adopted strategy on the part of the author is a matter of conjecture. But one understands that the stage has been prepared for grappling with these discourses —often naturalized by what Williams calls the 'metropolitan forms of perception'—from outside the space of institutionalized modernism. The trilogy, thus, presents itself with the possibility of exploring this modernism

> . . . with some of its own sense of strangeness and distance, rather than with the comfortable and now internally accommodated forms of its incorporation and naturalization. This means, above all, seeing the imperial and capitalist metropolis as a specific historical form . . . It involves looking . . . from outside the metropolis: from the deprived hinterlands, where different forces are moving, and from the poor world which has always been peripheral to the metropolitan systems. This need involve no reduction of the importance of the major artistic and literary works which were shaped within metropolitan perceptions. But one level has certainly to be challenged: the metropolitan interpretation of its own processes as universals (*Politics* 47).

Such intervention from the periphery, and its interrogation of metropolitan universalism, of course, substantially draws its critical energy from the formal rubric of modernisms. Sara Blair draws attention to the fact that the plurality of modernisms has created adequate space for us to seek alternative voices to the dominant high Anglo-American modernism within the larger aesthetic category of modernism itself. Modernist formal innovations could be, and were, she argues, employed for such interventions. Blair's argument has obvious echoes of the Brechtian assertion that it is the use of forms and techniques from specific cultural-ideological perspectives and with compatible 'intentions' that make the forms and techniques radical. Blair contends:

> In a vast array of contexts and places, writers during the era of high Modernism and beyond adapted its formalism and techniques, even its defining idioms, often so as to contest its political commitments. This was especially true for certain women, African-American, and socialist writers —what we can cautiously, with qualification, term writers on the left—attempting to open new public spaces or spheres for the expression of varied responses to modernity, and various political and social claims on its realities (Levenson ed. 162-63).

Gibbon, according to this definition a leftist modernist writer, attempts at re-presenting a marginal Scottish peasant culture from its own perspective, thereby departing on the one hand from the 'metropolitan forms of perception,' and from the trend of portraying the countryside from the perspectives of the aristocratic landlord or the distant middle class city-dweller observer on the other. His unromantic, unsentimental and unidealistic representation of the rural space, that refuses to indulge in a facile glorification of the countryside, offers a critique of these perspectives, which have been central to the romantic heritage of the British pastoral imagination.[3] In his project of rural reconstruction Gibbon shows from within the problems plaguing Kinraddie life and thus challenges the privileged pastoral vision of the countryside as a locale of eternal and uninterrupted bliss. The nature of the metropolitan intellectual hegemony is thus mediated in his work in its discursive complexity, and is not reduced to the banal binary of the country and the city. Such a complex, realistic representation involves an interrogation of the age-old myth of the 'organic community' and frees his treatment of the issue of class of the simplistic reductionism that characterised a whole lot of literary works produced in Britain around the same time, the 1920s and the '30s, mostly by city-centric middle class 'Marxist' intellectuals.[4] At the same time, *Sunset Song* is an example of how modernist techniques can be used successfully for a representation of the countryside, which has been either ignored in high Modernist discourses, or given a politically stabilizing representation that undervalued the (necessary) course of political-historical development.

Gibbon looks at the Scottish provincial reality from the perspective of the actual inhabitants of the region, the peasantry, and later, the working class. At one level the trilogy, as a whole, fictionalises the classic theory of social evolution from the country to the city. *Sunset Song* offers a discourse of the gradual dissolution of a peasantry and its unsuccessful

struggle against the invasion of a rent-and-wage form of agriculture. It is the self-definition of the peasantry, their construction of a distinct identity for themselves and the ways they innovate in order to grapple with prevalent historical forces, which constitute the narrative fabric of *Sunset Song*. If gender-inequality, lack of access to institutional education and technological modernity, and a somewhat rigid refusal to come to terms with the external world of momentous changes are some of the negative aspects of this self-fashioning, a positive emphasis on the communality of spirit, a belief in the uninterrupted continuity of life force in the region and a close, nourishing association with land and nature are the sources of self-subsistence of this people. It is this strength derived from a material as well as emotional association with people and nature that Williams describes as 'spiritual.' In such 'spirituality,' in Williams' formulation, 'the bitter memories of the clearances, the Highland laments, the legends of prehistory are woven into a cloth that both covers and defies poverty' (*The Country* 269).

The author's invocation of this 'spiritual' strength in the novel takes mainly two forms—exploration of an agrarian class-identity and construction of a regional subjectivity through an emphasis on the local. One of the ways in which the class-identity of the peasantry is conceived is politicization of the intense physicality of their life. The essential physicality of hard work is dealt with in its dual reality of pleasure and pain, so that any hollow aestheticisation of agrarian life becomes suspect. The harvest episode (67-71), for instance, is described from the perspective of an insider, a participant in the prosaic physical process, and not from the perspective of the detached observer. Thus collective work is represented in its contradictions, neither condescendingly reduced to a 'mere' physical activity as opposed to 'superior' mental activities, nor celebrated or valorised. There is a corresponding mixture of the prosaic and the poetic in the use of language in this part of the narrative. The grueling hardship of '. . . your back near cracked and broke with the strain of the bending' (68) is followed by the temporary relief and savory success of 'but in three days time the ley was cut, the yavil glowed yellow across the dykes and they moved to that without stop' (69), only to resurface in the anxiety that dissolves the border between the physical and the emotional: 'it came on real blistering weather of heat, but hardly you'd bear to touch on the wood of the reaper shaft when you soused the horses, so hot it grew. Kinraddie gasped and then bent to its chaving again, this heat wouldn't last, the rain was due, God help the crops that waited cutting them.'

Such collective physicality and close association with the natural habitus emphasize not only the positive reality of the complex totality of man as an individual, as a part of his community and as an integrated entity of the bio-physical natural order, but also a primitive mode of existence in which servile dependence on nature turns the bonding into crippling bondage. This unromantic vision of life in Kinraddie, participation in or close identification with the process of physical work rather than its neutral observation, and an emphasis on the collective rather than the individual dimension of work, are features of the genre of 'working class fiction,' though the working class in the technical sense does not figure in *Sunset Song*. There are works involving the working class produced broadly at the same time, whose treatment of the work process and the marginal people is ideologically

dubious. One can, for instance, compare Gibbon's representation of the peasantry and rural nature with that of D. H. Lawrence's. Like Gibbon, Lawrence migrated from the country to the city, but unlike Gibbon he went through an upward class-migration. His representation of the rural (man and nature), more often than not, is that of a physically and emotionally distant observer who approaches the whole experience from outside, from an alien framework. Like Gibbon, Lawrence never glorifies country life in a romantic fashion, but nor does he emphasize the political in it. In rural representation, what characterizes Lawrence is an evasion of the literal, as it is. There is almost typically a metaphorical import, as in the first chapter of *The Rainbow* that transforms hardship and exploitation into essential vitality and regenerative physical prowess:

> Heaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? . . . They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in the autumn . . . Their life and interrelations were such: feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to the furrow for the grain and became smooth and supple after their plowing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire . . . They mounted their horses, and held life between the grip of their knees (3-4).

In stark contrast with Gibbon's account of the harsh harvesting process, the political here is nullified by the symbolic, the poetic. In such aestheticisation of the political, the reader is granted the role of the safe, distant, complacent observer; he is allowed to identify with a particular social position, which is legitimized through such accounts. It is precisely this identification-separation-fetishisation technique that creates a smooth narrative of complacent roundness and draws the reader 'within,' something Brecht critiques in his model of distanciation-engagement-inclusion-contradiction because it keeps the reader 'with' it.[5] The Brechtian emphasis on the inorganicity of form that allows contradictory presences to coexist has to be seen in contradistinction with the Lukacsian idea of 'totality' in fictional representation that resolves all contradictions into a seamless whole. If Lawrence's passage is an example of smooth 'totality,' or what Stephen Heath calls 'fetishistic happiness,'[6] Gibbon's employment of an inorganic modernist form that relies on the principle of contradictions substantially reduces the possibility of unproblematic readerly identification with the narrative world. Such an inorganic form is compatible with his thematic debunking of the myth of 'organic community' of the British countryside. The smooth narrative of rural nostalgia gives way in the novel to an incongruous combination of the prosaic and the poetic that marks Chris and her brother Will's ambivalent attitude to men and nature in Kinraddie. They are simultaneously attracted to and repelled by them: 'He would whisper his hate to Chris as they lay . . . And Chris would cover her ears and listen, turning this cheek to the pillow and that, she hated also and she didn't hate, father, the land, the life of the land . . .' (30-1).

A concrete comparison of the passage from *The Rainbow* with the first paragraph of 'Ploughing,' the opening chapter of the body of *Sunset Song*, in which Gibbon presents

a partially poetic account of life at Kinraddie, would help us substantiate the point (allow me this rather long quotation):

> Below and around where Chris Guthrie lay the June moors whispered and rustled and shook their cloaks, yellow with broom and powdered faintly with purple, that was the heather but not the full passion of its colour yet. And in the east against the cobalt blue of the sky lay the shimmer of the North Sea, that was by Bervie, and maybe the wind would veer there in an hour or so and you'd feel the change in the life and strum of the thing, bringing a streaming coolness out of the sea. But for days now the wind had been in the south, it shook and played in the moors and went dandering up the sleeping Grampians, the rushes pecked and quivered about the loch when its hand was upon them, but it brought more heat than cold, and all the parks were fair parched, sucked dry, the red clay soil of Blawearie gaping open for the rain that seemed never-coming. Up here the hills were brave with the beauty and heat of it, but the hayfield was all a crackling dryness and in the potato park beyond the biggings the shaws drooped red and rusty already. Folk said there hasn't been such a draught since eighty-three and Long Rob of the Mill said you couldn't blame *this* one on Gladstone, and everybody laughed except father, God knows why (25).

The poetic, symbolic and the erotic in Lawrence's passage is not altogether absent here, but what is different is the recurrent punctuation of the smooth and beautiful with contradictions, 'which refuse to blend smoothly with one another, cutting across the action rather than neatly integrating with it . . . the audience is constrained into a multiple awareness of several conflicting modes of representation' (Eagleton 66). A 'distanciating' modernist narrative of disjunction—of what Brecht called 'order without hierarchy'—is created. This play of contradictions is primarily rendered through the conjunction 'but' and the close coexistence of the apparently beautiful but actually dreary possibility of a better world and its continuous deferral. The passage is in the traditional third person omniscient narrative, until in the last sentence several perspectives of the 'folk,' of Long Rob, are brought in; an enigmatic 'you' referring to the 'folk,' or the characters inside the narrative, and also possibly to the reader outside it, is introduced; and the use of the single word 'father' strikes and compels the reader to go back to the first sentence to identify Chris Guthrie at the centre of this whole passage, a formulation of whose stream-of-consciousness, the reader now realises, the entire passage must have been. The reader is forced to be alert, and the possibility of identification is replaced by an alienation effect. The border between inside and outside the narrative, and between narrative past and present dissolves to make the reader actively participate in the rest of the narrative. The distance between the reader and the fictional world is put to question. A typically modernist narrative in form is thus employed for a politically progressive understanding of the traditional, non -technological existence of a marginal peasant culture languishing in a state of servile dependence on nature's bounty.

If construction of an unromantic class identity is one part of Gibbon's questioning of the myth of 'organic community' and high modernist metropolitan universalism, the other part of this enterprise is his fashioning of a regional subjectivity through an emphasis on the local and the concrete. The two are, of course, essentially implicated in each other. Indeed, spatio-cultural self-fashioning emerges as a vital ingredient in the formation of peasant culture in the narrative. In each of the first two novels in the trilogy, *Sunset Song* and *Cloud Howe*, which deal with life in the Scottish rural region Kinraddie and the provincial Segget respectively, an entire chapter is devoted to minute topographical presentation of the locale of representation. Significantly, this is not done in the third novel, *Grey Granite*, which chooses as its setting the urban space of Duncairn, which, being closer to (though it is not quite) a modern industrial city, is characterized more by monotonous urban typicality than by specific regional features. Also, because of the global nature of the movement of capital and the emergence and development of an international working class consciousness through the labour movement, Duncairn has lost the local emphasis so vitally retained by Kinraddie and Segget. Invocation in a number of ways of a sense of rootedness and of pride in a rich regional peasant cultural heritage is one means of creating the authentic flavour of the 'local' in the first two novels. The minute topographical realism that produces a visual, almost physical impact on the reader contributes in narrative terms to the goal of capturing the tempo-spatially immediate, the here and the now. But the present, as a part of a historical continuum, receives its meaning and validity only through an evocation of memories, through oral narrative forms like myths, legends and folklores in the novel.

Commenting on the relation of memory, historiography and storytelling in "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" Walter Benjamin invokes a distinction between 'epic' forms and 'novel' forms of narrative. The 'epic' forms, which directly or indirectly have an oral and communal character, have greater historiographical value than the written 'novel' forms: 'Any examination of a given epic form is,' for Benjamin, 'concerned with the relationship of this form to historiography. In fact, one may go even further and raise the question whether historiography does not constitute the common ground of all forms of the epic. Then written history would be in the same relationship to the epic forms as white light is to the colors of the spectrum' (Benjamin 95). Memory acts as a creator of tradition, not just an aesthetic tradition comprising the tellers and listeners of narratives across generations, but also a historio-cultural tradition submerged in the process of epical storytelling. Communal memory shapes the community's consciousness of its past, as also the modes of its dynamic, futuristic self-fashioning at present. The validity of absolute chronological categories like past, present and future, used to define 'progress' of communities, thus, becomes suspect in understanding the nature of representation of history in these epical genres. Drawing on Benjamin's suggestions in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," we can argue that in such 'epical' narratives informed by narrative functioning of memory, progress is understood not in terms of the teleological continuity of these distinct temporal categories, but in terms of a singular non-sequential 'abridged' perception of the three.

Oral elements, and communal memory functioning through them, are foundational to Gibbon's literary reconstruction of the alternative local 'history' from the people's perspective in Kinraddie, and to a lesser extent, in Segget. An aesthetically informed, non-linear, non-written, informal 'history from below' captures the essence of history as a sustaining heritage in popular consciousness, and as a source of emotional nourishment and spiritual subsistence, which makes struggle in the material life towards a better future possible. By continuous invocation of the past through myths, legends and folklores and ceaseless recourse to allusions, anecdotes, even gossip and rumours, in the quotidian life, the people in the Mearns try to locate themselves in their temporal and spatial universe. The mythical Golden Age, also a part of their collective regional identity, is mentioned several times in the first two novels. Gibbon thus draws attention to the essential narrativity and discursive formation of people's history which locates itself outside the pale of the dominant historiography of 'progress.' In his attempt at constructing an archaeology of regional history through a complex network of popular narratives and oral discourses, and locating these small 'works of fiction' in the material-emotional-spiritual history of the people and the place, the porous nature of the boundary between history and fiction as separate discourses is exposed. The two modes of knowledge-production converge and advance in a mutually informing process in the narrative. To take one example, *Sunset Song* opens thus:

> Kinraddie lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide-window, tearing at their throats. In the Den of Kinraddie one such beast had its lair and by day it lay about the woods and the stench of it was awful to smell all over the countryside, and at gloaming a shepherd would see it. . . And it ate up sheep and men and women and was a fair terror, and the King had his heralds cry a reward. . . So the Norman childe, Cospatric, that was young and landless and fell brave and well-armoured, mounted his horse in Edinburgh Town and came North. . . (1).

Almost all the features of Gibbon's historical reconstruction and formation of a regional identity through 'storytelling' can be found here: the predominantly peasant culture and the people's perspective which invokes the material past of a feudal character; a combination of the legendary, the mythological and the anecdotal with the historical; abridgement of different time-frames through memory; compression of space through travel in mythical times; the interface of the home and the world in a pre-technological ambience; an intimate, personal bonding between the teller and the listener of the narrative(s); accumulation of cultural heritage through orality across generations and the resultant erection of a tradition; a rambling, elaborate, unabbreviated, gradual unfolding of the narrative; an air of the storyteller's personal familiarity with the subject of narration (or, the insider's approach, 'an artisan form of communication' Benjamin, 91); and above all, the imagination of community and construction of cultural identity through time and

space and the people's obvious pride in recounting that 'history' which would serve as a source of strength at present.

The entire section—and also the rest of the novel—is replete with elements of folklore and anecdotes about past people and incidents, recounted by the insiders of the community. Phrases like 'they said', 'folk said' and 'some said' abound, especially in the first few sections. Such devices give the novel an 'epical' quality, which no more remains a creation, or pronunciation, by a single, central, godlike 'author.' 'Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn,' Benjamin writes, 'and among those who have written down the tales, it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers' (1). Gibbon's storytelling/ 'historytelling' enterprise thrives upon the decentered voices of innumerable anonymous storytellers. The 'aura,' or creative authority, of the 'author' is thus replaced by the mediatory role of an authorial persona, a mere pivotal consciousness. As long as it is the general life of Scotland, Aberdeen or Kinraddie that the narrator deals with, he uses such narratorial devices as 'they said,' 'folk said' and so on. It is only when he zooms in on the individual character of Chris or her family that such devices are replaced by an omniscient third person narration. Thus, in the first case, the narrator's omniscience is challenged from within; he is only one of the narrators in a community of narrators. Dealing with collective consciousness, therefore, demands a flexible and accommodative technique that is lost in the representation of an individual, where the individual narrator is presented as adequate. The "Drilling" section, which concentrates mainly on the fortunes of Chris from her own perspective, for one example, is narrated mostly through third person omniscient narrative. One of the rare occasions here when 'folk said' is used deals with the process of harvest, the general productive life of the community. Through reduction in the authority of the 'author,' exposition of the fundamental materiality and historicity of a fictional narrative, and foregrounding of the fictional characters as creators of their own history through narrative self-reflexivity, Gibbon challenges the aura of the work of art. The sovereignty of the institution of art itself, which the 'historical avant-garde' wanted to challenge at the initial phase of modernism, is questioned.

Capturing the oral linguistic intonations, the vibrating colloquial nuances of the language of the people, the cadence, gait and spirit of the local form of the vernacular was an absolute imperative for any degree of authenticity of such an 'epical' project of historical reconstruction. Gibbon's polyphonic prose style draws richly on local speech rhythms, idiomatic patterns and the vocabulary of the soil. The linguistic or communicational life, as well as the creative, conceptual or spiritual life of a people cannot be dissociated from its material life. The language of verbal communication, Marx argued, is first of all an extension of a more fundamental mode of communication in the material life of a people, that is, the 'language of real life.' Linguistic relationship is a superstructure based on the foundation of the bonding of shared physical experience of the process of labour and exploitation:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest form (8).

Failure to devise a language compatible with the material and the metaphysical life of a people, that is, producing *their* history in the powerful 'standard' form of a language, in the language of the dominant culture—in this case, that of the metropolitan middle class—would amount to distorting and falsifying history as a whole. It would also imply a subsumption of the distinct, independent but marginal discourse within the dominant discourse of history and culture. Indeed, inventing a proper language and form for representation of the 'alien' reality of a marginal population or culture has always posed difficulty for the metropolitan middle-class writer.

It has been equally challenging for the agrarian/ working class writer to accommodate the experiences or sensibilities of the subaltern within the available language and form. The dominant literary language, forms, and genres are produced by the hegemonic culture which also controls the complex dynamics of the institutions of publication, criticism and readership. Raymond Williams thus comments on the difficulty that besets the 'marginal' writer of an alternative tradition:

> Their [the working class writers'] characteristic problem was the relation of their intentions and experience to the dominant literary forms, shaped primarily as these were by another and dominant class . . . Within a culture and especially a literature in which contemporary social experience had become important and even central, as is clearly the case in English after the bourgeois consolidation of the eighteenth century, the situation of the working-class writer is exceptionally difficult. In verse he may have the support of traditional popular forms, and these produced, in fact, an important body of street ballads and work songs . . . The formal features of the novel, on the other hand, had no such correspondence (*Problems* 218-19).

The problem, thus, is essentially one of 'translation': translation of 'alien,' 'exotic' experiences into the form and 'language' available within the horizons of expectations of the metropolitan middle-class readership. Gibbon's reshaping of the available novel form through its 'oralisation,' and 'epicalisation' is his way of negotiating the challenge at one level. The abundance of folklores, legends and anecdotes adds to it an elasticity that makes it a medium flexible and receptive enough, like ballads in verse, to accommodate the

alternative cultural experience. In the more complex case of language, he had to strike a balance between the authentic language of the people and the place he deals with and that of the culturally hegemonic readership. Hence his diffident 'Note' in the beginning of *Sunset Song*, where he compares his tricky position with that of a Dutchman writing in German about 'Lekside peasants,' presumably for a German audience (xiii). This opens up new linguistic and formal possibilities for him, resulting in a heteroglossia that finally contributes to his larger project of questioning metropolitan universalisms from a provincial cultural space through pluralisation of language itself. In moulding the English 'literary' language into the rhythms and nuances of the rich oral possibility of the North-East countryside Scots, the author enhances the expressive potentials of the Standard English language and thereby transforms it into a more democratic medium suitable for the use of people in the margins. As Thomas Crawford notes in the introduction to *Sunset Song*, 'It was Gibbon's strategy in the introductory note to pretend that he was writing in English, with only a few modifications. But in reality he achieved something rather different. He cloaked the Scots vocabulary in English spelling, writing 'blether' as 'blither', 'blaw' (to boast) as 'blow,' 'braw' (fine, handsome) as 'brave' and so on, easing the reading for non-Scots. But for native speakers, the pronunciations and meanings automatically given to words like 'ongoing' and 'childe' strengthen their convictions that they are participating in a life that is both familiar and national, though gone, perhaps, for ever' (x-xi). Gibbon's reconstruction of the English language is a means by which the local identity of the marginal Scottish people finds expression in the more powerful culture.

In the context of the relational economy of European cultures and nations marked by hegemony and hierarchies, Gibbon's is clearly a case of the 'empire' writing back through inscription of its long 'otherised' self upon the language of the centre. His 'progressive' modernist intention, in contrast to the 'ambivalent' high-modernist sensibility, thus finds an appropriate expression in his multi-dimensional, pluralistic intervention in the sphere of language. It is not just a matter of Scotland rewriting the language of England and a peripheral rural space 'provincialising' the discourse of metropolitan London; it is also about the peasantry reshaping and writing itself in the language of the middle class, a marginal culture 'feminising' the originally 'masculine' English language by endowing it with a new flexibility, fluidity and therefore a novel accommodative- creative possibility; and finally, it involves the marginalized culture of orality reinventing itself through intervening in the dominant culture of writing. Gibbon's linguistic iconography, therefore, apart from holding crucial ethnographic implications, explores the possibility of making modernism itself much more sensitive towards the cultures of the margins.

Through a politically conscious synthesis of modernist and realist formal features in a 'flexible modernist' technique, and a polyphonic accommodation of the voices of postmodernism, *Sunset Song* challenges the silencing politics of both traditional Realism and institutionalized Modernism from the perspectives of the marginal. For Gibbon, as for us students of literature and culture, critically exploring the reality of marginality and its literary ramifications is a step towards understanding the politics of representation and erasure, which has always been a marker of the economy of power inhabited by the

dominant and subservient 'structures of feeling' in a given cultural context. *Sunset Song* aesthetically challenges various levels of erasure of the marginal through interrogating modernism from outside its ideologies of metropolitan middle–class universalism. It is one such 'neglected work left in the wide margin of the century,' to recall Raymond Williams' formulation, that reminds us of the possibility of an alternative modernist tradition that deserves much more critical attention today, when it is being increasingly difficult to look forward 'to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again' (*Politics* 35).

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Endnote

[1] The socio-political ambivalence of several writers belonging to the dominant tradition of modernism has received extensive critical attention. Apart from the well-known orthodox Marxist positions and the works of Raymond Williams on the 'dubious' treatment of many modernists of the issue of class, one can profitably invoke the contribution of several critics—to take only a few examples, Lawrence Rainey, Sara Blair, Marianne Dekoven , Stanley Sultan, Andreas Huyssen, Benjamin Buchloh, Marshall Berman and so on—to the debate on the complex relationship between modernism and various aspects of social modernity, in the spheres of class, race and gender, fraught as they are with discursive silences and contradictions.

[2] This is obviously a rather general proposition that needs to be applied with a degree of flexibility to individual cases. All modernists even within the dominant tradition of modernism were not equally conservative, or radical, in their response to all spheres of social modernity. An individual with a robustly progressive attitude in one sphere might have a rather lukewarm, or even conservative, response to another. Compare, for one example, Virginia Woolf's position on the issue of gender with her take on that of class and race.

[3] Hobsbawm draws attention to the fact that 'Scotland and Wales are socially, and by their history, traditions and sometimes institutions, entirely distinct from England, and cannot therefore be simply subsumed under English history or (as is more common) neglected' (294). The traditionally weak economy of Scotland—which made it economically only an appendage of England—also ensured the historical cultural hegemony of England over this country.

[4] I am generally indebted to Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* for this part of my argument. The dominant cultural forms co-opt certain residual ones, Williams suggests, in order to thwart the birth of the emergent political energy. Williams underscores the socio-political significance of such pastoral visions thus:

> It mattered very much whether an experience of the country—in its whole reality, from a love of the land and its natural pleasures to the imposed pains of deprivation, heavy and low-paid labour, loss of work and a place—was ranged for or against them [the peasantry]. . . A selection of the experience—the view of the landlord or the resident, the 'pastoral' or the 'traditional' descriptions—was in fact made and used, as an abstract idea, against their children and their children's children: against democracy, against education, against the labour movement. In this particular modern form, the rural retrospect became explicitly reactionary, and given the break of continuity there have been very few voices on the other side (*The Country*: 271).

Gibbon certainly is one of these 'very few voices.' One might add that such politics of representation of the countryside is by no means a part of the British literary imagination alone. The romantic and pastoral sensibility has its strong equivalents in dominant or residual forms in all parts of the world that have experienced a feudal world order, or gone through the process of industrialization and 'modernity.'

[5] Samuel Hynes's *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* is a fascinating account of the Middle class Marxist intellectual passion and fashion and a largely romantic treatment of the issues of class, artistic commitment and revolution and so on by a host of writers in England from the 1920s—the 'Red-Letter-Days'—to the World War II.

[6] Brecht was the first to theorise the ideological significance of 'identification' produced by literary/ theatrical texts. The aesthetic effect is created through an identification of the 'consciousness' of the reader/ audience with that of the characters/ actors inside the text. But this 'identification,' paradoxically, is produced by a mode of 'distanciation' and 'negation' that should be distinguished from 'separation.' Brecht discovers in Chinese painting the principle of 'montage,' guided not by synthesis, but by 'juxtaposition,' of apparently incoherent images. Thus an order without

an imposed wholeness or constraint is established; multiplicity of perspectives instead of an organic unity leads to a 'displacement,' 'estrangement' or 'separation' that thwarts the creation of 'empathy' in the reader/ audience. The principle of relative autonomy, of 'order within multiplicity without constraint,' active in such a conception of a work of art has progressive implications because it does not force the political elements to form mere parts of the whole, but allows for their free play. Fictionality of the work of art or representationality of the process of representation itself is foregrounded through 'defamiliarisation', and thus the 'aura' of the work of art is dispelled. This leads to a critically useful, dialectically produced 'knowledge.' Art as an institution is thereby connected with the praxis of life.

[7] See Stephen Heath, "Lessons from Brecht" in Francis Mulhern (ed.) *Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism*. Let us also remember in this context Walter Benjamin's invocation of the illusive technical 'perfectionism' of photography that creates beauty (Heath's 'fetishistic happiness') out of an imperfect crude reality which is hardly beautiful.

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Resistance of Achebe's 'Heroes' Okonkwo and Obi Okonkwo: Defeated in the Flux of Nigerian Society?

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the resistance of Achebe's two 'heroes' Okonkwo, the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart,* and Obi Okonkwo, the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease*. While Okonkwo takes up arms to preserve culture and tradition in a "things fall apart society", Obi Okonkwo's honesty and his love for Clara remain constant with him and he is "no longer at ease" in the flux of colonial Nigeria. In pre-colonial Nigeria, Okonkwo's resistance to the white man's religion, education and technology is defeated and Obi's desire for a corrupt-free Nigeria fails during British colonial rule. In line with this development, we find Okonkwo's son converting to Christianity. Eventually, Okonkwo commits suicide realizing that he is going to be defeated. However, the history of resistance does not end here and Okonkwo's and Obi's apparent defeats have far-reaching implications for Africa's subsequent anti-colonial struggle.

Because of his involvement in apartheid activities, Nelson Mandela, the South African leader, suffered bitterly for a long period of his life only to eventually help free South Africa from colonial rule. Though he had to stay in jail for more than twenty-seven years, he was finally successful in his mission. We can call him a "Hero" in this sense. This paper analyzes how Okonkwo, the protagonist of Chinua Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart*, and Obi, the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease,* resist and struggle to preserve an idyllic Nigeria. Though their efforts fail, it is not the end of the history of struggle for freedom since their apparent defeat is actually a step towards victory over colonial rule. 'Resistance' is a common human tendency. Whenever a group of intruders dominate people in settled lands, those people struggle to free themselves from bondage. In colonial relations of power, we often notice how the struggle for freedom continues even after subjugation and defeat.

In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said says: "After the period of 'primary resistance', literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes the period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a 'shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system'" (209). Okonkwo embodies someone at the vanguard of the period of the 'primary resistance' who takes up arms to restore the values of his society, but Obi accepts colonial domination and challenges only its corruption, which is the act of someone involved in 'secondary resistance'. However, both do not get justice in their lifetime. The oppressed are victims and even when they resist, they often cannot articulate decisively what they want to say. Okonkwo and Obi are thus two victims of a society in continuous flux. Both resist but the resistance of Okonkwo, the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart,* and Obi Okonkwo, the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease*, is weakened not only by the continuous unrest and violence of the people of pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria but also by the members of their own families. In the end, their fruitless resistance leads to their downfall. Both think about the welfare of the people in a way that goes against the values of their contemporaries. While Okonkwo tries to conserve Igbo culture and tradition in a "things fall apart society", Obi Okonkwo becomes upset with the corruption of colonial society. In his pre-colonial society Okonkwo's resistance crumbles against the white man's religion, education and technology; even the Christian god takes the place of the Igbo god at one point. Obi Okonkwo's desire for a beautiful, corruption-free Nigeria fails during British colonialism. Okonkwo is shocked when he sees his son Nwoye turn into a follower of western ideas. Ultimately, Okonkwo commits suicide when he perceives he is going to be defeated. On the other hand, Obi takes a bribe to pay back the huge loan he had taken and is arrested at last. Individually Okonkwo represents active resistance and Obi passive resistance. Okonkwo is the victim of pre-colonial changes in society and Obi of changes in Nigerian colonial society. Nevertheless, their individual defeats do not amount to failure in the ultimate analysis as their resistance becomes exemplary to the next generation who strive to counter corruption.

In *Things Fall Apart,* Okonkwo resists the white man's rule in his domain. Since he is the head of his clan it is insulting to his masculinity to be subjugated by others. To some extent, of course, Okonkwo's resistance is due to his fear of losing societal status. Thus we can say that Okonkwo's ability to resist affirms his existence. That is why British colonial rule was too much for him to tolerate and why the white men became his worst enemies. Their rule become unacceptable to him and lead to him committing suicide. Angela Smith says: "Okonkwo [is] conforming too rigorously to tribal conception of manliness"(17) because "he feels intense personal bitterness against all white men for what they have done to his family" (20). Okonkwo's resistance is against British rule; however, he fails to develop this resistance into a meaningful revolt because of his impetuous personality.

Contrariwise, Obi is already the beneficiary of a colonial education, and so his resistance is not against colonialism but against corruption in postcolonial society. During a job interview, when Obi is asked whether he will take a bribe while working, he becomes furious and thinks that this custom of giving bribes should be changed. When his friend,

Joseph opposes his behavior, especially during his interview, he says: "Nonsense! That's what I call colonial mentality" (37). That is how he starts resisting against the remnants of colonialism in his society, even though he is defeated and cannot live up to his ideals at the end. Nevertheless, his desire for resistance is praiseworthy.

Noticeably, when Okonkwo resists the colonizers, he faces problems from his surroundings since he does not get support from anyone in his clan. Nobody in his village supports his stand since most people feel they will not get anything by being honest. The villagers in general are caught between resisting and embracing change and face the dilemma of people caught between tradition and change. They are excited about the 'new world order' on view. Most villagers are excited about the new opportunities and techniques that the missionaries bring. This European influence, however, threatens to eliminate the need for traditional methods of farming, harvesting, building, and cooking. Okonkwo feels helpless in this modernizing society. Bruce King contends in his essay 'Thoughts on Okonkwo, His Flaws and Society' thus:

> Okonkwo is destroyed, and brings ruin on others, because he is excessive in his adherence to the values of his society; those who can compromise, change with the times and adjust, are seen as more sensible. This does not make Okonkwo any less tragic or heroic. Despite Achebe's objective manner of narration, [Okonkwo is] portrayed with sympathy and achieve noble stature in the course of the novel; the principles [he upholds] are also seen as noble and engage our sympathies. But such principles are often flawed and inherently unsound in the face of social change. . . . Okonkwo thinks about the new world order. Okonkwo, for example, resists the new political and religious orders because he feels that they are not manly and that he himself will not be manly if he consents to join or even tolerate them. (1)

Therefore, Okonkwo's resistance is against his community's embrace of imperialist culture. For his part, Obi too is also alone even though his loneliness comes from being in an unstable situation in a corrupt society. Whereas Okonkwo wants to preserve tradition, Obi tries to bring changes he believes are necessary for Nigerian society. For example, he wants a new class of educated people replacing the set of old corrupted ones in different social fields. In chapter two of *No Longer at Ease* we even find him taking a stand against his friend Joseph. He has this to say about the men in administration: "The Civil Service is corrupt because of these so-called experienced men at the top" (17). But the irony is that he cannot bring change in the real sense of the word by removing these men from their posts.

One of the weakest points in Okonkwo's resistance in *Things Fall Apart* is fear. Okonkwo is shocked when he finds out that his own son Nwoye has gone against him. It bothers him more than anything else in the world that his own son, who symbolizes his future, is in league with the colonizers. He is indeed shocked to find his very existence in danger because of his own son Nwoye. Okonkwo becomes furious when he hears of

Nwoye's plan of converting to Christianity. Outraged, he says to Nwoye: "'Answer me, before I kill you!' He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three savage blows" (107). Willene P. Taylor has this to say about this scene: "Ironically, it is Okonkwo's obsession with the adherence to the Ibo Value system which causes him to lose his son, Nwoye, to the European way of life" (31). His beating of Nwoye is a part of his attempt to resist the encroachment of the colonizers.

On the other hand, Obi's need for money becomes the weakest point of his life. He takes bribe not out of greed, but because of his debt to the Umuofia Progressive Union, which he has had to take for scholarship. At the same time he has to support his poor parents. This circumstance always troubles him, no matter how much effort he uses to get rid of this condition. It is money for which he is in trouble at the end; therefore, he takes a bribe and becomes a victim. The first and the last bribe in his life destroy all his idealistic concepts at his work place as well as his own image as an honest worker.

Unfortunately, both Obi's and Okonkwo's resistance fails because of certain changes among people around them, both in pre-colonial and colonial situations. They are extremely surprised to find out that no one in their society thinks the way they do. Their reactions also show their unrealistic way of looking at life because they cannot keep pace with the flow of life in their society. For example, when Obi talks about marriage to Clara, an 'Osu' girl, i.e. an outcast, he cannot accept the fact that according to his people's tradition he could not marry an outcast. He promises to marry her, though both Clara and his friend, Joseph, understand easily that in a traditional society a sudden change like marrying an Osu girl is not desirable. As far as his marriage is concerned, he thinks that it is ridiculous that anyone should object to his marrying a girl from another tribe. Therefore, he resists everybody on this issue. He feels that his education has made him a stranger in his own country. When Obi shares his desires of marrying Clara with Joseph, the latter is filled with dismay at Obi's not realizing what it would mean to the Umuofians for him to marry an outcast and someone who is not an Osu like Clara. For his part, Obi cannot understand why it is so important that Clara should suffer because of her ancestry. Joseph says that it is not yet time for such a drastic move but Obi declares that not even his mother could stop him from this marriage. Nevertheless, Joseph insists that his entire family plus all the Umuofians would be against it. In the end, Obi has to change his decision in order to keep his sick mother alive and happy.

We can note too that Okonkwo's anger is the result of his insecurity regarding his father's lack of masculine qualities. Okonkwo's relationship with his late father shapes much of his violent and ambitious demeanor. He wants to oppose the consequences of his father's extravagance and indolent behavior for he believed his father to be weak and perceived him to be feminine. According to the clan's language, the word for a man who has not won any expensive and prestigious titles is *agbala*, which also means "woman." However, Okonkwo's idea of manliness is not limited by the clan's perception. He associates masculinity with aggression and thinks that anger is the only emotion that he should display as a man. For this reason, he frequently beats his wives and threatens to kill them from time to time. He

does not think about such things, and we see him acting impetuously. In an essay titled "Criticism" Robert Bennett says:

> Another way to analyze the psychological dimensions of Okonkwo's character is to examine how he constructs his sense of gender by asserting a strong sense of masculinity and repressing any sense of femininity. Just as there is an external psychological conflict between Okonkwo and his father, there is also an internal psychological conflict between the masculine and feminine sides within Okonkwo. While Okonkwo's hyper-masculinity initially enables him to achieve success as a great wrestler and warrior, his refusal to balance this masculine side with feminine virtues eventually contributes to his later destruction. (3)

Therefore, it is not only his father's feminine image but also his internal feminine side, which is responsible for his downfall. On the other hand, Obi's defeat takes to a position from which it is hard for him to escape, no matter how much and how he resists. In the end, he is compelled to take a bribe. Although he does so, he always carries a guilty feeling with him and this is why he is eventually arrested. Ironically, the bribe that he takes reluctantly becomes evidence for his arrest.

As Okonkwo is alone and everybody in his clan supports British rule in order to get back his position as the head of his clan, he becomes infuriated as well as envious of British colonial rule. Alan R Frieson comments on Okonkwo thus:

> Two years later when the missionaries have established a mission in Mbanta, he discovers that his son has converted into this new religion and has forsworn the customs of his ancestors. When Okonkwo considers this new situation, "a sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang"(Achebe 142). At first, Okonkwo dismisses the villagers of Abame as foolish for not being prepared for an ambush, but after seeing the "demasculating" effects of the white man, first-hand he realizes that the situation is much more grave than he at first believes.(4)

As a result, he is ready to kill anybody who supports the white men's rule. He cannot believe that in his absence the people became weaker than he had expected, so he is ready to kill anybody who supports colonial rule. His *chi* or spirit is not against him when he kills the court messenger who announces that he should not have a meeting with his people. Okonkwo kills him because he is attempting to uphold the culture of his people in the face of impending colonization. In *the Wretched of the Earth* Fanon says: "The colonized man is an envious man. . . . It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place" (30). Therefore, Okonkwo acts in this vehement way to take revenge at having his position taken away. In contrast, Obi is in some way inactive as far as resistance is concerned. For Obi resistance takes place most of the time only in his thoughts and not in his actions. Ode Ogede says: "Through Obi Okonkwo, an

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unsuspecting individual, who is a product of that education, Achebe graphically illustrates the mental anguish that an unsuitable educational system causes its African victims" (53). If we think about his decision to marry Clara, we see that when his mother compels him to not to marry her, he becomes helpless. He cannot go beyond that limitation as he is bound to do whatever his mother tells him to do, or in other words, what his society compels him to do. It is because of his mother that he cannot marry Clara, although he and Clara had already established both a physical as well as a mental relationship.

Then again in *Things Fall Apart* when Okonkwo returns home from exile to his home, it seems that the old customs have returned. The hero seems to have come back to resist the colonial power as if he is in accordance with what Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* has said, "The man of action has sometimes the exhausting impression that he must restore the whole of his people, that he must bring every one of them up out of the pit and out of the shadows" (237). But unfortunately when Okonkwo comes back to his village he is shocked to see that his own people are supporting the new religion and viewing their own customs as superstition. In this context Alan R Friesen says:

> He is saddened because his people have "so unaccountably become soft like women" and have lost their martial spirit. Tension between the church and the village escalates until finally Enoch, a convert, tears off the mask of an *egwugwu*, killing an ancestral spirit. The village retaliates by burning the church to the ground, which redeems the village in Okonkwo's eyes: "[i]t was like the good old days again, when a warrior was a warrior". With Okonkwo back in the village, it seems as if the clan is returning to its war-like state, and he has reason to hope that the village might actually gain enough courage to "kill the missionary and drive away the Christians". (5)

Therefore, the converts of Igbo society no longer believe in the ancestral spirit known as *egwugwu* in their language. But this change in them serves only to make Okonkwo more furious. He is shocked to see that "the clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that its way of life was barely recognizable" (129). He is deeply grieved and he mourns "for the warlike men of Umuofia" [who have] "so unaccountably become soft like woman"(129).

In Chapter 8 of *No Longer at Ease* we find that the Umuofia Progressive Union is against Obi's decision to marry Clara. Obi is offended by the behavior of the members of the union and thinks his marriage to Clara should be none of their business. Becoming proud and angry at the same time he says: "This is preposterous! I could take you to court for that . . . for that . . . for that" (75). He cannot believe that the Union, which is supposed to be progressive in nature has not progressed in its mentality and way of thinking. Obi's Nigeria, to borrow Salman Rushdie's phrase, is an "imaginary homeland" for him whereas in reality it is no more than a slum in which the slum-dwellers are being corrupted. In her essay "Crisis in the Soul in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*", Dr. Jaya Lakshmi Rao V says:

> With the advent of the white man there is a loss of native values such as communal harmony, placing society above self, respect for the aged and reverence for achievers, which resulted in the absence of self- analysis and a stable code of ethics in the society of pre-independent Nigeria. Lured by western-education and well-paid jobs, the youth of the country do not hesitate to stoop to the levels of immorality and dangerous permissiveness.

Obi's disillusionment sets in when he perceives the difference between imagination and reality. Obi refuses the bribe that Mr. Mark offers him to get a scholarship for his sister, and by rejecting it Obi finds that he has overcome the corruption in existing society. Feeling like a tiger, he thinks that he can continue such rejection and temptation in future and thus resist a corrupt society. Later, when Miss Mark comes and offers him her body, he refuses her offer too. Obi resists everything including money, although he has to pay the loan and give ten pounds to his parents as well as pay his brother John's fees. In spite of being in financial stress and obligation, he resists as much as he can. Obi is elated at his conquest and, at this point, does not foresee his future experience of corruption that would tarnish his honor.

In contrast, Okonkwo's resistance takes him towards tragedy and death. In his youth, Okonkwo was a famous wrestler and was sometimes even compared to a supernatural being, and now he cannot accept subjugation. Okonkwo "suddenly realizes that his chi is determined to lead him into disaster and shame. Therefore, he takes his own life in order to end it all" (77). Okonkwo's resistance comes because he thinks death is better than submission to the white colonizer. Bruce F. Macdonald claims that Okonkwo kills himself because the only other option is ignominious death at the hands of the white man. Nevertheless, Okonkwo's resistance is seen by Igbo society as a crime. Although *Things Fall Apart* can be seen in the tragic mode, the novel is much more meaningful if we interpret Okonkwo's suicide as an act of willful resistance rather than an act of shame and dishonor. In this context, Fanon's observation is worth mentioning: "The Negro is never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by the whites, when he decides to prove that he has a culture and to behave like a cultured person . . . he must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists" (170). Nwoye is lost and other people of this society have lost their identity as Igbo, but if we think of Okonkwo's death as his resistance it appears that Igbo culture has somehow survived and it had not wholly fallen apart. When Okonkwo kills the court messenger his people are reluctant to seize the other messengers, which suggests that they will not in the end go to war. In other words, others would not support Okonkwo's acts of resistance. Similarly, Obi cannot cope with changes in contemporary social values. As a member of a powerful, disillusioned age of corruption, Obi himself cannot resist taking a bribe in the end. As Dr. Jaya Lakshmi Rao writes: "While old values like courage and valour are no longer valid, the educated native's condition like that of Obi is charged with tragic undertones and is worse than that of his brothers in the bush".

His education has created certain a distance between him and his people who are unable to understand him anymore. Obi's uneasiness is created because he feels he is a misfit in society. Obi is an idealistic young man who wants to bring change to his

homeland. He talks against the corruption that goes on in his country. He also places himself, without compromise, against bribery. Obi's theory of corruption in the Nigerian Government is that as long as there are "old Africans" running public service positions, there will be corruption. He thinks that young and university-educated people need to take up those posts. When he is asked during his interview whether he wants the job to take bribes, Obi becomes furious at the suggestion. He tries to go past the superstition of his society by attempting to marry an outcast like Clara. Unfortunately, he eventually becomes the loser because he can neither marry Clara nor escape taking a bribe to give Clara money for the abortion of their love-child, in addition to giving money to the Umuofia Progressive Union and his family. These developments result in his arrest and humiliation.

Thus Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* present two 'heroes' who do not get justice, since their resistance is weak and futile because of the changes taking place in their respective societies. Nevertheless, their apparent defeat starts a line of resistance for the next generation to follow so that they can continue the struggle for their identity. Okonkwo and Obi Okonkwo resist, but ultimately their resistance is defeated since they live in societies which do not support them. Despite being the leader of the clan Okonkwo does not get the respect he deserves from his people and Obi, whose nickname could have been 'Honesty', ends up being dishonest by taking bribes to repay the heavy load of a loan. They resiste the social system, and the values of contemporary society but faile to achieve their goals. Perhaps for Obi it was his fate to live a life of struggle where he would never be at ease. For Okonkwo it was his fate to kill himself and for Obi it was his destiny to end with his surrender to the evil customs of his society. Thus they both become in a sense the 'wretched of the earth'.

Nevertheless, Okonkwo's and Obi's apparent defeat must have far-reaching implications for Africa's subsequent anti-colonial struggle. In *Black Heroes* Jim Haskins says:

> Throughout Africa's tumultuous history, certain individuals have fought against the odds to make a difference for their people. Some were strong conquerors while others were determined to bring about change through peaceful means. But all were figures whose charisma, bravery, and vision are legendary. African Heroes brings their stories to life. . . . from ancient Africa to the empire-building era, from battles against European incursion to twentieth-century efforts for nationalism . . . men and women who fought for this land.

In order to uphold Africa's nationalism many Okonkwos and Obis were later born in Africa who would bring revolutionary changes to African society. Therefore, although Okonkwo's and Obi's resistance appear to be futile, their failure would not defer the next generation from finding them heroic for their resistance. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault says:
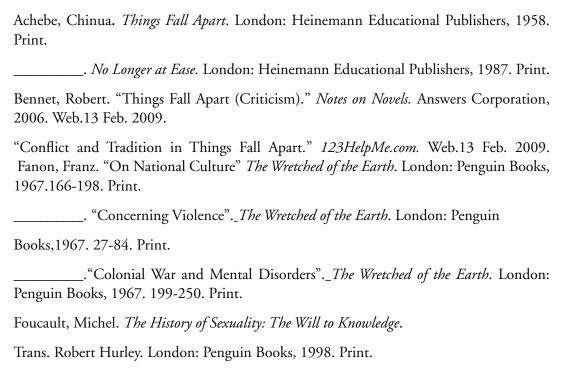
> Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships.(96)

Surely, their resistance of Okonkwo and Obi helped build the web that would entangle the future leaders who would continue to struggle against future oppression.

In conclusion it can be said that both Okonkwo and Obi suffered a lot in their lifetime. It is possible to see Okonkwo symbolizing active resistance and Obi passive resistance. In pre-colonial Africa, Okonkwo was trying to resist European colonialism with all his strength. On the other hand, in post-colonial Africa, Obi was resisting the corruption and immorality in society to preserve traditional values. For Obi to be a part of active resistance was impossible because his resistance was mainly inward. However, both became victims at the end. No doubt they were types of men destined to suffer for their actions; however, their resistance had the power to spread the fire of resistance amidst the next generation of Africans. They may have been defeated heroes, but they were not ultimately defeated if their resistance is considered in broader terms. Since their spark of resistance ignited the soul of other heroes who went on to fight for freedom successfully.

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Homologizing Accident: Notes on Warhol's Car Crashes

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Abstract

This paper focuses on some paintings by Andy Warhol depicting car crashes to demonstrate how he uses them not only to underscore the commodity fetishism of contemporary capitalism but also subversively to undermine such traits in contemporary American culture. It also explores the connection between the ambivalence reflected in the paintings and Warhol's sexuality. In the process, it connects the paintings to the category Susan Sontag has famously categorized as "Camp" and Warhol's own facetiousness and love of surfaces and mixed modes as well as gimmick and parody.

My purpose in this essay is to interrogate how some paintings by Andy Warhol constitute the theme and motif of car crash as the locus of encounter between two competing cultural positions on the one hand, a celebratory complicity in the commodity fetish of advanced capitalism in America; on the other, a gesture of resistance or subversion towards such forces of conformity. The article will further speculate on how, or whether, this encounter is inflected by or invested with the idiom of a sexual alterity or marginality.

Warhol had a unique biographical perspective on the American reality. Born of working class parents who emigrated from Slovakia and struggled to get American citizenship, he went on to become a millionaire, a cult icon. At the same time he flaunted his gayness in an increasingly homophobic society and actively participated in the underground life of New York drag queens, which made sure that he was disaffiliated from the mainstream of American bourgeois temperament posited on normative heterosexuality. His well-rehearsed facetiousness, love for surfaces and mixing of modes are best discussed under the category of Camp (as famously envisaged by Susan Sontag in her "Notes on Camp"), which is also intimately connected with sexual ambiguity. Throughout his public

and private life (the boundary between which he intentionally and aggressively blurred to engineer his self-image), Warhol constructed a repertoire of gimmick and parody that propagated itself by ceaselessly appropriating the resources of the late capitalist culture to which he was reacting.[1]

Warhol's paintings on car crashes belong to his *Death and Disaster* series, a loosely connected group of more than seventy works produced in the early 1960's, which also includes images of race riots, electric chairs, atomic clouds, a teenage suicide, and working class women killed by tuna fish poisoning.[2] All of these involve the silkscreen technique, and employed synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Warhol accessed the photographs of disaster from newspapers or police records and replicated the images in question (usually multiple times) on over-sized canvas to produce these paintings. His *Five Deaths on Orange* (1963) shows the single image of a car crash, where two victims try to crawl out of the wreck while looking at the dead body of the third. The dead person looks disconcertingly straight at the observer in the eye. The scene has been made more macabre by Warhol's use of a lurid orange background. The photograph used for this painting is redeployed in other paintings, for example, *Five Deaths Seventeen Times* and *Five Deaths Eleven Times in Orange*. In *Saturday Disaster* (1964) the image of a car crash has been reproduced twice vertically in black and white. The image shows a chaotic mass of twisted corpses, with one body hanging upside down and another lying on the ground with a face distorted beyond recognition. According to Sotheby's website, the most remarkable oeuvres of Warhol on this subject are the *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, the *Black and White Disaster#4*, the *Orange Car Crash*, and the *Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)*. Sotheby's website also recognizes the *Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)*, with its "silk-screened images cascading down [its] left-hand canvases, evoking filmstrips" as the most successful of these four works, in which "Warhol's use of reflective silver paint as background color charges the painting with a shimmering, cinematic quality," and shockingly juxtaposes a "bright, shimmering field" with "a sputtering image of a fatal car crash" (Kamholz).

Warhol's work is usually classified under the rubric of Pop Art, which is recognized in the Western institution of art history as a radically ambiguous movement or tendency in art with respect to aesthetic or generic commitments (Lucie-Smith). Warhol appropriated product designs, publicity stills and press photographs of popular currency, using techniques of commercial art in his canvases so as to challenge the traditional boundary between mass culture and high art. This indeterminacy, in fact, inaugurates the dialectic of conflicting allegiances in his work, prompting fundamental questions about the nature of art and its relation to society.

Accident informs Warhol's paintings on car crashes at multiple levels. First, it is homologized in his artistic technique itself as he exploits the contingencies of silk-screen printing to generate an impression of asymmetry and discord. He would carefully magnify the original photograph on canvas and overlay it with a silkscreen print. But the lack of perfect congruency between the two surfaces would mean overlapping and misplacing of chunks of colour. Warhol would repeat an image all over the screen in a haphazard fashion,

leave wide areas of the screen blank and happily retain all the irregularities introduced by his ghost-painters. Dyer marks this process as a deliberate means of undercutting the paradigm of mechanicity evoked by and through the painting, and of re-injecting the human presence (if not of the painter Warhol's *qua* painter in the classical sense, then his associates' and assistants'):

> Understood as traces of his making activity, accidents are displayed overtly on the surface of his images. Thus Warhol's colours are unnatural, theatrical, and randomly articulate the subjects in each image. The unnaturally large size of images exaggerates not only their flatness but also the accidents which differentiates them. Further, sloppy brushwork, hatching or scribbles over the images heighten the element of arbitrariness. The accidental, differentiating activity of Warhol is presented as fundamental to his practice and therefore to his images. … In describing himself as a machine, Warhol ironically pushes the metaphor to its ridiculous limit. The machine repetitively performs the same operation of differentiation which continually produces the same product: difference as accident. (43)

This, in conjunction with the flat and garish colours, produce an effect of *estrangement,* if we may borrow a term from Brecht's dramaturgy. It serves to draw attention to those totemistic images of mass media and consumer culture that are rendered invisible by their ubiquity.

Secondly, accident is thematized in the series as a whole as it stages various forms of death or death-dealing apparatuses and events ultimately traceable to the uncertainties or dangers of capitalism. In the capitalist way of life chance or accident is the keyword as it is governed by free-market competition and financial speculation. It may be added here that Warhol's father lost his job because of the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the formative years of his childhood were spent during the great Depression. Other features of American capitalism would be all-pervasive consumerism, class-based exploitation, racial tension, ever-changing fashions and ephemeral cults of celebrities. Warhol's paintings in the *Death and Disaster* series may be seen as approaching those occasions of rupture where the malaise and oppression of the American capitalism are no longer insidiously disguised as normalcy, but become almost *accidentally* spectacular. Accident in the pedestrian sense of an R&T mishap becomes the summational metaphor for the series.[3] Foster for one is not prepared to take at face value Warhol's own bland statement "When you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really have any effect," and he goes on to explore the dual effect of Warhol's paintings on disaster:

> to repeat a traumatic event (in actions, in dreams, in images) in order to integrate it into a psychic economy, a symbolic order. But the Warhol repetitions are not restorative in this way; they are not about a mastery of trauma. More than a patient release from the object in mourning, they suggest an obsessive fixation on the object in melancholy. Think of all

the Marilyns alone, of all the cropping, coloring, and crimping of these images: as Warhol works over this image of love, the "hallucinatory wish-psychosis" of a melancholic seems to be in play. But this analysis is not right either. For one thing the repetitions not only reproduce traumatic effects; they produce them as well (at least they do in me). Somehow in these repetitions, then, several contradictory things occur at the same time: a warding away of traumatic significance and an opening out to it, a defending against traumatic affect and a producing of it. (41-42)

Warhol's paintings of car crashes are widely read as staging an encounter with the dark reverse of America's glamour cult and material prosperity that is at the focus of his better known works. The paintings feature loud, voyeuristic images of car crashes, perhaps metaphorically foregrounding the element of devastation inherent in the American ideal of speed, mobility (locomotory and/or economic and/or geo-political) and possessiveness.[4] This admonitory quality of the paintings has been emphasized by Crow:

These commemorate events in which the supreme symbol of consumer affluence, the American car of the 1950s, has ceased to be an image of pleasure and freedom and has become a concrete instrument of sudden and irreparable injury. (In only one picture of the period, *Cars*, does an automobile appear intact.) Does the repetition of Five Deaths or Saturday Disaster cancel attention to the visible anguish in the faces of the living or the horror of the limp bodies of the unconscious and dead? We cannot penetrate beneath the image to touch the true pain and grief, but their reality is sufficiently indicated in the photographs to force attention to one's limited ability to find an appropriate response. As for the repetition, might we just as well understand it to mean the grim predictability, day after day, of more events with an identical outcome, the levelling sameness with which real, not symbolic, death erupts in our experience? (57)

Crow also factors in Warhol's conscious intervention in terms of the choice of the source photographs and the lay-out (58).

But this need not stop one from making a case for Warhol's avant-garde aestheticism and frivolity that posets it as decadent, even anti-communitarian and ultimately apolitical. Warhol's car crashes may be seen as inserting death itself into the consumerist imaginary as a commodity comparable to his better known Campbell soup cans, Brillo boxes or coke bottles. The technique of mechanically repeating the images in a single frame transmutes their semantic potentials. The array of images resembles a celluloid strip, a series of postage stamps or the display of commodities on the shelves of a departmental store. The image is robbed of any narrativity except that of the conveyor belt or shop window. In Warhol accident is no longer an event, but a motif, an object of mass consumption. They thus encapsulate the epistemology of a media-dominated culture, one of hyper-reality, where events are represented by their simulacra or depthless, reified representations (cf. Baudrillard).

This insight may be fruitfully compared with Jameson's observations on late capitalism, where he traces a symbiotic relationship between postmodern art and the consolidation of capitalist hegemony. According to him, postmodernism does not playfully interrogate commercial culture but assimilates it dumbly in the form of "pastiche" or "blank parody." Such a regimen is devoid of irony or satire and can operate only in terms of the simulacrum or the stereotype. Hence, according to these insights, Warhol's artistic stance evidences a successful interpellative function of consumerist culture, and is immediately translatable as political quietism. Many of Warhol's paintings, what with their psychedelic colour schemes and hallucinogenic layouts, apparently allude to a drug-happy counter culture. Warhol has been often linked to dissident youth cultures of the '60s, whose rebellious stance in hindsight appears as fashionable narcissism that served to reinforce the status quo. Added to this connection, Warhol may be seen as gesturing towards a radically adventurous aesthetic where death itself is a legitimate subject of pleasure. This may be explained with reference to the category of the "sublime" as proposed by Jean-Francois Lyotard where an irresolvable irony or *dissensus* is the basis of a heightened aesthetic experience. This aesthetic revolves around resistance to and incommensurability with consumer culture, but it is not replicable in terms of any social or political activism. In the final analysis it is self-complacent, idealistic, and politically innocuous.

Warhol's public stances almost invariably gravitate towards a parody of the dominant cultural ethos. Apart from the quasi-industrial repetitiveness and replicability of his art, he called his studio *The Factory*, his assistants workers, and himself an artist-businessman or a businessman-artist. According to Perniola, the ludic postmodernism informing Warhol's work elides or omits the personal but engages the market in order to fashion an economy of affective non-commitment.

> Its point of departure is the image of modern information such as we find in newspapers, television or advertisement. This image conveys the modern myths of beauty (Marilyn Monroe) well-being (Coke), power (Mao Tse Tung), wealth (Gianni Agnelli), success (Elvis Presley) and so on. Warhol submits the image to a process of transformation that removes it from 'directly competitive and competing' *business* so to speak, and places it in *another business*, that of art. The business of art, however, is not really an alternative with respect to the other, but constitutes, precisely, a kind of opposite duplicate of the first. *Art business* constitutes a kind of particular business but is always a 'production' and not really creative doing. While the latter implies the presence of a creative subject, the former has 'nothing personal'. (27-28)

But is not the knowingness underlying Warhol's car crashes fraught with contestatory potentials? Is not the epistemic investment in shock an enabling step towards a subversive mimicry? Warhol leaves no ground for ascertaining whether the parody is intended to be contestatory and fulfilled as such. Warhol's role finds an analogy in one of his lifelong preoccupations and recurring subjects that I have already hinted at, namely - the condition

of the androgyne, the transvestite, the fairy, the drag queen. In his 1972 film *Women in Revolt!* three transvestites play the eponymous revolutionaries; in 1975 he portrayed several black and Hispanic transvestites under the title *Ladies and Gentlemen;* whereas in 1981 he produced an especially bleak exhibition of self-portraits in drag. This interaction implicates his artistic paradigm as a whole, and occasions a fraught encounter between the mainstream culture (as regards sexual normativity) and a marginal or underground one.

A drag queen plays a woman while consciously not being a woman. Her performativity is self-indulgent, strategic, aggressive and hyperbolical. They may be seen as endorsing traditional femininity or heterosexuality by choosing to enact it, albeit in their own terms. But this seeming conformism has the effect of revealing all gender roles as constructed, artificial and provisional. The over-assertive enactment of femininity is laden with the potential of a subversive mimicry, an implicit resistance against norms of gender or sexuality. As Perniola suggests,

> on the one hand, the transvestite exalts femininity beyond any limit, on the other it reproaches the woman, implicitly, for not being sufficiently feminine. In either case, only one discourse is possible: that of femininity for the transvestite, that of modern capitalism for postmodern art. At the same time, however, they tend to level an accusation to femininity and capitalist society. (29)

But the role in question cannot simply be a parody since it is holistic and perennial, although very ironically for a drag queen (and this irony in fact forms an integral part of her repertoire of strategic self-fashioning). The very identity of the drag queen is contingent upon this performance; she does not command an Archimedean point from which to designate it as parody. Similarly for Warhol, as I have already mentioned, his mimicry and theatricality are so total in his work as in his life, it is difficult to label them as parody. However, the parodic mode of enactment marks his work inescapably as divided in itself, lacking in groundedness and coherence. This ontological irresolution need not be a deficiency, for it engenders much of the Dionysian energy that is identifiable with the subversiveness of drag and the cultural poetics/politics of Warhol. The self-sustaining irony of Warhol's aesthetic has been theorized thus by Perniola:

> As the transvestite is both superfeminine and antifeminine, so Warhol's art is both supercapitalist and anticapitalist. On the one hand, Warhol's art is a supercommodity whose economic value is hyperbolically disproportionate with respect to the value of the materials employed and to the work done to realize it; on the other hand, the fact that it utilizes the same materials and the same forms of the products of capitalistic industry ridicules the latter on its own ground, namely, that of speculation and exploitation. (29)

Moreover, it has to be recognized that the practices of both the drag queen and Warhol are necessarily revisionary or interrogatory even if they may choose from time to

time to coincide with the originary norms they mime. As such, they must (re)visit the ideology they contest, if not derive their identity deterministically from it. As a part of her peculiar modality, a drag queen has to refer to the heterosexual code since her performance/identity is contingent upon its playful manipulation. Likewise, the validity of Warhol's programme is inescapably based on the dominant culture---whether we are talking about advanced capitalism or compulsory heterosexuality. The drag queen has to negotiate a space between being a woman and not being one, and the ambiguity defines her self-fashioned status. In this tension between unresolved antinomies any residual meaning is available or constituted as such in the form of an *accident*. Much in the same way, Warhol's art tries to negotiate a space between complacency and awareness, between conformism and subversion, between the fine arts and mass culture, between capitalism and anti-capitalism. In this realm of seemingly irresolvable dialectics, meaning itself is an *accident* and needs to be recuperated as such.[5]

The present attempt at conjecturing about a homology between Warhol's aesthetics and car accidents (as a theme and a trope) stresses some associations of accident, such as chance, surprise, incongruity, and forcefulness, and elides or occludes others, namely, violence, fatality, the macabre, the uncanny. But in Warhol's treatment there is no marked preference for one set to the other. In fact, one set becomes a metaphor for the other, reinforcing and supplementing each other. The interplay of chance and violence is amply embodied in the production process as well as the viewing experience of Warhol's car crashes.

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Endnotes

[1] Warhol never rejected the apparatus of capitalism and continues to reap its fruits posthumously. In 2002 *Five Deaths on Orange* fetched 3 million dollars at a Sotheby's auction while in 2005 he was fourth in *Forbes* magazine's list of top earning dead celebrities. More recently, a 1963 portrait of Liz Taylor with a turquoise background, entitled *Liz (Colored Liz)*, cost the Hollywood star Hugh Grant 23.7 million dollars at a Christie's auction. Earlier, in May 2007, Warhol's *Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)* became his auction record, selling for 71.7 million dollars at Christie's. The record was bettered in November, 2013 when his diptych *Silver Hall Car Crash (Double Disaster)* sold at Sotheby's for 105.4 million dollars.

[2] Through the choice of a real contemporary event (or the representational trace of it) as the subject, Warhol's painting references and reworks the hallowed genre called *history painting*, the greatest exemplar of which in the last century would be Picasso's *Guernica* (1937).

[3] It would perhaps not be out of place to reiterate the significance of car accidents in two important parables on the American dream, namely, *The Great Gatsby* and *Death of a Salesman*.

[4] Thus they may be seen as gesturing towards the medieval Christian trope of *vanitas*, investing in death and disaster with the same warped glee which is evident in the *danse macabre*. If the paintings allude to the gnomic homiletic conviction about the vanity of worldly splendor and the inevitability of fall, the ethos they embody and represent hardly possesses the fideistic confidence with which to sustain this admonitory sentiment. This is how the operative philosophy of these paintings, and the visual experience they involve, presupposes a space for irony and burlesque.

[5] Nancy in fact talks of a fundamental irresolution and impasse that jeopardizes modern art in general: "In saying "art," we evoke a cosmetics that has a *cosmic, cosmological,* even a *cosmogonic* import or stake. But if there is no *kosmos*, how can there be an art in this sense? And that there is no *kosmos* is doubtless the decisive mark of our world: world, today, does not mean *kosmos*. As a consequence, "art" cannot mean "art" in this sense" (84-85). The calculated blandness and affective distance cultivated by Warhol's Pop Art may be recognized as a knowing nod in the direction of this cosmological vacuity.

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Western Democracy in Africa as a Failed Project: Which Way Forward?

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Abstract

The role of democracy in societal transformation and nation-building in Sub-Saharan Africa has been compromised by political and social strictures created during more than three decades of autocratic rule of most countries that still underline the practical and moral workings of the state today. Western democracy remains mired in rigging cleavages that find expression in parochial tendencies ranging from divide and rule to ethnicism and to regionalism being orchestrated by the state's political elites and those loyal to the ruling regime in a neo-patrimonial manner. As a result, the ability to mobilise all and sundry towards a meaningful democratic culture and development is limited. In this context good governance has remained, for the vast majority of Africans, illusory. With the end of the Cold War which characterised world politics since 1945, the United States of America and Europe have descended on the continent and re-launched a crusade for democracy without paying any attention to the structures which could harness meaningful democratic culture and development. This essay focuses on the dynamics that have impeded the development of western democracy in Africa. It interrogates even the *raison d'etre* of such a western buzzword with regard to meaningful development in most African countries. Does Africa really need western democracy to cure her developmental malady? This essay, while working on the argument that western democracy has botched woefully in most parts of the continent, attempts to proffer some suggestions, which if implemented would launch most African countries towards meaningful democratic culture.

Introduction: General Observation and Objectives

The fact that world politics between 1945 and 1989 was dominated and monopolized by two world powers–the United States of America and the Union of Social Socialist Republics–cannot be denied. That domination experienced a sharp twist in 1990 when the Cold War came to an end with the reunification of the two German nations. The

end of the Cold War led to what has been termed in certain quarters as the "third wave of democratic struggle in Africa" (Guseh and Oritsejafor, 2005:122). As a matter of fact, Africa has gone through three rounds of democratic struggle. The first round apparently began when indigenous Africans began their struggle for independence from European colonial rule in the 1960s, although it was only later in the 1970s and the late 1980s when Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South West Africa secured independence through armed struggles (IIiffe, 1995). Unfortunately, when the elites of these countries gained independence, they followed the same policies of exploitation and repression which the European powers had practiced. This led to the second wave of democratisation. "Sadly the second wave was short-lived and began to lose vapour by the mid 1970s. This was precipitated by the violent response of various authoritarian regimes to this struggle for democracy, such as harassment, arrest, imprisonment, assassination and banishment into exile, and economic strangulation for pro-democracy activists and their supporters" (Guseh and Oritsejafor, 2005: 121).

The ascendancy of America as the sole superpower in world politics after 1990 was symptomatic of a crusade launched by Western powers to impose western democracy on Africa south of the Sahara. America and some of her European surrogates tied good governance and/or democracy to economic aid (Ake, 2000: 206). This meant that for authoritarian and kleptocratic African governments to receive any economic aid from the US and its allies, they were required to liberalise their economies and thus democratise their politics according to western-style democracy. That was just one of the factors that led to the third wave of democracy in Africa. Aid donor institutions which, of course, were American in origin like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) or World Bank also promised withholding aid if African countries failed to democratise their regimes. The overthrow of President Bourgiba of Tunisia as well as the introduction of multi-party politics in Algeria after the 1988 riots; the freeing of Nelson Mandela in South Africa and the Franco-African Summit at La Baule in June 1990, all combined individually and collectively to have ramifications for Sub-Saharan Africa (Bayart, 2009:xx). Consequently, democracy came like a bitter pill that most authoritarian African heads of state had to swallow.

The whirlwind of democracy has attracted the attention of many scholars who have examined it in various ways (Bayart et. al. 1999; Bayart 2009; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Mafeje, 1995; Ngoh, 2001; Schneider, 2004; Akinyele, 2004; Osaghae, 2001; Agbese 2001; Klopp, 2001; Mamdani, 1996; Brown, 2001; Aiyede 2003; Fareed, 1997; Guseh and Oritsejafor 2005; Mulikita, 2003; Breytenbach, 1996; Baylies, 1995; Harrison 1996; Allen, 1995; Sklar, 1991; Wagnaraja, 1993; Akinde, 1995; Diamond, 1988, Ndegwa, 2001). These scholars, have carried out piercing and penetrating work on western democracy in Africa. Their works illustrate the volume of attention that has been devoted by scholars to the epoch of democracy in Africa. Yet this does not by any means imply that all have been exhausted on the topic. Although these authors have carried out excellent research on the democratic processes in various parts of Africa, and although they deserve a pat on their intellectual backs, they have not, in the opinion of this author,

charted a path forward which, if followed, could bring meaningful democracy to some parts of Africa and enhance their development.

The optimism and ecstasy which overcame Africa in this era of renewed democracy was soon eclipsed as the political ecology of Africa proved too resistant for genuine western democracy to settle, germinate and grow there; this was, of course, the case in some parts of Africa. In Benin it was welcomed but a few years later the country relapsed into the dictatorial system. This paper aims at unraveling some of the causes which were at the forefront in most African countries south of the Sahara behind impeding democracy and which seemingly indicated that they would truly allow the continent to move towards meaningful development. One cause for sure is that most of the continent still lies under the datum line of poverty. HIV/AIDS has further slowed the growth rate in the continent; the unemployment rate is almost reaching astronomical figures; corruption and anxiety of leaders to stay in power till eternity has shown that western democracy is a far-fetched dream. With all these handicaps what should be done? In other words, what is the way forward?

Theoretical Framework

There is no single theory which can best describe democracy. Only a combination of theories could best describe the concept (Dahl, 1965:1). This is as complicated as the definition of democracy itself. As a political concept democracy at certain quarters means popular power and what is implied in the famous Lincolnian formulation, "government of the people, for the people, by the people" (Ake, 2000:7). This formulation has been widely accepted across the world as the ideal operational definition of democracy. Huntington (1993: 366) warns us of problems ensuring from the ambiguity that results when democracy is defined in terms of source of authority or in terms of purposes, as classical theorists tend to do. According to him, the key procedure of democracy is that in it the leaders are selected by people they govern through means of competitive elections.

However, the modern theoretical standpoint in defining democracy appears to have originated as far back as the eighteenth century with the inception of what later became known as the classical theory. The French Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau based his ideas about the subject on the "Social Contract" which creates an indivisible body that we are all part of. "Under the supreme direction of the general will" we all invest our powers and surrender our persons to this body (Sabine, 1961). He suggests that all decisions made by such an entity undoubtedly interested in self well-being shall be good ones. Rousseau therefore stresses the importance of the source of authority and the purpose of this collective body; its universal inclusiveness and its aim for the common good. However, Rousseau's political philosophy is so vague that it can hardly be said to point to any specific direction (Sabine, 1961: 593-596).

Joseph Schumpeter did not mince words when he refuted this theory propounded by Rousseau, centered as it is on the "will of the people" and the "common good" as guiding principles. He dismissed all these as utopian. Schumpeter offers a rather procedural

definition by which the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by competing for the peoples' votes (Schumpeter, 2003: 5-11).The above theories with their shortcomings cannot be applied to the African continent because democracy is not homogeneous in the continent.

However, Robert Dahl's theory appears to be more helpful for our purpose because of the variety of democracies and the different contexts in which democracy operates on the continent. Dahl delivers a new concept of "polyarchy". Here he is not dealing exclusively with classification of regimes. According to him, "polyarchy" could also be applied to assess various typologies of social associations which includes amongst others, churches, company boards and even football clubs. Dahl further opines that one of the most common traps when discussing democracy at any level is failing to acknowledge the difference between the perfect, nonexistent and ideal form of democracy on the one side and the reality imposed by frames, limitations and constraints of actual circumstances on the other, a situation which describes some parts of Africa. He goes on to describe "the Ideal" and "the Actual" and suggests five criteria that a system should fulfill in order to be seen as democratic. These are: effective participation; voting equality; enlightened understanding; control of the agenda and inclusion of adults (Dahl, 1971: 26-29). He emphasizes that these, while belonging to the realm of "the Ideal", can and should serve as a standard towards which "the Actual" should strive and against which it should be compared.

Dahl takes stock of modern states and names six institutions that should exist in a country in order for it to be seen as a democracy. According to him, a large-scale democracy must have the following features: elected officials; 'free, fair and frequent elections'; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship. Dahl's work represents a synthesis of procedural, deliberative and substantive approaches in contemporary political discourse concerning democracy. It thus becomes imperative for us to see why the features of Dahl's Ideal and Actual does not work in most parts of Africa. The next section will examine some of these dynamics which have impeded the workings of democracy in some parts of Africa.

The Twilight of Democracy: Some Dynamics of Failure

The exhilaration and rapture that was associated with the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s was soon to fizzle out. The reasons for such dissipation are quite complex. But they could still be appreciated under certain rubrics that could be applied to most African countries. This section attempts to critically examine these rubrics.

'Sit-Tightism' Systems

One such rubric is what I prefer to call here as 'sit-tight' governments and presidents. This refers to incumbents not willing to give up the prestige, power and opulence that goes with the presidency. They have become despotic and authoritarian in nature. Fareed (1997:29) maintains that the illiberal character of such presidents in the dispensation of

new democracies has become a source of worry for many but is suggestive of the fact that the celebration of the triumph of democracy is still a bit hasty. Whatever way we take it, the fact is that Fareed is not far from reality as many governments–elected or not–prefer to move away from the rules of the democratic game and assert themselves continuously when in power.

The strongest arms of such governments which give them credibility find expression in "the consolidation of single parties, president-for-life, extensive security establishments, widespread inequalities, the army and personal rule" (Aiyede 2003:2). Thus the majority of people are denied the opportunity to meaningfully participate in decision-making. Above all, governance has been reduced to the practical expression of the whims and caprices of dictators and their sects (Aiyede 2003). Consequently, the democratic struggles of the 1990s which heralded the end of authoritarianism seemingly has ended up in new forms of authoritarianism. No wonder that some heads of states even argue that the one-party state serve the purpose of overcoming ethnic and other divisions and achieving greater cohesion of the state. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania actually argued that democracy is stronger in a one-party state as that party represents the whole nation while multiple parties can encompass only small portions of society. This type of argument has little support when it comes to practice. He was, however, talking about democratic socialism when he launched his *Ujaama,* the Kiswahili word which means "brotherhood" (Gordon & Gordon, 2007:171).

Ethnicity, Elites and the Mirage of Democracy

Nowhere in the continent has democracy been more elusive than within the brackets of ethnicity propagated by political elites. This appears to be one of the greatest challenges for the western model of democracy in most parts of the continent. Western democratic governance as well as concrete political institutions have not taken a nationalistic turn in their formation, and orientation because most of the time the problems of regionalism rear their ugly heads (Osaghae, 2001; Agbese, 2001).

A good example could be drawn from the East African country, Kenya. It is said that a majority of Kenyan political elites fan ethnic clashes amongst rural people. This is done to maintain themselves in the corridors of power (Klopp, 2001: 475). Closely related to this is the patronage, clientele system, policy of divide and rule, neo-patrimonialism, the politics of the belly, prebendalism, and so on, which again hampers the advancement of the western type of democracy in the continent. These features have also been well–illustrated in Cameroonian history. In the 1990s Cameroon society, from the height of the state's level downward, appeared to be peopled exclusively by a multitude of private individuals chosen for their loyalty to the state rather than merit. The Beti ethnic group from which the President came occupied almost all the important positions in government. These people embezzled state resources without a 'modicum of morality' (Bayart 2009; Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997; Nyamnjoh 1999; Ndembiyembe 1997; Wiredu 1998).

In Kenya, key power brokers and patronage bosses concentrated around the veteran politician, Danial Arap Moi, mostly his KANU members of parliament and ministers were

actively countering advocates of multi-party politics. In early 1991, rallies were held in rural areas to decry multi-party politics (Klopp 2001). To completely eclipse the democratic process the incumbent governments fragmented the opposition parties into "groups willing to accept different rules of competition" (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1991:71)

Money or Trading Democracy

Any causal observation indicates that "money" democracy is a new form of democracy which is again best illustrated by the Cameroon example. Democracy in the Cameroonian context has some peculiarities worth examining and is dubbed at times as 'trading or money democracy'. Within seventy-two hours of the announcement of the elections date in 2011, more than fifty party leaders filed in their candidature to run the race for the presidency 2011 elections. The reason for such a number could simply be found in the fact that people had to pay CFA 5,000,000 (about $12,000USD). Once their applications went through the administrative procedures they were in turn given CFA 25,000,000 (about $60,000 USD)

The implication of this situation is obvious but needs further explanation. It befogs anyone's imagination how the government which is at the same time the ruling party and the incumbent will financially sponsor opposition parties to campaign against it. The argument is that it could only be easy and certain if the incumbent knew that it has done everything possible for the opposition never to win. It would have never been the other way round. This type of democracy may appear to be quite new but it is something which Bayart had foreseen a long time ago (Bayart, 2009). In a country like Cameroon the opposition feels that its political enemy should sponsor them to campaign against itself. This appears to be one of the greatest blunders of the opposition. In countries like Senegal presidential candidates instead deposit WFCA 25,000,000($60,000USD). That shows some level of seriousness. But in Cameroon the case is different. This partly explains why the country has one of the longest serving governments in the continent.

The Military Intervention Virus

In some countries the allure of the military to always intervene has not produced the best results for democracy. Contemporary debates on western democracy are pegged on the viability of democratic transformation, the role of external forces and the role of civil society (Allen, 1995: 148). Yet that dream of transformation has been constantly punctuated by the military. No case in Sub-Saharan Africa seems to better explain this notion than that of Nigeria. The emergence of new western democracies saw a bid on the part of existing military government to hang onto power. In the early 1990s, in order to insure national cohesion the military in Nigeria sponsored constitution-making and attempted to formulate a highly complicated model of governance. This included, amongst other things, a formula in which the successful candidate had to capture 25 percent of votes in each of at least two-thirds of the states in the country. In addition, all states of the federal republic had to be represented in the new president's cabinet of ministers. When it became apparent that Bashuron M.K.O. Abiola was winning the 1993 elections on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the military head of state, General Ibrahim Babagida annulled the elections. The reason for the

annulment was simply that Bashuron Mr. Abiola was not in the "good books" of the military elite. (Akiyele, 2004:66).

The Meaning of Democracy to the Rural/Urban Majority

It is difficult, if not impossible, for democracy to settle down in Africa when the population is not even clear about what it means. When Graham Harrison conducted a research in Mozambique on the significance of Multi-Party elections his results were quite revealing. During interviews with peasants, mostly in the villages of Munda and Mecufi, two questions were posed in order to illicit opinions: "what difference had democracy made to your life/ life in the village and what was the meaning or significance of the elections for you?" (Harrison, 1996:25). The principal response to the question concerning the concrete impact of democracy showed that prevalent problems had not been handled through democracy. In other words, there was still prevalent hike in prices, poverty, lack of employment, poor harvests and little or no social provisions. This showed that democracy had failed to solve basic problems and provide the necessities that common people need, although according to Harrison (1996:26) "many others realized that things had not changed at all". It was clear that all and sundry had not enjoyed the benefits that were to come with western democracy as anticipated by civil society.

Election Rigging

The rigging of elections and other forms of democratic misconduct have prevented democracy from succeeding in most African countries. In countries like Cameroon, rigging has become the norm of the incumbent for more than a decade. The consequence of such a practice is that it increases voting apathy amongst the masses. If democracy, as Diamond has noted, (1988:4), and as corroborated by Schumpeter (1976), involves a substantial level of individual and again collective competition for public office among citizens, and the existence of a regular schedule of elections from which no citizen of legal voting age is excluded, then the rigging of elections has made it very difficult for genuine western democracy to exist in Africa.

In the same vein the approval of many political parties and the fragmentation of civil society have gone a long way to 'destroy' the western model of democracy in Africa. In the 2011 elections in Cameroon more than 125 parties participated (Nkwi, 2011). These parties had no joint or combined objectives and through the leaders the incumbent government divided them; hence, they were not able to galvanise any support from all and sundry. All the above reasons show why western democracy has failed in most countries in the African continent. It is therefore imperative to chart a way forward. The next section attempts to show such a way. What is striking is that almost all the above elements appear to be themselves benefitting the various sub-Saharan African regimes; yet for any meaningful democratic reforms to take place it is relevant to identify such issues before attempting a way forward without them.

Which Way Forward?

The above discussions have examined the various reasons and dynamics why western style democracy has not been able to operate meaningfully in most African countries south of the Sahara. But we must also note that some countries have actually experienced meaningful democracy. They include Benin, one of the countries to experience democracy meaningfully through the holding of a national conference (Akinde, 1995: 268) and in Tanzania where in 2001 the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi led by President Benjamin Mkapa won the democratic elections and empowered women in all fronts (Brown, 2001:67-68). Of course Ghana is another very good example but only after Jerry Rawlings had left the stage there. Sometime ago Claude Ake published his book, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa* in which he questions whether democracy is feasible in Africa (Ake, 2000). The problem is not whether it is possible for democracy to progress in Africa but rather whether within the circumstances in which African states find themselves, democracy can be possible. It therefore makes good sense to proffer a way forward which, if a majority of African countries were to follow, might give western style democracy a chance succeed. Of course there are challenges and difficulties that this proffered solutions will also face. The first challenge and difficulty is that what can happen in a part of Africa may not be replicated across the continent. The heterogeneous nature of the continent would not make this possible.

Does Africa Need Western Democracy at all?

Since 1990 western democracy has become a buzzword and become synonymous with development. Yet the last two decades have shown that democratic transition in Africa need to be re-questioned and reformulated towards an auto-centric paradigm. Democracy should lead to meaningful development that will affect all and sundry or else it will not be relevant. I, howevers take inspiration from Sklar and Whitaker (1991) who have convincingly argued that meaningful democracy should be linked to development. They have emphasised that democracy is not simply about forms or means but also about ends which have to do with its inherent capacity to enhance development. Most if not all societies will have to undergo 'developmental democracy' which is more oriented to solving "problems of economic underdevelopment, social stagnation and political drift" (Sklar & Whitman, 1991). It will therefore be imperative to see democracy and development as two bedfellows who are complements of each other. Such complementarities if well harnessed will definitely lead to meaningful development. Wagnaraja (1993) did not mince words when she said: "democracy and development are two sides of the same coin". Countries by any standard African need development and if democracy cannot match with this then it is irrelevant.

The failure to link democracy to development indicates that some African societies should go back to the African democracy which tends to be an auto-centric style of democracy. The fact that African democracy exists has raised debates of unusual proportions. July (1992) and Lyold (1967), rightly argue that democracy is no stranger to Africa given that traditional Africans communities had regulatory institutions that limited the powers of their kings which had to be consulted by him in many major decisions.

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Therefore, the king ruled with the consent of their nobles in the interest of the subjects. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1970:12) put the case of African type of democracy in stronger terms. They said:

> …the government of an African state consists in a balance between power and authority on the one side and obligation and responsibility on the other….The distribution of political authority provides a machinery by which the various agents of government can be held to their responsibilities…and kings and chiefs ruled by consent….A ruler's subjects are as fully aware of the duties he owes them as they are of the duties they owe to him, and are able to exert pressure to make him discharge these duties

Thus more checks and balances existed in African pre-colonial societies than what is exists in the 21st century in the name of western democracy. Despite such institutions, Bratton and van de Walle have attempted to dismiss African democracy by declaring that some of these societies prevented women, slaves, strangers and younger people from participating in decision-making processes and that it is questionable if any pre-colonial traditional African society had experienced direct democracy. The issue at stake, then, is whether African democracy, if blended with certain elements of western-styled democracy, can lead some African countries towards development.

Whatever the argument against African democracy, it is easy for us to see the concept of western democracy as something which for two decades has not achieved anything meaningful for some African countries.

The need for a strong civil society

If anything necessitated the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Africa it was the vibrant civil society that existed in most African countries in the 1990s. Civil society, it must be stressed, deals with day-to-day operations of livelihood and one should be able to talk of civil society when it has an impact on society; if not it should be left out (Nkwi, 2006:93). The subject of civil society has thrown up endless disputes over definitions but its study in Africa has made great strides in academia since the 1990s (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Kasfir 1998; Sitoe 1998; Osaghae 1994).

The vibrancy of civil society in the 1990s soon waned. It became increasingly difficult to evolve a viable, inclusive and participatory governance structure due to the authoritarian nature of most African countries. That difficulty was compounded and complicated by the states' use of political stratagems such as divide-and-rule, prebendalism, patronage and clientelism, all of which has led to the 'informalisation' of politics. Through these methods the ruling government has penetrated civil society and survived by 'buying off' sections of it (Nkwi, 2006: 99). This has led to the impotency of civil society.

The way out of this gloomy situation requires civil society to transcend narrow, social and political boundaries and identify with the daily and legitimate struggles of

ordinary citizens. Francis B. Nyamnjoh (1999) argues that attempts to empower civil society have met with little success because of poor organisation, while Yenshu (2001) blames weak social mobilisation in a context of repressive laws that stifle real political and social debates. To overcome these problems civil society in Africa must therefore develop itself through a national network capable of promoting a more consistent and coherent democratic discourse and promoting practices and attitudes that defend the fundamental rights of citizens, which is one of the benchmarks of genuine western democracy. The experiences in many other African countries, especially South Africa, could be emulated elsewhere, for example, in Cameroon and the Central African Republic. The contributions of mass political mobilisation and awareness-building among civil society organisations to the achievement of social transformation in South Africa should serve as an inspiration to budding civil society organisations in other parts of Africa.

The idea of civil society is not new, but what appears to be new now is its organisation within the modern state and its presupposition of a global character. According to De Oliviera & Tandon (1994), human beings have always come together for a common cause, and the gregarious nature of humankind is expressed in an associational life of diverse character and objectives. This diverse character, according to Bayart (2009), should include villagers, fishermen, nomads, members of different age groups, village councilors, slum dwellers and all others who are, or feel they are without due access to state resources, as well as professionals, politicians, priest and mullahs, intellectuals and military officers. This human solidarity, with its holistic and philosophical origins, is known as civil society and nowadays requires greater citizen participation and influence more the affairs of modern states than ever before.

One of the drawbacks of democracy in the continent has been ethnicity. There is no doubt that civil society in Africa is threatened by the particularism of ethnicity and other atomistic tendencies (Woods, 1992). A fully developed civil society in Africa should help create norms that would help limit the character of ethnic and cultural particularism. It is unlikely, however, that a civil society will develop in Africa that is completely void of ethnic tensions and divisions, but structures can be created to contain the problem. The civil society in Africa should be questioning its own *raison d'etre* like other human institutions. By examining itself, it will know whether it is worthwhile. The growth of civil society requires organisational development to enable leaders to exercise influence over a government on behalf of its members. When this type of institutionalisation exists, even authoritarian regimes such as the one in erstwhile Apartheid South Africa will have to give grudging recognition to civil society (Sklar 1987).

The Gap between Urban and Rural Politics

The yawning gap between rural and the urban politics has been largely responsible for the inability of western style democracy to settle down in Africa. Inordinate focus on national level urban politics can lead to an inadequate understanding of forms of despotism in Africa and consequently the process by which such despotism might be transforming towards democracy. Thus we need to examine the ways in which rural majorities are

linked to urban-centered national politics. This is what Mamdani (1996) has coined as "decentralised despotism". A cursory observation of politicians and the political parties' secretariats shows that almost all are found in cities or urban areas. As elections approach, politicians rush to rural areas and within a few days their assignment with the rural areas is terminated. This paper holds, however, that there should be an equilibrium between rural and urban areas, thus closing or narrowing the gap between the two spheres for better functioning of democracy.

Conclusion

The process of democratisation which was re-launched in the 1990s ha been captured under the tutelage of competitive elections which found expression in the emergence of the multi-party system. This became noticeable in Ivory Coast, Togo, Cameroon, Gabon, Benin and Kenya. The democratic movements of 1990s howevers and also given birth to regimes that had very shallow and consequently very little knowledge awareness of the preconditions of future stability as they had major weakness, coupled with ethnicity, sit-tightism, divide and rule politics. These countries included *inter alia* Mali, Kenya, Togo, The Gambi, Senegal and Cameroon. Democracy also produced regimes which were and cannot be easily considered as genuinely democratic–Central Africa Republic, Congo until 1997; Equatorial Guinea, Zambia and Chad. In certain quarters democracy has been snuffed out by the intervention of armed forces like Nigeria, Niger and Burundi. All these point to the fact that there is great variety in the penetration and success of democratization in Africa. There are countries there that have never gotten a taste of democratization; there are those that followed the process of democratization but failed to consolidate democratic institutions and reversed themselves democratically; and there are those which have undergone change towards democracy and successfully maintained and acquired legacy. Thus it could be contended here that democracy has undergone considerable vicissitude in the continent.

Within two decades of the new wave of democracy in Africa, it has faced a myriad difficulties and challenges, although it has met them with some successes here and there. The reasons why it was so have been analysed in this paper. I am aware that Africa is a very diverse continent with its own peculiarities. Therefore the essay holds that the particular social, political and economic environment of the continent should be responsible for the type of government that will best serve the people of Africa. It is hoped that what could be seen as good elsewhere could as well be emulated here. Nevertheless, the fact is that Sub-Saharan Africa was prepared neither in the colonial period or in the postcolonial one for western democracy. Perhaps the time has come for Africa to initiate a democratic model based on its own past experiments with it that may be blended with the best of western practices of democracy.

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The Powerlessness of Cameroon's Reunification Monuments

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the symbolism and popularity of the Reunification Monuments constructed in Yaounde and Mamfe some years after the political reunification of the two Cameroons. These monuments were constructed to commemorate the reunification of Cameroon, considered by many as the most significant event in postcolonial Cameroon history. This study intends to investigate why the monuments became victims of neglect, indifference and even scorn from Cameroonians only a few decades after reunification. An analysis of the data collected from interviews and secondary sources reveals that the monuments remain unpopular like the reunification history itself largely due to the failure of the powers that be to project this aspect of Cameroon history. The monuments have, therefore, remained powerless, as they have not immortalized the reunification of Cameroon, as is the case with reunification monuments elsewhere.

Key Words

Reunification, Monuments, Plebiscite, Southern Cameroons, *Republique du Cameroun*

Introduction

Cameroon became a German protectorate in July 1884 following the signing of the Germano-Duala Treaty between German traders and some Douala Chiefs along the coast of Cameroon. German administration in Cameroon ended in 1916 when Anglo-French forces defeated the Germans in the territory following the outbreak of the First World War in Europe in 1914.

When the war ended in Cameroon, Britain and France decided to partition Cameroon into British and French dominated areas. In the partition, France received four-

fifths of the territory and Britain, the remaining one-fifth. The international community through the League of Nations recognised the partition and requested the powers to administer their respective areas as Mandate Territories of the League of Nations. Britain decided, for administrative convenience, to partition British Cameroons into two: British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. The British territories were administered from Nigeria: Northern Cameroons from Northern Nigeria and Southern Cameroons first from Southern Nigeria and later the Eastern Region of Nigeria.

After the Second World War, some of the nationalists in both British and French Cameroons expressed their desire for a reunification of the Cameroons. In French Cameroons, the desire and struggle for reunification were championed by the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) led by Reuben Um Nyobe while in the British Southern Cameroons, reunification was one of the objectives of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) of John Ngu Foncha and One Kamerun (OK), led by Ndeh Ntumazah. In both territories, the colonial powers treated the reunificationists as enemies, opposed the struggle and mounted formidable obstacles to its achievement. On January[1], 1960, French Cameroon became independent as la Republique du Cameroun. In February 1961, the UN organized plebiscites in the British Northern and Southern Cameroons requesting the indigenes to choose between gaining independence as part of Nigeria (integration with Nigeria) and independence with la Republique du Cameroun (reunification with French Cameroon). A majority of Northern Cameroonians opted for union with Nigeria while a majority of Southern Cameroonians voted for reunification with la Republique du Cameroun. On October 1, 1961, Southern Cameroons became independent and reunified with la Republique du Cameroun to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon.[2]

The reunification of Cameroon attracted international attention for several reasons. Firstly, it occurred at the time the Central African Federation of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia created by the British in 1953 was collapsing because of zonal peculiarities, economic differences and the "divide-and-rule" politics of the colonial master. Secondly, the African-initiated federations such as the Mali Federation formed by Senegal and Sudan in 1959 were also proving unworkable. These were indications that African unity, highly cherished by the Pan-Africanists, could not easily be achieved. For these reasons, the reunification of Cameroon was welcomed by anti-colonialists, Pan-Africanists and African countries that were hoping that the reunified Cameroon would be the fulcrum of a wider Africa because it would blend the best of what was inherited from Britain and France. They expected Cameroon to offer the inspiration that would unite the rest of Africa. Speaking in 1961, Cameroon's first President Amadou Ahidjo said "reuniting today people of both French and English expression, Cameroon will be a veritable laboratory for an African Union which will unite people who speak two languages. She will be a bridge between these two Africas, and her role can only be increased in forthcoming African Assemblies" (Dibussi Tande, 2006). This statement was an indication that political actors in Cameroon were aware of the importance of their decision. Cameroon's reunification was therefore given moral support by the anti-colonialists as a desired political development in Africa.

Ahmadou Ahidjo, considered rightly or wrongly by observers as the principal architect of the reunification, received praise and acclamation all over Africa. In 1972, the University of Lagos conferred on him an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree partly because of his role in the reunification of Cameroon. The Lagos University authorities citation stated that after achieving independence for what was then French Cameroon, Ahidjo initiated "intensive diplomatic campaigns at the United Nations to have a referendum conducted in that part of the Cameroons under British Trusteeship. The result was the reunification of East and West Cameroon…" Ahidjo was also described as "…one of Africa's most illustrious and best known leaders (who) welded together diverse cultural entities into a homogeneous modern state…" (Aka, 2002:266)

To crown these awards, Cameroon was honoured by the member states of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as it was the only country that provided two Secretaries-General to the OAU successively in the 1970s. They were Nzo Ekhah-Nghaki, 1972-1975 (from Anglophone Cameroon) and Eteki Mboumoua, 1975-1980 (from Francophone Cameroon). Africa therefore celebrated the reunification of Cameroon and the authorities in the country could not remain indifferent to this African recognition of the significance of Cameroon's reunification

The Erection of Reunification Monuments

To immortalize this significant event, two reunification monuments were erected in Yaounde and Mamfe. There was also the reunification bridge over the Mungo River constructed in 1969 to link the towns of Douala in East Cameroon and Tiko in West Cameroon and to give concrete meaning to the political reunification of October 1961.[3] In 1972, a newly constructed stadium in Douala was also christened "reunification stadium". There were also "reunification streets" in Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe and other towns of West Cameroon. At individual levels, several traders, tourism promoters and especially liquor vendors in the major towns of West Cameroon baptized their sales points "Reunification Hotel" and/ or "Reunification Bar" in memory of this great event. However, the most conspicuous structures were the Yaounde and Mamfe monuments. The Yaounde monument was in the administrative and political capital of Cameroon while the Mamfe monument could be remembered because it was at the heart of the Mamfe town (Reunification Roundabout) that hosted some of the decisive pre-independence nationalist conferences in 1953 and 1959.

The Yaounde monument was designed by Gedeon Mpondo and the Jesuit Priest Engelbert Mveng and constructed by the French architect, Salomon, between 1973 and 1976 (Ngo Binam and Kay, 2003). It is located in Ngoa Ekelle in the Yaounde Third District near the French Embassy, the Ministry of Defense and the National Assembly. It is a mass bloc of an old man brandishing the national torchlight with five children on him. The second part consists of a spiral tower behind the old man.

The Mamfe monument, however, is a little-known monument constructed at the heart of the town during the years of giddy euphoria to commemorate the birth of the bilingual Cameroon. Unlike the Yaounde monument which bears no inscriptions,

on the Mamfe monument (which is simply a wall) is clearly and boldly written "Built in commemoration of West Cameroon Independence and Re-unification of Cameroon, October 1961". In the early years it was expected that the two monuments would be sustainable touristic attractions like the Eiffel Tower. These monuments were also to be the best places and sites to commemorate, remember and evoke the history of reunification because as Boursier (2001) puts it "*les monuments constituent les traces visibles du passé pour l'éternité, et la volonté de transmission de la mémoire aux generations futures*". That is, monuments constitute visible and eternal traces of the past preserved in order to ensure the transmission of the history they represent to future generations. The two also represented the hopes and dreams of a bilingual Cameroon that would serve as an example to the rest of Africa. In terms of symbolism, the Mamfe monument, despite its small size, was as important as the Yaounde monument and like the Yaounde monument, it rapidly became a victim of neglect, indifference and even scorn from the people of Mamfe and the rest of Cameroon
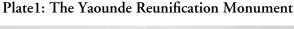
Plate1: The Yaounde Reunification Monument

Plate 2: The Mamfe Reunification Monument

People's Perception of the Monuments

The Yaounde reunification monument is the principal monument and historical site in the political capital of Cameroon. In a study carried out by Ngo Binam Bikoi and Kay Nicole in 2013, it was realized that the Yaounde reunification monument was not known by a majority of the Yaounde inhabitants. (Ngo Binam and Kay, 2013) The monument was not a popular site for tourists and even the city dwellers manifested no attachment to the edifice. The study also revealed that the city dwellers had a negative perception of the monument as it was virtually in a no-go-zone. (Ibid) An interview conducted in Mamfe by this author in June 2011 with forty city dwellers between the ages of twenty and sixty revealed that less than ten percent of them knew that there existed a reunification monument in their town. None of the persons interviewed had visited the monument before. The monument itself had never been given a face lift since construction. The Mamfe and Yaounde monuments were also abandoned as no commemorative activities were ever organized at the site despite the monuments' obvious importance. The neglect, indifference and scorn from the people in the neighborhood of these monuments could be accounted for by the following considerations

Firstly, the monuments were constructed at the time some Cameroonians were disgruntled with the Ahmadou Ahidjo's regime following the dismantling of the federal structures in 1972 in favour of a unitary state. It should be recalled here that the reunified Cameroon was a Federation of two states; West (Anglophone) and East (Francophone) Cameroon. In May, 1972, Ahidjo abolished the federation through an unpopular referendum and instituted a unitary state to the chagrin of most Anglophones. Between 1973 and 1976 when the Yaounde and Mamfe monuments were constructed, the Government was busy marketing the advantages of this unitary state over the federation created in 1961 (Ngoh, 2004). The bicultural character of the republic represented by the two states and the cohabitation of Anglo-Saxons and Francophone administrative, judicial and educational systems were buried in favour of seven provinces in a unitary state. Many observers took the reunification monuments for unitary state monuments. This confusion persisted in Yaounde because the monument did not carry any inscription or writing in favour of reunification. Instead, the old man with five children at the heart of the monument seemingly depicted or represented the unitary state more than reunification. A better monument for reunification would have been a man with two children representing Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons.

The location of the monuments was also a problem. Many could not explain the choice of Yaounde and Mamfe. Given the historic role of the towns of Buea and Foumban in the reunification process, many observers questioned the construction of monuments in Yaounde and Mamfe.[4] Foumban hosted the historic constitutional conference from July 17 to 21, 1961 that produced the draft constitution for the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Buea was the capital of the British Southern Cameroons and the town that hosted the declaration and celebrations of reunification on October 1, 1961. It was therefore largely expected that these towns should host the reunification monuments. However, Mamfe is known to have hosted the 1959 Plebiscite Conference during which the proponents

of reunification successfully marketed the advantages of their stance while Yaounde was the capital of the reunified Cameroon. These arguments were not sufficient to favour Mamfe and Yaounde against Buea and Foumban as the best towns to host the reunification monuments.

The disdain for the Yaounde monument was also due to its location in this town. Unlike the Eugene Jamot and Charles Atangana monuments[5] which were constructed at the heart of the city and at conspicuous sites, the reunification monument was constructed in an elitist quarter near the military headquarters, an institution that was known for its suppression of the nationalists and reunificationists in particular between 1955 and 1972 (Ngo Binam and Kay, 2013). It was also located near a mortuary and the French Embassy, where many believed anti-reunification plans were nursed by the colonial master. This perception also rendered the monument unpopular and consequently led to their neglect. It should be recalled here that the UPC that worked for reunification in French Cameroon was a bête noire of the colonial authorities because the party wanted immediate independence and immediate reunification, options which the French were not ready to tolerate, at least before 1958. The various French High Commissioners and Ambassadors in Cameroon between 1952 and 1972 were therefore championing anti-nationalist and anti-UPC activities.

Monuments are generally considered the best places for the commemoration and remembrance of the historical events they represent. They represent the most visible traces of the past for future generations. Unfortunately, Cameroon's reunification monuments were abandoned by the authorities immediately after construction ended. Since 1976 when the Yaounde monument was completed, the Yaounde regime had never celebrated October 1 as reunification day. Even in 2011, when the government flamboyantly announced the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of reunification, no commemorative activity was organized at the monument to remind the younger generations of the historic reunion of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons on October 1, 1961.[6] This could be explained by the fact that at independence, the French handed over power to the loyalists and moderate nationalists who were not diehard reunificationists like the UPC militants in French Cameroon.[7] The moderates led by Ahidjo (1960-1982) and Paul Biya (1982-?) were not excited with reunification, which was actually forced on them. The two regimes of Ahidjo and Biya therefore placed more emphasis on the May 20, 1972 reform that ushered in the unitary state, thereby dismantling the 1961 federal institutions. Ahidjo, and later, Biya ignored reunification and celebrated May 20th from 1973 as Cameroon's national day. This gradually blurred reunification in the memory of Cameroonians. Reunification monuments therefore became obsolete.

The powerlessness of Cameroon's reunification monuments could also be traced from the history of reunification itself. In French Cameroon, the UPC that advocated reunification was in fact the bête noire of the colonial master. Consequently, everything was done to prevent reunification. Reunificationists were molested, tortured, jailed and exiled. In July 1955, the UPC leaders were forced into exile in the British Southern Cameroons.

The UPC as a political party was not therefore part of the historic 1956 elections that led to the formation of the first indigenous government in French Cameroon. The moderates who led the government in French Cameroons since 1957 did not have reunification as part of their political program. In fact, Andre Marie Mbida, the first Prime Minister of French Cameroon, is said to have argued in 1958 that the idea of reunification was far-fetched. To him it was a dream that could not be realised. (Ngoh, 2002:161) His successor, Ahidjo, did not also make reunification a priority. In his speech to the Cameroon nation on January 1, 1960 and in the presence of John Ngu Foncha, he did not mention reunification or even his ambition for the 'annexation' of the Southern Cameroons. (Nfi, 2012) Therefore, those who finalized the Reunification process, Ahidjo and Foncha, were not the initiators. (Abwa, 2011). The exclusion of the UPC, principal initiators of the reunification idea, from the final constitutional conferences that resulted in the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1961 contributed to the unpopular image of the visible symbols or traces of reunification

Nothing was done to popularize the reunification idea. Again, the people of French Cameroon were not directly involved with the 1961 plebiscite organized by the United Nations to enable Southern Cameroonians to choose between independence with French Cameroon (reunification) and independence with Nigeria. In fact, they were not given the opportunity to vote for or against reunification. With all these sore points, the reunification episode remained strange to them and this was to reflect on their relationship with the reunification monuments.

In the Southern Cameroons, the British also opposed reunification and mounted all possible obstacles to its realisation. They administered the Southern Cameroons as an integral part of South Eastern Nigeria, obliging the people to depend on Nigeria for political advancement, education and other socio-economic infrastructure. However, by 1953, the nationalists were divided into three camps. The first and most popular group wanted the Southern Cameroons to gain independence as a separate state without connections to either Nigeria or French Cameroon. The second group advocated for independence with Nigeria while the third and least popular group wanted the territory to gain independence through reunification with French Cameroon.[8] Since the British considered independence with Nigeria as an indigenous approval of her 1922 decision to rule the territory as an integral part of South Eastern Nigeria, the British decided to woo the people towards accepting independence with Nigeria. To achieve this goal, Britain convinced the United Nations to pair independence with Nigeria versus independence with French Cameroon (reunification) in the 1961 plebiscite, since reunification was the least popular of the options, and the British could not imagine a vote in favour of reunification. The most popular option for independence for the Southern Cameroons, that is, an independent Southern Cameroon State, was eliminated from the plebiscite alternatives. Many Southern Cameroonians therefore voted for reunification at the 1961 plebiscite not because they cherished and understood it but because they were not given the opportunity to opt for an independent Southern Cameroon State. Cameroon's reunification monuments are therefore unpopular–like the reunification episode in Cameroon history.

Last but not least, some Anglophones lost respect and interest in the monuments because according to them, reunification did not bear the desired fruits. It did not bring the much desired decentralization which Foncha, the leader of the KNDP, promised them. Instead, Ahmadou Ahidjo concentrated powers in his hands and in Yaounde in a dictatorship.. The violation of the 1961 federal constitution, the exclusion of the Anglophone from policy-making and effective power-sharing since 1972, and Biya's unilateral creation of the Republic of Cameroon in 1984[9] to replace the United Republic of Cameroon were the institutional and constitutional roots of the Anglophone discontent and regret for reunification.[10] Reunification also resulted in the decline of towns like Mamfe, which was an important river port, and Victoria, a seaport. Anglophone economic institutions like the Produce Marketing Board (NPMB) disappeared a few years after reunification. Anglophone values of honesty, righteousness, freedoms, discipline, self-reliance, community spirit and hard work vanished, as they were literally assimilated by the majority Francophones. Mamfe people in particular had nothing to jubilate over as few years after reunification they lost commercial contact with Nigeria as the town gradually dwindled from a buoyant commercial center into a "ghost town" (Tata, 2003). It was in this context that the reunification monument in Mamfe was scorned at and the various reunification streets, hotels and bars in Anglophone Cameroon neglected and abandoned

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show that the sustainability of monuments and historical sites depend on the values attached to them and the historical importance or popularity of the events they represent. The reunification monuments that were constructed in Yaounde and Mamfe in the 1970s were welcomed as the best physical and visible representation of the most significant event in Cameroon history. The construction of the monuments came at a time when the international or the African community was heralding the Cameroon experiment that was expected to serve as an example of African unity. Unfortunately, the monuments remained powerless and failed to immortalize the reunification of the two Cameroons. This was so because no commemorative events were ever organized by the site of these monuments and also because the government of Cameroon opted for the regular celebration of "national unity" achieved as a result of the May 1972 referendum rather than reunification achieved in October 1961. Cameroon's reunification monuments have thus remained unknown, no-go zones, dirty, neglected, powerless and unable to immortalize reunification, whose history is also unpopular and which some Anglophones today even consider as an unfortunate occurrence due to its negative consequences for West or Anglophone Cameroon.

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Endnotes

[1]For more on a comparative study on Nationalism in the two Cameroons, see V.G. Fanso, "Anglophone and Francophone Nationalism in Cameroon", *The Round Table: The Common Wealth Journal of International Affairs*, no.350, 1999,pp.281-286

[2]For an eye witness account of the 1961 plebiscite in some parts of the Southern Cameroons, see J. Percival, *The 1961 Cameroon Plebiscite: Choice or Betrayal*, (Bamenda, Mankon; Langaa RPCIG, 2008)

[3]In 2002, the bridge collapsed when an oil tanker exploded on it.

[4]Most of the pre-reunification talks and constitutional conferences were in Buea and Foumban. In fact the conference that identified the structures of the federation was held in Foumban in July 1961.

[5]The Eugene Jamot monument was constructed in honour of Doctor Jamot, a Frenchman who rigorously fought against sleeping sickness in Cameroon before the Second World War, while the Charles Atangana monument was in honour of the Yaounde chief, who had collaborated with the German and French colonial masters

[6]In his traditional address to the nation on December 31, 2012, President Biya said " Je voudrais dire que le cinquantenaire de notre reunification, intervenue, comme vous le savez le 1er octobre 1961, sera célèbre avec toute le solennité nécessaire", see P.Biya, 2012, "Discours la nation du 31 December", *Cameroun Tribune*, no10003/6204, du 3 Janvier 2013, p.4

[7]For more, see J.M.Zang-Atangana,, *Les forces Politiques au Cameroun réunifie*, (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989)

[8]For more on this division, see Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, "The Kamerun Plebiscite: Perceptions and Strategies", PhD Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973

[9]In 1984, President Paul Biya unilaterally changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon adopted in 1972 to the Republic of Cameroon. This was the same name French Cameroons had at independence in 1960. Many Anglophone interpreted the change of name as a tacit withdrawal of Francophone Cameroon from the 1961 union.

[10]For more on Anglophone discontent after 1972, see Tata S. Ngenge,"The Institutional Roots of the Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", J-G Gros (ed), *Cameroon, Politics and Society in Critical Perspectives*, (New York, University Press of America,2003), pp.61-68

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Review Essay

Authorized Honesty: *The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul*

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No acquaintance of V. S. Naipaul could possibly imagine that during the scattering of Pat Naipaul's ashes, the Quran was recited, but the author, highly acclaimed for both his fiction and non-fiction but also known for his hostility towards Islam, allowed the lapse and was even grateful. The recitation of Sura Fatiha in Arabic was performed by Naipaul's newly-wed wife Nadira, a Muslim woman from Pakistan with links in Kenya. Naipaul was too distraught to accompany her into the woods on Cooper's Hill; he stood by the car, crying the entire time. The location, near Gloucester, had memories for him, memories of Pat, wife of a forty-one year long marriage. Months earlier, the funeral at Salisbury Crematorium was austere and frugal. Curiously enough, Naipaul defended the minimalism to someone in Islamic terms: "'It was chaste, it was Quranic in its purity'" (480). There was no decent interval between the first wife's death and the second wedding. Naipaul had met Nadira in Pakistan while collecting materials for a new book on Islam (*Beyond Belief*) and had proposed to her when Pat was still alive but dying of cancer. She passed away in February of 1996; the wedding occurred in April; Pat's remains were dispersed in October.

Patrick French concludes his *The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul* with an unforgettable description of the bizarre moments of the scattering of Pat's ashes. Throughout the book, French narrates the life of a man who seems a bigot, a racist, a tightwad, a tyrannical husband, an adulterer, a frequenter of prostitutes—a thoroughgoing villain, one might conclude. Naipaul, however, baffles such characterization. He is also an author of remarkable talent, a loving son whose father Seepersad Naipaul was his greatest literary inspiration, not without generosity even to strangers on occasions, and a scathingly honest critic of his own conduct.

The biography offers extensive information on Naipaul's Indian/Trinidadian ancestry. His grandparents came to Trinidad from India around the late nineteenth century, but both parents were born on the island. The Naipauls were mostly cane cutters, but claimed to be Brahmins (members of the priestly caste) as well. French raises strong doubts as to their true caste origin. It is not clear if the name "Naipaul" is of Brahminic origin. It could have been given to Seepersad's father by the officials responsible for documenting indentured laborers, many of whom were completely illiterate. Other versions of the name exist in the archives, including "Nepaliah" (24). Naipaul felt that his dark-skinned paternal relations had Nepalese physical features; one of them indeed was Nepalese (18). Seepersad's parents had a troubled marriage. His mother had to leave his father because of his extremely violent rages; she even had a son by another man (17). This certainly was an aberrant conduct because traditional Hinduism does not allow remarriage even of widows.

In contrast, Naipaul's maternal grandparents claimed higher lineage. The grandfather, Kopil, later Capildeo Maharaj in Trinidad, was in all probability a Brahmin and possessed knowledge of Sanskrit and the scriptures. He married the daughter of his overseer, fathered many children, and became quite prosperous in Trinidad. All members of the Capildeo clan were proud of their founding patriarch's achievements, except for the days prior to his passing on a ship bound for India. He was on his way to India with another man's wife, with money raised through mortgage of most of his Trinidad property. Stories of the parents and grandparents are the materials of Naipaul's masterpiece novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. In it the author figures as Anand, son of Biswas.

Naipaul went to Oxford on a scholarship to study English literature in 1950. His Oxford days were both exciting and depressing. He was better informed than most other students and impressed his teachers, but he suffered bouts of anxiety. Asthma was a recurrent problem, as were financial uncertainties and lack of feminine companionship. News from home was not cheerful. Seepersad was having job-related worries but was still adding more children to his impoverished family, fathering seven in his rather short life. Like the son, the father was prone to frequent depressive episodes. Not only was Seepersad haunted by poor job prospects; added to the disappointment was the huge frustration of being a failed writer. He could never find a publisher for his work.

Naipaul earned the B.A. with a Second Class at Oxford. The result disappointed him; one comfort was J. R. R. Tolkien thought Naipaul's "Anglo-Saxon paper was the best in the university" (115). Naipaul looked for jobs, but none came his way. Prospects were bleak not only for him alone, but for other university graduates as well at the time. Naipaul tried his luck in all possible places, including dozens of advertising firms, businesses in India and America, the Indian High Commission, the British Council, the BBC, and a couple of English newspapers. Returning to his home country—"a plantation," according to him— was not an option. His ambition to be a writer could not be realized there. Seepersad, now dead, was the proof of the fate of failed writers.

In these years of punishing apprehensions, anxieties, frequent asthma attacks, and guilt for not helping his family in Trinidad, Pat Hale, a student of history at Oxford, gave Naipaul solid succor. It was a difficult job because he was not the stuff of grace under pressure. The situation changed when BBC offered him the job of running a radio show called "Caribbean Voices" on a renewable contract. Naipaul's writing career thrived in the coming years, but the years of misery after graduation left a deep scar on him. The existential angst that his fictional characters express was shaped by this episode of his life when he was often on the verge of complete collapse; once, he even attempted suicide (103).

The most useful part of French's *Biography* is an abundance of such information, information that explains the geneses of an impressive number of books—how each was conceived, written, and published. The first reader and editor of Naipaul's books was Pat; she remained a devoted wife in all the four decades following their marriage. Their relationship, on the other hand, lost the warmth of their youthful years in less than half that time. The reason at least in part was Naipaul's sexual dissatisfaction, which had plagued him for years and which marriage intensified in him in double measure. He began visiting prostitutes on the sly, but even they could not give him what he was looking for: absolute control and abundant sex. There was also the matter of safety. He confided to French, "'I always practiced safe sex. Safe sex is rather joyless sex'" (183).

The opportunity to have abundant exciting sex came when Naipaul met Margaret Gooding in 1971 on a trip to Argentina. This relationship is the stuff of his own fiction. Romance appears rarely in his work, but when it does, it is usually a carnal union leading to disaster. One can recall Rafique and Laraine in *An Area of Darkness* or Salim and Yvette in *A Bend in the River*. Margaret had a family with children of her own, but she left them to be with Naipaul. He, on the other hand, enjoyed the sex but not her company as much. She lived in Argentina for the most part, except for taking excursions out of the country with him. These arrangements were not easy to plan; money was an issue; and she realized, "Vidia even expected her to pay for it" (327). He wanted nothing other than sex and was quite successful in extracting it from her. Completely in his thrall, she wrote in one of her many letters from Argentina that "he was vain to call his penis a god, but . . . she hoped to make a pilgrimage to the shrine" (329). Naipaul did not always read these letters but soon found a way to deal with the two women in his life. Pat was his official wife, living with him in their English home, editing his work, and attending parties thrown by friends with him. Margaret was the travel paramour, available when needed but snubbed when she sought attention. Pat accompanied Naipaul when he went to India and to East Africa to write *An Area of Darkness* and *In a Free State.* Years later Margaret went with him when he went to the US and India again to write *A Turn in the South* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now.* Margaret summed up the situation nicely in a letter—"Mama at home, a whore in Argentina" (328).

Apparently, Margaret served Naipaul's carnal needs and Pat his intellectual ones. When he was planning to write *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul talked about the book first to Pat. In the following months, he went through acute mood swings, and Pat was the victim

of his outbursts. She was awakened in nights to be told of matters relating the to book, a job she was happy to perform for him. The concluding paragraph of the book, considered a literary masterpiece by many, came to Naipaul in a sort of esoteric trance—as did "Kubla Khan" to Coleridge—in the wee hours of the morning, at 12:30-1:30 AM. Highly satisfied with what he had accomplished with *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul went to the US to live with Margaret for a while (381).

The situation was somewhat different when Naipaul went to Indonesia to collect materials for a book on Islam. Margaret accompanied him, only to be sent away when he found her presence too annoying. Pat was summoned from England with detailed instructions on travel arrangements (392). This was not the only sudden termination of Margaret's companionship. There were other instances, including those with strong declarations of permanent rejection, but then passion rekindled. Naipaul would take months or even a year to respond to Margaret's epistolary overtures, but respond he did until he met Nadira in 1996.

And Margaret's devotion to Naipaul required sacrifices. Once when her entreaties to be with him went unheeded, she came to England on her own. Naipaul learned, however, that she had come to be with him by being the mistress of an Argentine banker who was financing the trip. Recalling the incident, Naipaul told French, "I was very violent with her for two days with my hand; my hand began to hurt . . . She didn't mind it at all. She thought of it in terms of my passion for her" (348).

Obviously, Margaret was a woman of low self-esteem, but what about Pat? She was no better and fared worse. French reveals a pattern of torment to which she reacted with characteristic self-remonstrance: "it is perhaps my own fault" (407). The abuse ran deep. Paul Theroux's *Sir Vidia's Shadow*, published ten years before French's biography, does not contradict French's account of the Pat–Naipaul relationship though immediately after Theroux's book, its credibility was questioned by many of Naipaul's admirers. French does point out some incongruities surrounding a lunch at the Wiltshire residence of the Naipauls that Theroux reports in his book. There can be little to dispute his account of Pat, however. Her warm personality and deathly dedication to her husband were noted by others as well. In a review of French's biography, James Woods recalls the setting of his interview with Naipaul. He mistook Pat as Naipaul's secretary; then "only as the secretary showed me out, and novelist and servant briefly spoke to each other in the hall, did I realize that she was Naipaul's wife."Moni Malhotra, the IAS officer who had helped Naipaul on his first trip to India, wrote after observing the Naipauls in their Wiltshire home, "She was a very Indian wife in many respects—more Indian than most Indian wives—the way the woman sacrifices her own life for her husband. It was an unusual kind of relationship for an Englishwoman" (435).

Marital infidelity was not the only hurt; Naipaul, in later years of their marriage, rarely missed an opportunity to humiliate Pat. French quotes some of these remarks. "'You know you are the only woman I know who has no skill'" (332). And Pat wrote in her

diary, "Vidia said . . . [h]e doesn't dislike me . . . I only irritate him" (398). Sometimes the tyranny manifested differently. A visitor to their Wiltshire home noted, "'Pat Naipaul is apparently not allowed by Vidia to garden . . . if she does so clandestinely while he is resting in afternoon he will suddenly pull aside the curtains and denounce her from the window'" (430). Pat had to yield always to her husband's will. She even had to comfort him when he admitted to her his guilt over the affair with Margaret (330). The revelation did not mean he was going to stop; Pat just had to accept the other woman in his life. It may seem that he did not divorce her out of compassion though that was what he claimed: "I might have left her to look after herself. I couldn't do that . . . I didn't have the brutality" (348). Readers of the biography are likely to infer otherwise. Not only did Pat provide literary assistance to him, she cooked and washed for him for years (331), services the penny-pinching Naipaul would be loath to pay for.

Why keep ill-treating a woman who by all accounts was soft-spoken and held her husband in utmost awe? Christopher Hitchens offers an explanation in his review of the biography, "He used her as an unpaid editor and amanuensis, and then spurned her because he resented her knowledge of his weaker moments" (138). Pat was privy to all his weaknesses, which doesn't mean she had power over him, but the knowledge that she knew them all deeply disturbed him. For a long time, though, Pat had no knowledge of his calls on prostitutes. When Naipaul revealed that he had been "a great prostitute man" in an interview with the *New Yorker* in 1994 and the disclosure became front-page caption, Pat was highly upset. Her cancer, on remission for years, returned and killed her soon.

French's interviews with Naipaul expose many unsavory facts. They also demonstrate Naipaul's honesty in assuming responsibility for his actions. Recalling the revelation on prostitutes and its disastrous effect on Pat's cancer, he acknowledged to French, "this cancer business can come with great distress and grief" (459). In an earlier interview with French, when assessing Margaret's effect on his life, Naipaul had told French, "I was liberated. She [Pat] was destroyed. It was inevitable" (313). French frequently juxtaposes the despicable Naipaul with the self-recriminating Naipaul; the latter shows remarkable integrity.

French, however, makes no attempt to water down Naipaul's racism. Early in the biography, French has explained "picong," a Trinidadian verbal posturing that infringes propriety and deliberately infuriates the listener. Presumably, Naipaul's many oral outrages that French quotes in the book are the esteemed author's picong moments. Those at the receiving end of his callous contempt are not likely to see humor in comments such as "[someone] doing disreputable things like mixing with Bengalis—and other criminals" (xi) and "a banana a day will keep the Jamaican away" (188). Then there is the grand generalization on Africans. Upon hearing the murder of a white Englishwoman by members of a black cult in Trinidad—the materials for *Guerillas*—Naipaul commented, "[l]unacy and servility: they remain the ingredients of the Negro character" (298).

One cannot be sure if the last statement is an attempt at picong because Naipaul's undisguised contempt for Africans and Caribbean blacks consistently appears

throughout the biography. And his fondness for the "N" word, noted by many in his private conversations, is reminiscent of a Faulknerian Southern bigot. An Indian journalist noted Naipaul's outrage at the impregnation of an Indian film actress by the West Indian cricketer Viv Richards: "'How could she have a child by that nigger?'" (439). Years before he got the Nobel Prize, when asked about his chance of getting the coveted honor, Naipaul responded, "'Of course I won't get it, they'll give it to some nigger or other'" (442).A dig at Derek Walcott? Perhaps. Walcott got the Prize in 1992, nine years before Naipaul, which, as French points out, made Naipaul's prospects of ever winning the Prize rather uncertain because region has a role in the award (451).

The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul reveals the highly complex personality of a much admired author of our times. French portrays a talented man, a tortured soul, and a torturer; undoubtedly, his biography will prove invaluable to Naipaul scholars for years to come. The curious fact is that though French raises doubts regarding Theroux's account of certain events in his *Sir Vidia's Shadow*, Theroux's portrait of Naipaul, in fact, appears kinder in comparison to the one that French presents. Theroux himself acknowledges in his review of French's biography that he "didn't know the half of all the horrors" and that his own memoir had offered a gentler Naipaul because of legal concerns. In the same piece, Theroux also describes Naipaul as "the ultimate Caliban with a college degree and a knighthood casting no shadow" and thinks French has destroyed Naipaul's reputation forever. (It is pertinent to mention that Naipaul and Theroux made up their differences in 2011 in a public event where both authors were invited, ending a much-publicized literary spat that lasted fifteen years.) One wonders why Naipaul, so irked by *Sir Vidia's Shadow*, actually helped French in writing the biography that would make highly shocking revelations regarding his character, even admitting to him that "a less than candid biography would be pointless" (xiv). It cannot be ignored that *Sir Vidia's Shadow* preceded Naipaul's winning of the Nobel Prize in 2001 while *Biography* followed it in 2008 when his personal reputation could have little or no effect on his literary reputation.He was seventy-six; had authored more than two dozen books; and had won the highest literary honor of the world. French offers also this reasoning: "his willingness to allow such a book to be published in his lifetime was at once an act of narcissism and humility" (xiv). The latter is hard to detect in what French portrays.

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