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Editorial

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to present the first issue of the *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* (IJHCS). This issue includes different scholarly articles on various aspects and issues of humanities and cultural studies which reflects the interdisciplinary scope of the IJHCS. The IJHCS is a peer-reviewed journal. It has the ambition to be indexed in major international databases and reputed libraries across the globe. This first inaugural issue includes the articles of the research scholars from different countries such India, Italy, Tunisia, UAE and USA.

The IJHCS has two paramount aims of 1) providing an international platform for the research scholars so that their works get noticed and appreciated and 2) making the quality research works available for the world community of knowledge seekers so that their needs are fulfilled. The IJHCS is contributing its part in disseminating and spreading the quality research works for the academic and research community around the globe.

I also take this opportunity to thank our esteemed contributors for selecting the IJHCS, our reviewers for reviewing the selected articles for this issue and the Administrative Board for its contribution to helping the IJHCS achieve this status.

Due to the editorial and review policies, the IJHCS could not include many articles of our colleagues around the globe who showed their interest in our journal by submitting their manuscripts for this issue. I would like to invite them to submit their manuscripts to the next issue of the IJHCS by adhering to the policies and manuscript guidelines of the IJHCS.

With Best Regards,

Dr. Hassen Zriba
Editor-in-Chief
The *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* (IJHCS)
Gender Violence: Social Structures in Latin America, the Question of Victim and Trauma

Federica Cirami
University of Palermo, Italy

Abstract

In this article, I firstly argue that femicide is a word that indicates the psychological and physical violence against women because they belong to the female gender. I analyze in particular the femicide cases that took place in the border between Ciudad Juarez and Texas from 1993 until now, in addition to the cases on the border between Tijuana and Baja California. During this period more than 700 women were murdered in the border area between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, still the criminals of these brutal homicides are unknown. The reason for the lack of justice can be explained through institutional corruption and the existence of a patriarchal society. Through an interdisciplinary approach from psychoanalytical and anthropological area, I argue that gender violence is a social political construction due to the principles of capitalism, and also that violence against women results as a social emotion eradicated in the collective imagination as a real fact of this brutal and unconditional violence against woman. I have analyzed two border cases and explain both the grim reality as the consequence of structural violence, as well as cultural violence caused by the Catholic ideological system and the origin of women and family mental conception. Moreover, I relate gender-based violence with kidnapping cases, drug cartel traffic and the state of terror and violence that dominates Mexico. Finally, I will delve into the origins of violence in human behaviour, as a result of institutional control and cultural influence based upon the patriarchal domination system into the post-colonial reality that now exists.

Keywords: Femicide, violence, Latin America, trauma, victim, cultural memory, structural crisis, cultural crisis.
Introduction

In the first part of my work I explain briefly the border condition. The information corresponding to the murder cases committed against women in Ciudad Juárez and in Tijuana from 1993 until now. The analysis is supported mainly by the information from the Amnesty International Reports, Human Watches Reports, Diana Washington’s book *The Killings Field: Harvest of Women* and a considerable amount of data from governmental and non-governmental Institutions. Furthermore, I will argue that the psychological and physical violence depend on the existence of an invisible structural violence and a symbolic violence.

Firstly, I analyze the theories of Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Michel Foucault to state that the political and economic institutions manipulate human conditions through ideology. Secondly, I assume that even the cultural patterns are a result of historical and political control. According to the psychoanalytical work, the violence instinct is neither a condition in our individual unconscious or in the collective unconscious so that the trauma will be passed culturally on during the generation. Finally, I conclude that both structural and symbolic violence are the consequences of an ideology of control and that maybe there are few solutions to solving these issues. Moreover, I would research the origin of the violence in the human behaviour as a result of institutional control and cultural influence, based on a patriarchal dominant system in a post-colonial reality.

The culture of terror and torture

Since 1993, there have been, in Ciudad Juarez, more than 700 murders on women aged between 10 and 25. These murders were defined serial murders because of the same ritual murdering method and the selection of the victims, hence: they were teenagers, they came from a poor class, they were migrants and most of them were employed by the *maquiladoras*. These murders might be related because of the choice of victims of physiognomy and ethnicity and the *modus operandi* taking place through a ritual of torture and violence, kidnapping, rape, cruelty, sexual torture, mutilation, strangulation. Some victims’ bodies were found naked and mutilated, others are still missing, maybe because the perpetrators have used a corrosive liquid called *lechada* that dissolves suddenly bone and flesh. On the other hand, there is another border town similar to Ciudad Juarez, it is called Tijuana, where is located on the north-west border of Mexico. It is known as the city of gambling, sex, drug and tequila. Even if this city became more famous through tourism and artworks, it is still the city of violence, where sexual abuse, exploitation and kidnappings occur on a daily basis. According to the amnesty international’s Report related on the 24th June 2013, Miriam Isaura Lopez Vargas was kidnapped by the Mexican police that tortured her and finally raped her. The highest percentage of women violence are registered as domestic violence perpetrated by partners or structural violence committed by the police or at the works places.

The border towns are struggling with the problems caused by the incessant flow of migrants, the eruption of a monopolist industrialization of *maquiladoras* and finally the threat by organized crime. Such reality makes to suppose the existence of a structural violence caused by the social-political corruption. According to Diana Washington Valdez, some federal sources
should confirm this hypothesis that one of the instigators of the murders identified six wealthy businessmen in El Paso, Texas, Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, which would also be involved in drug trafficking, prostitution and human organs' trade (Washington Valdez 2006).

In the early nineties Ciudad Juárez is transformed into one of the most violent and dangerous cities in the world, while Tijuana violence's proportions begin to peak in 2000 due to the drug cartel of Sinaloa. Since the first reports published by Amnesty International in 2003, the recent situation in Mexico appears unresolved despite the approval of several laws against violence against women. In Mexico from 1985 to 2009, there were approximately 34,000 women murdered. In 2010, the victims amounted to 2,4184 (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres 2009).

Gladys Janeth Fierro, 12 years old, was abducted in May 1993, a few days later her body was found lifeless. Gladys was raped and then strangled to death. In 1996 six other women were found in the desert area known as Lomas de Poleo: the victims were stabbed, mutilated and raped. In April 1998 Sagrario Gonzalez, 17 years old, employed in the maquiladora factory was found in the same locality raped, strangled and stabbed. During this time the police have identified as potential perpetrators different criminal gangs known as "El Tolteca", "Los Chofere", "Los Rebeldes". Unfortunately the evidence was insufficient and the murders continued to occur. In 1995 the Egyptian chemical Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif was accused of being the perpetrator of the murders committed in Lote Bravo and Lomas de Poleo. His charge was aggravated by his previous crimes committed, in fact Abdel Latif emigrated around 1970 in the United States of America and he was sentenced to 12 years in prison for raping a girl of 12 years (Crime Library 2007). Despite the arrest of Sharif Sharif the murders did not stop and the authorities continued to regard him as the main instigator of the murders as the boss of the gang "Los Rebeldes". The Egyptian always considered himself not guilty and his lawyer, Irene Blanco, following repeated death threats was forced to abandon the defence of his defendant and the city. Towards the end of 1999 more bodies of women and girls were found in the ranchos, owned by drug traffickers located in the desert area. Nevertheless, the officials argued that it was only a coincidence and would not investigate the link between the murders and drug trafficking. As a result, they have never solved a single case.

The corruptibility of the local police, the government's negligence and the neglect by politicians disturbed the atmosphere of Ciudad Juárez. The border town struggled with the problems caused by the incessant flow of migrants, by the eruption of a monopolist of industrialization maquiladoras and finally the threat by organized crime. Some federal sources confirm this hypothesis, in fact one of the instigators of the murders are identified in six wealthy entrepreneurs in El Paso, Texas, Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, which would also be involved in drug trafficking, prostitution and human organs' trade. The close ties of friendship with the latter known personalities such as President Vicente Fox, which financed the election campaign, and Francisco Barrio Terrazas, became prime minister thanks to their support, would also explain their safety. This alliance between politicians and businessmen is the primary factor of the difficulty in getting a just resolution of cases of murder. Such theory is endorsed by Diana Washington Valdez and it was publicly denounced in her book, entitled The Killing 's field: Harvest of Women. In the book, it is reported that Javier Felipe El Negro Lardizabal, a Police Officer, who worked for the Prosecutor of Chihuahua and investigating cases of femicide committed in 1993, as one of the first persons who had begun to suspect and denounce the
existence of a complicity among his colleagues and some criminals. His investigations revealed the corruption of the state police in Chihuahua, under which reward cooperating with organized crime in the illegal activities of drug trafficking and car theft. During the year of 1993 the city lived a time of extreme violence and crime. The brutal criminal Carillo Fuentes, known as "El Señor de Los Cielos", took control of the city, going down in history as the most dangerous drug lord of Mexico. Phil Jordan, a former official of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) stated that the police in Juárez was involved with illegal activities and that Roberto Corral, former commander of the municipal police of Chihuahua, protected a drug trafficker who had raped a girl of 11 years. In addition, the DEA accused the government PAN to be involved in the business of drug trafficking, in particular suspected the existence of a close collaboration between Fuentes and Francisco Barrio. On the other hand, it is irrefutable that during the government Barrio increased suddenly the numbers of missing women.

In the early nineties Ciudad Juárez is transformed into one of the most violent and dangerous cities in the world, the PAN was then synonymous of change, reform and social justice. Many journalists, such as Sonia del Valle, Heidi Slaquet and Sergio Gonzales convinced of the corruptibility of the system, began to launch a campaign of denunciation that ended with death threats. In 2010 Marisela Escobedo Ortiz, an activist of the movement Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, was assassinated, only because of her demand for justice for the brutal death of her daughter, Ruby Frayre. Since the first reports published by Amnesty International in 2003, the recent situation in Mexico appears unresolved despite the approval of several laws against violence against women: 1996 - Law of Assistance and Prevention of Family Violence, 1997 - Decree to reform the Criminal and Civil Law on Family Violence, 2003 - Federal Law to prevent and eliminate gender discrimination, 2006 - general Law for Equality of rights between men and women, 2007 - general Law against Violence to Women, 2012 (Carpizo 2012).

Thanks to the work of the National Commission to prevent and eliminate violence against women (CONAVIM) femicide has been recognized as a crime and the crime has been codified in the Penal Code. In 2009, Amnesty International along with the Constitutional Court of Human Rights accused the State of Mexico to be an accomplice to the crime of femicide and cases of violence and abuse of women. Despite the approval and implementation of the Protocol Alba entrusted to Fiscalía General (Fiscalía General del Estado 2009), the investigation of the murders were carried out with disinterest and inattention. The presence of this protocol would serve mainly to investigate the cases of women who are still missing and unidentified between the periods of 1993 to 2008.

**Structural violence in Mexico**

The use of violence against women should be not considered only into the category of direct violence, but also as methods of destruction such as physical, psychological and social. The aim of this analysis is to expose theories and concrete data to corroborate the presence in society of a violent attitude that it is not instinctual but historically constructed. Considering the violence as a factor in cultural and social domain implies the existence of a kind of invisible violence. Numerous activists, researchers and scholars have contributed their research work to give a legitimated definition of the phenomenon of femicide. This term was mentioned for the
first time by activist feminist Diana EH Russell, who in 1976 presented to the Court of Brussels an international report on crimes against women: The International Crimes Tribunal Against women (Russell, Van de Ven 1976). However, a first definition of the term is to be found in the text of Rape in Marriage, 1990, which collected the testimonies of 930 women living in San Francisco and all victims of rape and abuse within the marriage relationship. Russell claims that femicide is "the murder of women, because they are women" (Russell 1990: 286-299). In 1990 the writer, along with the professor of American cultural studies Jane Caputi, redefined the term as "the murder of women by men who harbour hatred, contempt, pleasure and sense of ownership towards the female gender" (Caputi, Russel 1990: 34-37).

Even if this definition embodies the idea of sexism and misogyny that causes the feeling of violence against women in a society, the author does consider neither the cultural aspect nor the plurality of the term female gender, reducing a wide term into the category of women. In order to include a more general gender and transgender view Russell and Roberta Harmes decided to revise the definition opting for an explanation of the phenomenon as "the murder of the female gender from men because they belong to that genre" (Russell, Harmes 2001: 100-114). The activists chose to replace the term woman with female, since the choice of the noun "woman" excluded all boys and girls who are victims of violence, including the cases of infanticide, AIDS and mutilation of the female genitalia. Therefore, femicide is a form of physical, moral and psychological violence which includes all the practices of violence against the female gender, such as rape, sexual violence, and violence caused to the right of honour or the right to dowry, violence committed by intimate partners, by family members or strangers. Violence against women seems to be one of the most abhorrent crimes, more exactly I suggest defining femicide as torture, and then it is an act of coercion, an act of inflicting intentional pain as punishment in order to dominate the female gender.

The anthropologist Scheper-Hughes argues that “violence is been manifested daily in public and private places, in those invisible spaces where violence acts silent and undisturbed” (Scheper-Hughes, Bougois 2003). Considering this fact, the invisible structural violence seems to be the instrument of administration in such repressive government which acts in accordance with a policy based on fear of terror. Scheper-Hughes discusses in her book the concept of violence in everyday social contexts, such “normal” and “safe” contexts. She defines this violence as a continuum genocide (Scheper-Hughes, Bougois 2003: 2) that refers to the human capacity to act at all times with a violence that can dehumanize the victim. Moreover, the anthropologist compared structural violence to the violence that is manifested by poverty, hunger, exclusion, social humiliation, and exploitation that it is translated from a governmental violence into an intimate violence. In this context of emotional manipulation the somatic dimension plays a central role, because of the physical pain inflicted on the victim due to a psychic vulnerability. The subject violated incurring a mental transfiguration that depersonalized the victim. The psychological weakening of an individual person allows the exercise of control over him/her, a practice that manifests itself through a process of social annihilation. That is the same convention that suffers the female gender in a patriarchal society. This observation can be placed within the logic of colonial regimes which imposed their language, religion and culture to the defeated population. The process of sovereign power is detected in all Western policies, such as
colonization, imperialism and capitalism; all these politics aim to achieve the full control of people physically and psychologically.

An analysis of this phenomenon was conducted by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish*. He discusses the history of crime in relation to the institutional construction of a policy of control by the discipline of the human body. Starting from the assumption that the body is the territory of historical, biological and physiological investigation, Foucault proposes an analysis of society through the study of those systems of punishment that have been implemented through a specific political economy of the body (Foucault 1993).

The first attention towards the study of possession of the human body came from researchers and physicians in the context of historical demography and pathology, as an objective entity since the human body is the place of study of the physiological processes and testing for the prevention of the attachment of viruses and bacteria. Nowadays, scientists have partially decoded the human genome and this discovery aims not only at preventing infectious diseases; rather it satisfies certain cultural needs. Also, the body becomes an object used and regulated in the relationship between politics and science. Political possession of the human body means the imposition of power relations that control and monitor the presence of the body in society as in ceremonies, in the workplace and in social relationships. Consequently, the policy will retain the right to dress and undress the bodies and submits them not only through the means of violence but also through ideology. Furthermore, power and knowledge are the weapons of terror used by institutions. To discover the normative reason hidden in an ideology, we should reconstruct the "microphysics of power" through a discursive way, the way Foucault suggests. The political domination of the body has roots so deep that its presence in the relationship between state and citizen is imperceptible. Foucault proposes the unmasking of these micro-powers through the knowledge of those little incidents that occurred throughout the history of human beings, or deciphering all those mechanisms and processes that favoured the political hegemony on the social body both collectively and individually, making it legitimate and imperceptible. Thus, the control of the human body allows the realization of a satisfactory human capital but it also means having a decision-making power over life and death of an individual person. This relational conception is appointed by Foucault "bio politics", the place where politics' area and human being's area will be shaped because of the reception of power. In a first phase, such individual ideologies assert themselves in social attitudes, and they will be made lawful by specific economic and political changes, finally they are purged and assimilated within a specific culture.

This observation can be placed within the logic of colonial regimes, which imposed their language, their religion and their culture. The process of sovereign power is detected in all Western policies, such as colonization, imperialism and capitalism; all these politics aim to achieve the full control of people physically and psychologically. Considering this deep desire of domination and subjugation, the logic of power could be understood within the parameter of the body as subject/object, as he explained in *Discipline and Punish*. Looking for these mechanisms and processes in his book, Foucault analyzes the methods of punishment and the penal system in the course of human history starting from 1757 with the story of the martyrdom of Damiens and...
coming up to the creation of the structure of the Panopticon. This path of historical reconstruction will come to the unmasking of an ideology of power and control that has managed to succeed by using the methods of discipline imposed in schools, hospitals and prisons. As a result, we mislead ourselves when we believe that our image is created by us. Thus our reliance on imitating stereotypical behaviours is stronger than we conscientiously know.

Liberalism is based precisely on the possibility of being able to control human life, because the control of social ties allows the creation of accurate economic and political purposes. In addition, the regulation of human behaviour is always located within the logic of the market. The control of the human body thus allows the realization of a satisfactory human capital but it also means having a decision-making power over life and death of an individual person.

Foucault and Scheper-Hughes identify the regulatory and public spaces as places where violence and capital go hand in hand. Both in their theories consider the political, religious and ideological instruments of control and punishment. Such a demonstration of the control policy can be identified also in the history of Mexico, a state victim of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. The Mexican, first deprived of his language and his culture, had to undergo a state of terror by both the Spanish colonial policy and U.S.A. capitalism. This is reflected in the practices of the maquiladora industries which under the assumption of massive female workforce have weakened gender identity causing a collective psychic vulnerability. Culturally macho affirmation of women in the economic reality may result in the emergence of discriminatory feelings and acts of violence, especially if the woman's role is stated at the expense of that of the man. Violence is a process generated by the constant influence between the direct and indirect violence, the latter of cultural and structural nature. In this regard, a path of discrimination of the female gender could be mapped from the time of the myth of Malinche, a woman damned traitor and the profane image that is currently translated in the image of the emancipated woman.

The feminist activist Mercedes Olivera in her essay Violencia Feminicida: Violence Against Women and Mexico's Structural Crisis associates the presence of the extreme forms of violence and sadism against women in Mexico with the socio-economic crisis in the country. The violence is caused by the increase of poverty, unemployment and a policy of suppression imposed by neoliberal system. The activist also claims that the femicide should be considered as the effect of the structural crisis today caused by the capitalist system. In Latin America, the patriarchal ideology has been naturalized within the systems of socialization and it has become an integral part of the culture by providing a new identity. Western societies have built a cultural image of women, so her status is bound in the family as a mother and a wife. The woman was assigned a subordinate role in both the institutional reality and in the family. For instance, woman in Mexico has won the right to vote only in 1947 but started to practice it 10 years later. This gender discrimination is present in the collective sub-consciousness and thus naturalized culturally and socially. Generally, in Latin America the imposition of a neoliberal system has failed, as it has managed to create an institutional model for the development of democracy. However, this system has helped to create a stereotype of the hyper-masculine identity that has emerged through the unconditional use of violence against women in public and private spheres.
Finally, conflicts between couples and domestic violence arose in defence of a kind of supremacy that has increased due to the highest rate of poverty, unemployment, social polarization and alcoholism. Ciudad Juárez is one of many Mexican cities that had experienced a massive industrial growth through investment of U.S. industries with the installation of numerous oil platforms and maquiladoras. In his essay, Mercedes Olivera seeks to highlight the impact of socio-economic changes in the Mexican cultural reality at the expense of the female figures. According to statistics INEGI 2005 in Chihuahua, 95.38% of women are employed and economically active. The data goes back to 2010. It indicates a growth in employment of the male gender; it is to find 73.28% employed men compared to 35.55% employed women (Statistic of INEGI 2005). These data demonstrate that in the period of industrialization from 1990 to 2005 in the region of Chihuahua, female labour force was favoured compared to the male one. The massive integration of women is motivated by the political line pursued by the maquiladoras, as being more docile and submissive; women are able to work 10-12 hours daily with a very low salary. Especially the indigenous of Chiapas have been victims of this process of globalisation. Their crafts were bought by foreign businessmen in a very low price and then resold in the tourism market in Mexico (Olivera 2006). The advent of women in the workforce has helped to create a new image of them within the collective imaginary. The presence of inter-family conflicts caused mainly by divorce or responsibility for children has generated a kind of hatred on the part of man. Therefore, the crisis of the image of man has generated a crisis of masculine identity that is manifested through the physical and mental violence against the female gender. Violence is a complex emotion that cannot be reduced simply to an individual psychosis; quite often its nature is to be found within those economic, social and cultural factors.

Symbolizing gender violence in the collective memory

Violence is a feeling generated by a conflict manifested in the confrontation between the masculine and the feminine. Historically, the relationship between the sexes has been focused on the search for differences and diversity. The report created around the sphere of male and female sexuality is thus based on a clash between opposites such as active/passive, dominant/dominated, hot/cold, high/low, straight/crooked, hard/soft, open/closed, positive/negative (Bourdieu 2009) and it is precisely in this cognitive struggle that the concept of male and female sexuality was born. According to this logic the male universe is built on key principles such as honour, virility, power and control. These aspects assert the male supremacy from the physical plane to the social one. The identity of the woman belongs rather to the threshold of the pure and the impure and the only barrier that regulates these two levels is represented by the belt. This is the sign of closing women and it symbolizes her chastity and her moral integrity. However, the interplay between the sacred and the profane gives an image of the vagina as fetish and taboo (Bourdieu 2009). The results of this cognitive struggle occur in the same manner in which the collective imagination perceives the female body; it is at the centre of social and cultural conceptions of the distinction between male and female. The life of women is bound by social codes that condemn them to a life in liabilities and discretion. This allowed a type of psychological violence as a legitimate use of physical violence. The concept of 'symbolic violence' of Pierre Bourdieu expresses clearly the social legitimacy of the male's view. This violence is manifested first in the spiritual and existential level and then in the physical and the verbal ones. So, conceptually, the symbolic domination was founded by a precise vision of inferiority of the female body, and as result it was
established using the body as medium of social and cultural incorporation of male superiority. Therefore, the woman is the means by which the practices of production and reproduction of the whole community are controlled and safeguarded. For this reason, the human emotional space is related to the behavioural practices that occur in the social, cultural, economic and political fields. As a result the feelings of the human being became socially naturalized and culturally indifferent, as noticed by Erich Fromm. Fromm places the human behaviour within an instinctual and a passionate research template, the first one of natural character and the second one built socio-biologically and historically (Fromm 1975). Eventually, C. Gustav Jung argues that the unconscious is formed by a surface layer, which resides in the personal unconsciousness and a deeper layer called collective unconsciousness. The term “collective” indicates the common presence of a psychic identical substratum, not just individual. He states that the contents of the personal unconsciousness are have complex affective tone that constitutes the personal intimacy of psychic life and the contents instead of the collective unconsciousness which are called archetypes (Jung 2012). The last term refers to the primordial images common to all human beings that have been transmitted in the course of human history, through myths and fables. Beyond the personal unconsciousness, there is a collective one that we have inherited genetically throughout the history of man which may be found in the myths. Thus, there is a close link between the mysteries of the collective unconsciousness and mythological figures. Considering the example of the Greek culture, we can mention three special women that represent, within our cultural heritage, the symbols of the violated women: Iphigenia, women's image killed by the society, Medea, mirror of the spiritual death, and Antigone, flag of brotherly love, killed by patriarchal laws that she herself divorces.

In the Mexican culture the impure image of women (how Octavo Paz is noticed and used) is related to the word Chingada that represented the abused mother synonymous of closed, passive and violated condition. This image is associated with the Malinche; she is the symbol of India's women who was abused or seduced by Spanish Cortez betraying Mexican people. Also, if the biggest insult for a Mexican is to be called 'hijo de una Chingada'; and not ‘hijo de una Malinche’, that is because this image of women is different from the image of the prostitute. One becomes insulted if the mother was the victim of abuse. Overall, gender discrimination is present in the sub- collective unconsciousness. Such gendered discrimination has been naturalized culturally and socially, so that the image of macho is still caged in this obsession of acting in a patriarchal society.

Conclusion

The social crisis of Mexico in general and Ciudad Juárez in particular is the structural crisis of Latin America which for centuries has been the victim of the process of industrialization and a policy of colonial plunder. 'Development is a trip with multiple shipwrecked sailors', says Eduardo Galeano, and in front of a colonial policy that ignores the integration and acts the problem of gender-based violence continues to be a topic that needs to be researched, analyzed and contextualized. The double presence of structural and symbolic violence is much eradicated in Mexican culture, so that the policy keeps abusing it for its benefits. However, as suggested by the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, the states could put an end to direct violence working through the phases of reconstruction, reconciliation and resolution between the institutions and
therefore act on a reformulation of the cultural and ideological infrastructures (Galtung 1998). The lack of a cooperative work between these institutions causes a massive failure, so that they cannot avoid using violence. Judith Butler shows that until the United States does not consider the important role played by the vulnerability of bodies. They keep on deciding unilaterally who can be a considered a human being and who is not; this will not cause violence to stop. Butler argues that 'Mindfulness of this vulnerability can become the basis of claims for non-military political solutions, just as denial of this vulnerability through a fantasy of mastery (an institutionalized fantasy of mastery) can fuel the instrument of war' (Butler 2004). In regard to this statement, it is to recall the idea of the continuum genocide of Sheper-Hughes which refers on the continuously use and abuse of violence to establish a policy of war and terror.

Finally, the border is still a herida abierta, an open wound that has not healed and its conditions cannot change if the world does not appreciate the people treated as subaltern, prefer the possibility to be considered human being, and finish living in the precarious boundaries between the humanization and dehumanization. The terror and torture of humans are meant to dehumanize the person physically and psychologically: It then proceeds to a work of mass destruction aimed at the depopulation of the territory and its conquest, so that not only the soul but also the cultural space and collective identity will be permanently deleted. All these factors occur through violence.
References

Primary sources


**Secondary sources**


Insurgency and Transformation: How Libyans Conquered the Street

Laila S. Dahan
American University of Sharjah, UAE

Abstract

When Libya joined the Arab Spring in 2011 it did so in reaction to the success of Tunisia and Egypt ousting their leaders. However, Libya’s foray into revolution was different in that the Libyan people had spent 42 years under the frightening rule of Gaddafi, in an era rife with the fear of who was watching and reporting, and a general consensus that to speak out was to accept the fate of imprisonment or death. Due to the years of repression, the Libyans did not put themselves into situations, like Tahrir Square, wherein they knew they would be slaughtered. Instead, they organized themselves and in short order seemed to have developed a military mentality in order to survive. Their struggle was enabled, in part, by NATO strikes. But another difference from the other two rebellions was how the Libyan revolution blended the old with the new. Technology and modernity did play a role in the ability of the uprising to take hold, but the icons which were chosen to help rally the masses, included the old flag and Omar Mukhtar’s photograph. Both of these harkened back to the Libyan’s earlier revolt against the Italians and their hard-won independence in 1951. Both looked to a pre-Gaddafi era in the country’s past. This article looks at how the Libyan uprising differed from that of Tunisia and Egypt, and how this particular rebellion was a revolution. Furthermore, it discusses the catalysts for the uprising and the role of the “Arab street” in giving the masses a place to express their rage with the Gaddafi regime.

Keywords: Libya, Gaddafi, uprisings, revolutions, social media
Introduction

In February 2011 as unrest and upheavals spread throughout the Arab world, the Libyan people finally arose. Put under enormous pressure by 42 years of extreme suffering and inescapable hardship, the masses poured into the streets of Benghazi in the eastern region of the country and a revolution was born. The protests rapidly spread throughout the country and were responded to by Colonel Gaddafi’s security forces with brutal force and violence. Those who watched the horrors unfold on television screens could hardly believe the power and focused intent of the Libyan people. After so many years of abuse and terror, they stood up to the dictator and his malicious supporters in a bid to take back their country and their dignity and reassert their rights as citizens of a free Libya.

When we talk about mobs and people’s mentality at the time, we wonder what the impetus was, what finally drove them to arise. This article attempts to delve into that problem in the Libyan situation and gain an understanding of why, after 42 years of near inertia, save for a few attempts which ended in bloodshed and failure – what changed? The following will address this question, and further will examine the Libyan uprising in the context of revolutions and what made this particular mass movement an actual revolution. It puts into perspective the Libyan revolution as compared to those in Tunisia and Egypt and endeavors to understand the catalysts which led to this specific situation. Finally, the importance of the place of the Arab street is looked at as a central space for the revolution to have taken root.

How the Libyan uprising was different

Although the Libyan uprising against Colonel Gaddafi’s 42 year-old regime occurred immediately following the Tunisian and Egyptian events, it was different in many ways. Despite the initial impetus coming from seeing their compatriots on the western and eastern borders shrugging off tyrants, the Libyan people’s revolution very early took on a more militaristic tone. While Tunisians and Egyptians took to the streets in mass protests against their governments, the Libyans did not maintain that position very long. What started in the eastern city of Benghazi could have been crushed had the masses not mobilized so quickly. Their ability to adapt to the situation, while maintaining unity and effective organization aided them in assembling a very ragtag fighting force early on, which was completely in contrast to their counterparts in the other two North African nations, who were able to topple their leaders solely through street gatherings.

Part of the rationale for the differences in Libya was that any decision to congregate in large groups would most probably have ended in mass deaths and executions. Unlike the Egyptian army, which showed some restraint in Tahrir Square, in Libya Gaddafi’s forces were never known to restrain themselves. This was well-known to the people of Libya who had spent four decades in terror. Libyans knew not to discuss the problems of their country, they knew never to denigrate their leader, and essentially had become adept at voicing no public opinion. Up until 2003, Libyans were insulated from the outside world and Gaddafi treated people as he wished with impunity. In fact, the Libyan people had no real “street” savvy. They had lived
through too many visions of public executions on state run television to even dream of arising. They felt the world was not watching and did not care.

Since they were well aware of the repercussions of any actions counter to the regime, they also knew that any organized movement would be immediately crushed. It is for this reason that they went on the defensive as soon they could. Gaddafi’s forces were certainly ready to enter Benghazi and ensure a bloodbath, and they would have succeeded had NATO not interfered. That support combined with the Libyan’s movement towards an armed struggle in short order developed into the “rebel” forces. Furthermore, in the case of Libya, according to Lacher (2011) “political mobilization and organization largely occurred along tribal or local lines” (p. 140). However, Lacher stresses this did not mean the conflict was a tribal civil war, just that those loyalties were key. The ability of tribes to rally their own was not found in the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, and the power of tribal loyalties in Libya ensured that the masses became organized quite rapidly.

Those involved in the earliest days of the uprising were mainly young men who needed jobs and whose “education level and access to information technologies were substantially below those of their Tunisian and Egyptian counterparts” (Lacher, 2011, p. 141). Additionally, in Libya there was an almost total absence of organized movements and institutions as Lacher argues, more so than either of the other two revolutions. In Colonel Gaddafi’s regime, he had kept all state institutions deliberately weak and that is what led them to collapse so rapidly. The army especially was kept weak in order to avoid an overthrow of his regime, insists Lacher (2011). All of these details ensured that Libya’s struggle to depose a dictator was very unlike its neighbors.

The Libyan people’s road from the street to deposing a tyrant was decidedly different from Egypt and Tunisia’s versions. Unlike Ben Ali and Mubarak, Gaddafi was never going to leave without a fight and his megalomaniac tendencies made him willing to fight to the death; which he did.

**Libya’s Uprising, was it a Revolution?**

Many have called the Libyan uprising a revolution. Although it would seem to come under this category, it is essential to clarify if this moniker actually fits the particular context. It is important at this juncture to determine how Libya’s situation fits into a definition or theory of revolutions.

Kroeber (1996) defines revolution as a term that signifies all “demands, suggestions, and attempts at radical change” (p. 25). For Bayat (2007), “revolutions signify extraordinary change par excellence, rare moments of utopian visions and extreme measures, followed by contestation and compromise to merge utopian ideals with hard realities, thus leading to surging dissent from both the revolutionary ranks and opponents” (p. 192). In all cases, revolutions follow a similar pattern in that the people of a nation rise up in a mass in order to foment change. The end result is not guaranteed, but the need to have a voice and be heard becomes the overwhelming desire and it overrides any rational thought of possible outcomes. But, despite all the discussions of theories of revolutions, Kroeber (1996) alleges that so far no “comprehensive, general theory of revolution has emerged” (p. 21).
In the past, the seminal work on revolutions was Skocpol’s (1979) *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. However, since that time many scholars have taken issue with her discussion of revolutions. Foran (1997), for example, suggests that social revolutions described by Skocpol are actually quite rare. A major cause for revolutions according to Skocpol is a breakdown of the state; however, this was not the case with Libya. She also overlooks some parts of society in her theory and furthermore does not appreciate the influence of “cultural and ideological factors” (Kroeber, 1996, p. 23). Since Skocpol’s 1979 publication, the study of revolutions has taken a huge leap forward according to Foran (1997).

Sociologist Charles Kurzman writes that “revolutions are inherently unpredictable. They involve massive disobedience, huge numbers of people breaking from their normal patterns of behavior, highly risky confrontations with security forces - the sorts of activities that people are loath to engage in and usually don’t, until they think that other folks may join them” (Kurzman cited in Houhshell, 2011). These uprisings, as viewed by Kurzman, point to the importance of the “street” in urging people to action. Believing that others will join in, gives revolutionaries a feeling of hope and power. Since the street is definitely an unpredictable place, especially in Libya, it is clear that this particular revolution was probably not planned and did not “result from prior schemes” (Bayat, 2010, p. 2). However, what held the rebels together following the initial uprisings was the fact that all the members of the group shared the same feelings of dissatisfaction and had a common revolutionary goal (DeFronzo, 2007; Gurr, 1970). The population was frustrated with the regime and their lives under its rule, leading to what Greene (1990) terms the “frustration-aggression theory” of revolution (cited in DeFronzo, 2007) wherein the magnitude of the people’s frustration is seen as a central rational for mass mobilization leading to revolution. Greene also refers to the broad hatred of a dictator as a factor in encouraging participation in a revolutionary movement that covers all classes and is a mass movement. This was certainly the situation leading up to the Libyan revolution.

In his 1997 article, Foran argues for five interrelated causal factors in order for a revolution to occur. There are three which are particularly relevant to the situation in Libya and will be discussed here. The factor Foran terms a “repressive, exclusionary, personalist state” is the one most relevant (p. 792). According to Foran, it is dictators who remain in power for exceptionally long periods of time who “epitomize this personalist type of rule” (p. 793). Because of their overall treatment of the population, dictators tend to “fuel grievances” which then alienate the upper classes leading to social movements from below. Due to this situation, people from all walks of life are able to come together in an alliance against the regime. Foran’s theory is similar to Greene’s (1990 as cited in DeFronzo, 2007) discussion of a broad hatred of the dictator. This feature is clearly applicable to Libya and the role Colonel Gaddafi played in alienating all classes.

Another cause that assists the opposition in uniting is for the people within it to have something they can rally around; this can be, according to Foran (1997), formal ideologies, folk traditions, or others. For the Libyans, the rebels in Benghazi quite early on took up the mantle of the old freedom-fighter Omar Mukhtar, who had contested the Italian occupation. Those rebels then declared themselves his grandsons. At the same time they co-opted the “old” Libyan flag which had first appeared after independence from the Italians in 1951. These two items, which
will be discussed further in this article, went a long way in helping the rebels attract more people to their oppositional force. They were perhaps most influential in bringing in the elderly contingent of the revolution, who still had memories of a life before Gaddafi.

A final reason given by Foran for why a revolution occurs is the lessening effect of outside control. Although this issue has not been discussed much in the case of the Arab Spring’s events, there have been those who have viewed the United States’ withdrawal from the region (see Dyer, 2011) as an opening for the Arabs to arise. The presence of the US in the Arab world was fairly consistent over the decades following the end of Arab nationalism and the arrival of the dictators. However, in early 2011, the US appears to have become less willing to interfere in Arab countries. After the debacle of Iraq and the continued upheaval in Afghanistan, the US seemed to have lost its willingness to protect its autocratic ‘friendships’ in the region and the people were able to use that to their advantage (Dyer, 2011). Although Libyans were probably unsure of how much the US helped Gaddafi remain in power, they were certainly able to see the US relinquishing its hold in Iraq and struggling with the Afghan situation. It could very well have been that it was that slight impetus that gave the Arab street the ability to arise and overcome.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Libyan uprising was, in fact, a revolution, because it was the people of Libya battling against the regime (Ignatieff, 2011). Furthermore, Lacher (2011) asserts that in the case of Libya there was no constitution or any state institutions which could be counted upon to provide any sense of permanence and, therefore the events in Libya “can be described as a revolution” (p. 148).

Catalysts for the Uprising

As mentioned, the Libyan people were extremely leery of any gatherings or protests that would attract the attention of Gaddafi’s security forces. A nation living under fear for 42 years certainly would have a difficult time exposing themselves to what they knew would be immediate arrest or imprisonment. The continual stories of disappearances and family members being arrested for trivial infractions all served to instill in the population an unimaginable fear, which served Gaddafi’s regime well in keeping the populace under control. As Fandy (2007) observes, “in an authoritarian setting, it is very difficult to speak or write freely about the maladies of a particular government or society; the price paid by those who violate the heavy regulations of the state and government ranges from imprisonment to kidnapping or disappearance, to in many instances death” (p. 6).

Yet, on February 17, 2011 the Libyans decisively arose. There are several reasons for their willingness to finally reveal their dissatisfaction with their tyrannical leader. Much of their drive came from watching their North African brothers and sisters rise up and confront their unpopular leaders. Until that point, it was always viewed as an impossible situation because of the years of brutality and the history of violence against any of those brave enough to confront the regimes. However, they were certainly motivated by what they saw.

In addition to the obvious signs of apparent success from the Tunisians and Egyptians, the media and social media can also be noted as having an effect on the Libyan people. Although Libya had been privy to media for years, it was in this particular situation that the media’s role became paramount. In recent years, the opinions of the Arab people began to emerge and “Arab
satellite television became a player to contend with in shaping what Arabs think” (Zayani, 2008, p. 59). Much like the people of the Soviet Union in 1989, who suddenly saw their compatriots in Eastern Europe arising, the same occurred with Libya. The Soviets had been shielded from knowing the truth beyond their borders; however, by 1989 they could no longer be kept blindfolded due to the spread of technology and the global media. This was similar to Libya, who had not seen any Arabs actually rebel and have any hope of success until the Arab Spring.

The two Arabic satellite channels - Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya - had continual 24 hour coverage of both Tunisia and Egypt. Zayani (2005) maintains that to “some extent, Al Jazeera fills not only a media void but also a political void. In the absence of political will and political pluralism in the Arab world, Al Jazeera serves as a de facto pan-Arab opposition and a forum for resistance. It provides a voice for Arab opposing views and a high-profile platform for political dissidents, many of whom live abroad” (p. 2). In fact, El Oifi (2005) views Al Jazeera as “contributing to the reconfiguration of the political system in the Middle East region, by giving rise to a new ‘Arab voice’” (pp. 66-67). Even though Al Jazeera has been around since 1996, its ability to help the Libyans rebel had to wait many years. As discussed in the section on revolutions, several factors must coalesce in order for a revolution to take off, Al Jazeera was but one of those items that helped give the revolution some impetus.

In addition to the continual news broadcasts, social media may have also been helpful in raising awareness and encouraging people to meet, march, or attack. However, in the case of Libya, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, it was perhaps mobile phone technology and messaging that was more important than Facebook or Twitter. The use of cell phones in the Arab world is quite extensive and nearly everyone, rich, poor, young, and old has at least one. Therefore by being able to rapidly transmit both messages and video footage of events, the Libyans were able to rally support from both within and outside the country. YouTube certainly allowed for the Libyans to maintain a forum for their postings of the dreadfulness occurring within, especially when journalists were unable to be in locations early on. Cell phones were probably more useful in Libya where there are about 5 million users out of a population of 6 million according to Charlton (2011). According to a report published by the Dubai School of Government, in Libya there are 5.51 internet users for every 100 persons and only 3.74 Facebook users for every 100 (see Charlton, 2011). Therefore, the numbers that would be required to have made the use of such social media a “phenomenon” appear to be missing in the case of Libya.

Despite the many claims that the Arab Spring relied greatly on social media in order to succeed, this is just not a fact. With regard to Libya, it is even more unlikely that social media was that important as the number of users of Facebook in the country is limited. Additionally, the Gaddafi regime ensured that most internet sites were blocked as the uprising began. Many journalists and scholars have reviewed the issue and the facts and the information just does not add up to any of these revolutions either being started by social media or especially not “won” by these efforts (see for example: Charlton, 2011; Hill, 2011; Hirst, 2012; Hounshell, 2011b; Moore, 2011). And as Lindgren (2013) firmly argues, “there are of course no social media revolutions” (p. 217). Furthermore, he points to the fact that just because “activist tweeting occurs, this does not automatically mean that tweets contribute to social change” (p. 217). However, there are those on the other side of this issue who continue to claim that in some way
social media was a chief factor in each of the Arab Spring uprisings (see Beaumont, 2011; O’Neill, 2011).

Essentially from the beginning of the uprisings in the Arab Spring, the west began touting social media as important factors for the change in the Arab world (Hill, 2011). However, “this was largely not true” according to Hill since the usual societal practices such as meeting at mosques after Friday prayer, never needed Facebook or Twitter in order to organize. The same is true of groups of men meeting up following funerals, especially after attacks on civilians. Furthermore, in Egypt the regime was extremely successful in shutting down all internet activity, yet the people still gathered and protested (Charlton, 2011).

Although the social media cannot be rewarded for actually starting any of the Arab Spring upheavals, one way in which Hounshell (2011b) sees its input, especially in terms of Twitter was as a “platform for outsiders to discuss big breaking news” such as Mubarak’s resignation (p. 20). Therefore, although it was not actually helping the rebellion; it was one way for news to get out and spread the stories of what was happening in a way that may not have made it through mainstream media (Beaumont, 2011; Moore, 2011). Certainly YouTube was an up-to-the-minute forum for the horrors that were emerging, but again, it was mobile phone technology which initially was responsible for getting the footage. The people on the ground in Libya were on the streets, and at times it was unlikely that they had occasion to get to a location to log on to a site. In fact, many of them just smuggled their sim cards out of the country with the videos on them (O’Neill, 2011). The idea of the revolutions spreading due to social media does not really add up to the reality of history wherein there has always been some sort of media available during various revolutions. During the French and American revolutions there were pamphlets, Khomeini’s message to Iranians was through tapes, and today there is social media (Hirshberg cited in Moore, 2011).

When it comes to spreading any message in the Arab world it is Al Jazeera who excels. It reaches a “global audience, and populations Facebook cannot: the poor, the less educated, the older” (Pollock, 2011, p. 77), and therefore the regular media, found in Al Jazeera was probably more of an instigator and information sharer for the masses than any social media. In the end, the social media for many of these rebels was just a place to talk about what was happening.

The uniqueness of the Arab Spring, as a revolutionary movement, will in many ways be associated with the technology that brought it out to the world. Not only did the media share the daily awfulness with the world, but it further allowed Libyans to realize that they were not alone in their fight and that the world was behind them. This was visible through the NATO airstrikes, but also manifested itself in other ways through foreign aid from Arab countries, both military and humanitarian. In addition, returning Libyan exiles and occasionally outside supporters appeared in the country compelled by their need to join the cause.

But it was in the street that reality occurred and therefore the street resonates with these young fighters as they were forced to witness the atrocities inflicted on their friends and families as they grappled for control over their own lives. The street has started becoming a major factor in the Arab world only recently and part of the rationale behind this was the emergence of satellite television, as suddenly the Arab rulers lost their monopoly on information and could no
longer shape opinion, according to Fawaz Gerges, a professor of Middle East studies at Sarah Lawrence College (cited in Kifner, 2001).

The Arab Street

Throughout recent history, the Arab street has seen some rioting, but none as consistent and as powerful as the Arab Spring. Many scholars point to the last time that the Arab world actually saw any passion in the Arab street and all concur it was during the years of Arab nationalism, when Nasser ruled Egypt and the Arabs felt a sense of pride in themselves and their nations. When Arab nationalism was on the rise, the Arab street “became synonymous with mass public opinion” (Zayani, 2008, p. 46). But over time the dictators appropriated nations and their wealth and in the modern Arab states, people were only allowed to use public space passively, that is for “walking, driving, or watching” (Bayat, 2010, p. 11). However, “any active use of public space infuriates officials” because these excursions into the public sphere represent a “challenge to state prerogatives and may encounter reprisal” (Bayat, 2010, pp. 11-12). The street was the main place for Arabs to give expression to their collective voice, especially as long as their regimes ignored their needs. However, except for being allowed a voice to support Palestine, the Arab street was usually closed to most internal matters (Bayat, 2003). Arab demonstrators always had to get permits in order to protest, if allowed. In addition, there was always a police presence, often in larger numbers than the protestors (Schanzer, 2003). Essentially the street was controlled by the regimes.

When we view the notion of the ‘street’ it is the final frontier to “communicate discontent” (Bayat, 2010, p. 11). Street politics has several dimensions according to Bayat. The street is not just a place where authorities and informal groups might disagree on control of the space. Streets “as spaces of flow and movement” are not solely locations for people to vent their frustrations, but they are places where people can enlarge their social circle, build new identities, share their aspirations with others, and “extend their protest beyond their immediate circles to include the unknown, the strangers” (Bayat, 2010, p. 12). The street then becomes the forum for establishing communication with others sharing the same interests and sentiments. It is in this arena that demonstrations, which begin relatively small, expand to become enormous “exhibitions of solidarity” and it is for this reason that most revolutions find their voice in the “urban streets” (Bayat, 2010, p. 12). The urban streets are not exclusively physical spaces where conflicts can occur, but they are the locale where bonds are formed contends Bayat. These urban streets “also signify a crucial symbolic utterance, one that goes beyond the physicality of streets to convey collective sentiments of a nation or a community” (p. 13).

It is the public spaces, which forge the solidarities, even without organizations or leadership asserts Bayat (2010). He terms these places “passive networks” which include: “neighborhoods, street corners, mosques, workplaces, bus stops, parks, colleges, and more” (Bayat, p. 22). The street, for these people, allows them to share in their commonalities just by noticing one another, and long term Bayat maintains that these groups develop a shared identity of their place as a group in society.

Despite the ability of the Arab street to succeed in toppling dictatorial regimes in the Arab world recently, the “Arab street” and by extension the “Muslim street” has usually been viewed
by the west as a place filled with angry and abnormal people. Accordingly, any actions by Arabs or Muslims are nearly always described in terms of “mobs, riots, revolts” that can suddenly turn into a violent horde (Satlof cited in Bayat, 2003). The west has made exaggerated claims that the Arab street is a horde ready to arise. Zayani (2008) asserts that the Arab street in the western media has been looked at in three ways: something to celebrate due to its liberating powers and as a “harbinger of brewing revolutions;” a submissive and ineffectual space; and something to be dismissed altogether as a myth (p. 50). Essentially, in the view of the western media, the Arab street is either “irrational” and “aggressive” or “apathetic” and “dead” (Bayat, 2003).

The Arab street is believed by some in the west to be always simmering and ready to burst into revolution (Zayani, 2008), but this was never the reality because of the regimes’ authoritarian hold over the populations, especially in Libya. Others view the Arab street as ineffective and non-threatening since traditionally there has been little success in having any effect on Arab politics. In fact, the Arab street’s public opinion is “politically irrelevant” (Zayani, 2008, p. 52). This is because any street demonstrations were rarely tolerated and “dictatorships brook no politics – they brook no public opinion – no freedom of speech, association, the press or anything else” (Murawiec cited in Zayani, 2008, p. 52). The autocratic regime in Libya kept the Arab street silent. The US spent decades assuming Arab public opinion was not significant, so they focused on influencing the Arab governments rather than reaching the masses (Zayani, 2008, p. 56). Since the voices of the street were not encouraged they remained muted by virtue of leaders who tolerated no dissent, especially in Libya. The US had maintained a distance from Gaddafi and his regime for years, but after the reaffirmation of respect in 2003, the US turned a blind eye to his internal viciousness and focused on his apparent renunciation of terrorism and nuclear weapons.

As evidenced by the Arab Spring, although the Arab street appeared for years to be unable to turn “aspirations into actions” it did finally succeed (Zayani, 2008, p. 53). It was that sudden “retaking of public spaces, and the insistence that such belong to the public, that began the extraordinarily radical movements in exposing the obviousness of the injustices at work” (Schwedler, 2012). As the people of Libya finally had a glimpse of “freedom and empowerment” they discovered how “utterly intoxicating” it can be (Schwedler, 2012). They realized they could no longer be ignored and it encouraged more of them to join the mobs, the riots, the protests. As Schwedler (2012) insists “once people realize that it is they who really hold the power, the question is not if change will come, but when.” In an ironic twist for the Libyan situation, as the people rose up demanding change, the icons they chose as their rallying symbols both came from the distant past.

Symbols of the Past

As noted earlier, Foran (1997) points to a uniting factor for revolutions which the opposition can use to increase support, including formal ideologies and folk traditions. For the Libyans there were two important historical items that they immediately coopted in their revolutionary fervor: the freedom fighter Omar Mukhtar and the old flag of Libya following independence from Italy, but more importantly before Colonel Gaddafi.
Some of the fiercest resistance to the Italian occupation came from Cyrenaica, which is the eastern region where the recent Libyan revolution began. The most famous fighter was Omar Mukhtar, a Quranic teacher who spent almost two decades fomenting revolt and was eventually executed by the Italians in 1931 at the age of 70.

Omar Mukhtar fought the Italian colonizers for decades until he was captured and executed. Many of the Libyans, especially in Benghazi called their uprising the “Revolution of Omar Mukhtar’s grandsons” (Cousins, 2011). His 90-year-old son is still alive and was proud to have the current revolt named after his father. Despite the distance in time from his father’s fight against the Italians to the uprising in Libya, Mukhtar’s son, Haji Mohamed, saw a link between those events and the uprising against Gaddafi. And so too did the young Libyans fighting to throw out the Colonel, they wanted to reconnect with a pre-Gaddafi past and learn more about their original ‘freedom fighter’ (Cousins, 2011). Even as the Libyan rebels were fighting a war for control of their country, “they were also keen to reclaim their national pride and history after more than four decades of submission to Gaddafi’s mercurial vision” (McDonnell, 2011). And despite the fact that Mukhtar died long before the new generation of rebels was born, he still became the symbol that the Libyan people could join forces around. Mukhtar was a leader they all could feel proud of, a man who had fought the real enemies of the Libyan people, in opposition to Gaddafi, who spent most of his 42 years disregarding or terrorizing his own people.

Almost immediately after the uprisings began in Benghazi, the flag, which had flown prior to Gaddafi’s green rectangle, was hoisted all over town. The original flag which was red, black and green horizontal stripes, with a star and crescent in the center was the flag representing Libya’s independence from Italian colonization. At the time, 1951, the three provinces of Libya: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the Fezzan had just been united under King Idriss Senussi, who came from Cyrenaica. The Senussi family insignia was the crescent and star. The rebels who took up the old flag say that they chose it for the sole reason that it represents a time before Gaddafi. It could also be that the flag represented independence when it was first used and the people of Libya strove to achieve independence from the Colonel and his regime. Therefore in some ways the flag “appears to symbolize both independence and unity” (Hashim, 2011). Much like the harkening back to Omar Mukhtar as their hero, the flag also represents a look back at the past. A past which those living through the four decades years of incertitude and suffering believed could only have been a better more positive era.

**Conclusion**

The Libyan revolution was an event that thrust the Libyan people’s struggle against a dictator into the public eye, mainly through television, but also at times through social media. It occurred because many factors finally came together which allowed for a revolution, theoretically, but more importantly it happened because the Libyans finally took to the street and took back the street from those who had prohibited them from having a place or a voice. They saw their brothers in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt removing the tyrants who had oppressed them for so long and realized their time had also come. The ability to rationalize going into the street and staying there, demanding to be heard and demanding to be seen, suddenly allowed a mob of disorganized frustrated people to band together for a cause, the ultimate cause, which was to regain the street and regain their freedom, no matter what the cost.
Today there is a new Libya, a Libya without Gaddafi. Initially there was great hope that Libya’s future would be peaceful and secure, but unfortunately the aftermath has proven to be more difficult and divisive than ever anticipated. Currently the post-revolution governments have been inexperienced both in governing and in knowing how to set up political institutions, and these structural issues are causing the major problems, which must be addressed (El-Kikhia, 2014b). Due to the Political Isolation Law (PIL) adopted in 2013, “anyone who was involved with the Gaddafi regime was disqualified from the new administration, armed forces, and other entities” (David & Mzioudet, 2014, p. 1). According to David and Mzioudet, this law is weakening Libya more than offering it any protection and is further undermining any hope for reconciliation among the masses. Sharqieh (2013) is also adamant that Libya needs to “embark on a credible and comprehensive process of national reconciliation” (para. 2). He further argues that the political isolation of former regime officials is detrimental to the country.

Despite the current problems plaguing Libya, El-Kikhia (2014a) still has hope for a positive future for Libya. He notes that in Libya “contrary to the dominating view, democracy has not failed.” He believes that Libya is “slowly returning to normalcy after nearly half a century of dictatorship that destroyed it financially, morally, and politically.” Although the path ahead remains rocky, and there is no certainty about how this revolution will eventually manifest itself, within the country hopes are high that whatever form the new nation eventually takes there will be a place for all to have a voice and an opinion, a place where the people own the streets and the people can demand equality and justice.
References


The Literary Representation of the Jew in Postmodern Arabic Fiction

Saddik M. Gohar
UAE University, UAE

"We aforetime grant to the children of Israel the Book (Torah)
the power of command, and prophet-hood,
We gave them for sustenance, things good and pure, and we favored them above the nations."

*The Holy Quran / Al-Jathiyyah: Surah / Section xlv-37v, p.738*


Abstract

For decades, the historical and political ramifications of the Palestinian / Israeli dispute not only created hostility between the Arabs and the Jews but also undermined the possibility of initiating a mutual dialogue between the two peoples. This paper aims to re-historicize the literary representation of the Jew in postmodern Arabic / Palestinian fiction dealing with the Palestinian question to illuminate controversial issues integral to both sides of the conflict. The paper argues that Palestinian authors particularly the great Palestinian writer, Ghassan Kanafani, provided counter-narratives deploying positive Jewish images in his literary works –in the post 1948 era- challenging orthodox and conservative Arabic discourse paving the way for a new era of sympathetic Jewish literary images in Arabic literature. In Returning to Haifa: Palestine’s Children, the writer not only incorporates Palestinian suffering and displacement - as in traditional Arabic literature - but also engages the Jewish history of diaspora and genocide. In other words, Kanafani in Returning to Haifa: Palestine’s Children attempts to underline human issues of common interest for the two partners in the conflict foreshadowing the political agenda of his literary works.

Key words: Jews –Arabs – Holocaust – Conflict – reconciliation – re-historicization.
Introduction

In one of his poems, the well-known Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai expresses his hope for an era of peace and love between the Palestinians and the Israelis on the land of Palestine:

An Arab shepherd searches for a lamb on Mount Zion,
And on the hill across I search for my little son,
An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father
In their temporary failure.
Our voices meet above
the Sultan's pool in the middle of the valley.
We both want the son and the lamb
to never enter the process
of the terrible machine of ‘Chad Gadya’.
Later we found them in the bushes,
and our voices returned to us crying and laughing inside.
The search for a lamb and for a son
was always the beginning of a new religion
in these hills. (Cited in Coffin 1982: 341).

According to the preceding lines, the Israeli poet’s dreams have not been fulfilled due to dubious political policies imposed by colonial hegemonic powers. Historically, the British colonial strategy of division and rule prior to WWII era intensifies the conflict in Palestine widening the gap between the Arabs and the Jews. Due to British colonial policy, the Jews and the Palestinians were not able to come to an agreement about their attitude toward the British occupation. They were not able to drive the British colonizers out of Palestine and consequently they were obliged to confront the possibility of either dividing the country or living in a multinational state of double nationality.

Apparently, there were main currents and trends within the Middle East on the eve of the Second World War that had a great impact on the geo-political history of the entire region in general and on the situation in Palestine in particular. Just as the First World War had been a dramatic historical event which had stimulated competing visions about the political future of the Middle East, so was the Second World War equally momentous consequences. First, the demands of the war provoked the intrusion of the European powers into the states or the region as they sought to mobilize the political, social and economic resources required to secure their respective strategic positions. Although in the short term this policy appeared to redouble the assertion of European-control, on the pattern of the First World War, in the longer term it signaled the end of European Imperial power. In the aftermath of the war, the exhausted states of Europe particularly England and France lacked both the means and the will to maintain the kind of hegemony over the Middle East that had once seemed vital to the security of their interests (Tripp 1991: 88).

In a related context, the great Israeli novelist, Amos OZ argues: «the encounter between the Arab residents and the Jewish settlers does not resemble an epic or a Western, but is perhaps close to a Greek tragedy. That is to say, the clash between justice and justice, and like ancient tragedies, there is no hope for happy reconciliation on the basis of some magic formula" (cited in
In an interview with Amos Oz, he attempts to come to terms with the essence of the Arab-Israeli dispute. He argues that the Arab-Israeli conflict is greatly influenced by prior confrontations between the Arabs and the European invaders during the colonial era as well as by the traumatic Jewish experiences and the genocide of European Jews during the Holocaust. Amos Oz points out: I feel that it is fundamentally a struggle not over territories or over symbols and the emotions they raise. I think that both sides of the conflict overlook the actual enemy. Now for the Palestinian Arab, “Jews are considered a mere extension of the arrogant, white European oppressor. Both parties regard their enemy as an extension of their traumatic experience. Both Israelis and Arabs are fighting against the shadows of their own past” (cited in Coffin 1982: 332).

Regardless of occasional periods witnessing a growing sense of frustration and pessimism, both Israeli and Arabic literature, prior to 1948, expressed a great yearning for coexistence between the Jews and the Palestinians. Early Israeli fictions dealt with Arabs as romantic exotic oriental figures, however, less sentimental Arab images are to be found in the socialist / realist literature of the late forties and the fifties. In both Arabic and Israeli literatures, mutual hostile representation of each other dominates the works written between 1948 and 1973. But, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, in the mid seventies, marks the beginning of a new era of more understanding and tolerance between the two sides of the conflict which is reflected in literary production.

However, there is no doubt that the existence of militant organizations and regimes which advocate violence on both sides in addition to the rise of political Islam and the Jihad movements in Palestine - under the sweeping impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran since the eighties – have complicated the situation in the Middle East. Regardless of violence and bloodshed, there are positive solutions underway in the political arena and many promising developments in the field of civil society activities on both sides that would bring about a better future of more understanding and tolerance at least between the two peoples.

The Myth of Arab Anti-Semitism

In the Arab world, the aphorism “the Jews are our cousins” used to be a recurring motif in Arabic folklore and everyday language prior to the rise of the nationalist movement after the 1967 war followed by the emergence of fundamental political Islam in the 1980’s. The above-cited aphorism is still used in Arabic discourse though it gains punning and ironic connotations shaped by the radical developments and political complexities in the Middle East conflict. The notion of the so-called blood ties between the Arabs and the Jews is deeply inherent in Arab popular culture and local religious traditions particularly in countries where Jewish communities used to take roots like Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, Iraq and Palestine. According to Islamic traditions and popular culture narratives, both Arabs and Jews descended from the same Semitic roots, therefore, they are originally cousins and relatives. Regardless of these anthropological narratives, which contradict with their counterparts in Western theology, the Jews, like other Middle Eastern minorities such as the Christians, the Kurds and the Druze were able to live in a state of coexistence with the mainstream Arab-Muslim population.
Like all minorities and non-conformist groups in the region, the Jews have been marginalized, ghettoized and deprived from some basic rights as Arab citizens; however, they were not physically annihilated or mass-murdered due to their religious doctrine. After the massive immigration of western Jews to Palestine during the Nazi holocaust and the emergence of Zionism as an independence movement, the armed struggle erupted in Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews. The conflict between the two sides reached culmination during the 1948 war which paved the way for the establishment of the state of Israel and the exodus of Palestinian refugees. The dramatic consequences of the Palestinian tragedy in 1948, the equation between Zionism as a neo-colonial movement and Judaism as a sacred scripture as well as the lack of knowledge on the part of the Arabs of the Nazi holocaust, and the Jewish history of genocide and victimization intensified Arab hostilities toward the Jews. Nevertheless, the Arab antagonism toward the Jews, in Palestine or elsewhere, has never taken the form of anti-Semitism in the European sense. In other words, the Palestinians dealt with the immigrant European Jews as western colonial invaders the same way the Algerians did with the French or the Egyptians with the British during the era of colonization.

Nevertheless, in several fictional and nonfictional texts, Western writers claim that both Arabs and Palestinians are hostile to the Jewish people which is a distortion of history. In English literature, the negative Jewish image epitomized by Shylock, Barabas (The Jew of Malta) and others, has a wide effect upon Arabic literature particularly after the 1948 war. However, there are Arab fictions that reveal a counterattack upon the Shylock image. While the artistic superiority of the bad over the good Jew is dominant in English literature, the positive image of the Jew in several Arab novels fits the changing imaginative interests of a changing generation. The fictional Jew (the wandering Jew) and other images which display a stereotypical rigidity are altered by several liberal Arab writers. Incorporating Eastern and Western myths and recalling archetypal figures from the Bible and Islamic history, these writers attempt to be objective in their treatment of the Jew as a historical victim.

In the same context, Trevor Le Gassik points out that in Arab culture, Judaism is dealt with “as a divinely-inspired religion as the Quran teaches” (Le Gassik 1982: 250). According to Le Gassick "even armed resistance groups" in Palestine distinguish between Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a political and colonial movement aiming to dismiss the Palestinians out of their homeland. The wide difference between the attitude of the Palestinians toward the Jewish people and the Zionists is “a fundamental motif in the ideology of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as many of their publications show” (Le Gassick 1982:250). Apparently many Western authors equate Zionism with Judaism the same way they equate Islam with terrorism to fulfill dubious ideological ends. Critics also claim that Theodore Herzl, the father of Zionism, is a dedicated Jew, however, Herzl in The Diaries confesses that “he does not believe in the Jewish religion” (Herzl 1960:54).

Moreover, in his discussion of the image of the Jew in Arabic literature, Trevor, Le Gassick argues that “Arabic political writings frequently express negative comments on the greed and duplicity of Zionists but reiterate that “there should not be any quarrel with Judaism or its adherents. In general, they emphasize their respect for Judaism as a divinely inspired religion” according to Islamic traditions and insist on the idea that “Zionism is an aberration
supported by fanatics in the service of Western imperialism” (Le Gassick 1982: 250). There is no doubt that the deliberate distinction between Zionism and Judaism in Arabic political discourse is reflected in Arabic literature about the Arab-Israeli conflict. This difference becomes a fundamental motif in the ideology of Arab writers dealing with the Palestinian question. Thus, many of the fictional works incorporating Jews and Zionists are extensions to political polemics. Most of these works aim to express the anger of the writers and incite the Arab masses against the Zionists in Israel. However, “few words in Arabic of recent years involve a major character who is Jewish and the portrayal is rarely sympathetic” (Le Gassick 1982: 251). In this connection it is significant to argue that for centuries Arab culture totally has lacked any information about the historical suffering of the Jews particularly the holocaust. This cultural gap in addition to other elements participated in what Le Gassick calls “the rare sympathy” (Le Gassick 1982: 252) toward the Jews in Arabic literature.

Apart from Le Gassick’s perspective, the image of the Jew in Arabic literature is shaped by a variety of national and international elements including internal social and political transformations and external pressures and interventions. Some of these images are directly inspired by negative stereotypes assimilated from western literature particularly the works of Shakespeare who demonizes Shylock, the famous Jewish character in The Merchant of Venice. Likewise Christopher Marlowe, in The Jew of Malta, introduced a biased image of the Jew throughout the character of Barabas. In Oliver Twist Charles Dickens unfortunately attempts to dehumanize the Jews by emphasizing the inhumanity of Fagin. In The Cantos, Ezra Pound associates usury with Jewish bankers. Moreover many of T.S. Eliot’s well-known poems reveal a sense of anti-Semitism.

In a related context, it is noteworthy to point out that after the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 war, negative images of the Jews, adapted from western literary sources, are transformed and recycled in Arabic literature to serve political and ideological aims integral to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In other words, western stereotypes of the Jews reflecting European anti-Semitic are extensively duplicated by Arab writers in the aftermath of the 1948 war to underline Jewish aggression and violence against the Palestinian people. Several Arab versions of Shylock, Barabas, Fagin and others are aesthetically articulated by state-side writers to reinforce the image of the Jew as a fearful and hypocritical colonizer and a sadist who wants to slaughter all the Palestinians and drive them out of their land.

On this basis, it is apparent that many Arab writers, supported by tyrannical / local regimes depicted the entire Jewish community in Israel as Haganah militia fighters determined to annihilate the Palestinian people. This simplistic image of the Jew is encountered by other Arab writers who introduced a balanced vision of the Middle East conflict. Deploying positive portraits of the Jew and foregrounding the human dimensions of the Jewish character as a defender of the oppressed and the humiliated and as a victim of a history of persecution and genocide, these writers aim to bridge the gap between the two conflicting parties in Palestine.

For example in Samih al-Qasim’s novel al-Sura al-Akhira fi al-Album / The Last Picture in the Album, the protagonist is a sympathetic Jewish girl who became acquainted with the suffering of the Palestinian people after her visit to an Arab village. The girl, who lives in Tel
Aviv, changes her attitude toward the Palestinian tragedy due to her journey to the Arab community. Consequently, she becomes convinced of the right of the Palestinians to have an independent state of their own (cited in Zalum 1982:46). In confrontations with her father, a militant Zionist who keeps an album including the pictures of the Palestinians he murders, the Jewish girl asks him to put her picture in the same album as a sign of sympathy, with the Palestinian victims.

Moreover, in al-Qasim’s novel Orange Fruits Miriam, a Jewish girl, identifies herself with the Palestinians. She even refused to cooperate with the Zionist Agency in Germany. When members of the Jewish Agency attempted to urge Miriam to immigrate to Palestine she told them: “I will not cooperate with you. You are criminals. You want to use us to implement your hateful Zionist agenda. Palestine is not my homeland. My homeland is Germany and I will stay here. I will not help you to use our misery as a means of achieving your aims” (cited in Abu-Matar 1980: 410). Apparently, the Palestinian novelist, Samih al-Qasim aims to draw a distinction between the Jews and the Zionists acknowledging the holocaust “our misery” as a painful catastrophe experienced by the Jewish people in Europe.

Moreover, the Palestinian writer, Hanna Ibrahim depicts a sympathetic Jewish character in his novel al-Mutasalelun / The Infiltrators. The novel’s events go around the encounter between Sara, a Jewish girl and a Palestinian family consisting of an old man, his daughter and her baby who came to the doorsteps of Sara’s house inside a Jewish Kibbutz. In the beginning of the confrontation, Sara carried her gun and went toward the door where she heard strange voices and mild knocks. She screamed in Hebrew “who is there?” and a female voice replied in Arabic “for God’s sake, open the door”. Hearing the cries of a baby, Sara became confident that the strangers were not Palestinian rebels because the rebels did not carry babies. When Sara opened the door, she found an old man in a state of fatigue coughing and groaning. His daughter Hind was also exhausted due to the cold weather outside while the cries of her body were breaking the silence of the night. Immediately Sara threw her gun away and brought clothes for the woman and her baby while attempting to help the cold man who fainted and fell on the floor out of hunger and exhaustion.

Afterwards, the old man told Sara that they should leave her house “because our presence will cause trouble for you” (cited in Abu-Matar 1980: 110), but Sara refused to let them go at night in the raining weather. They left Sara’s house at day-break but she discovered later that the Palestinian family was killed by the Israeli soldiers in the Kibbutz. In conversation with an ex-Israeli soldier Sara became aware that Hind and her father were killed in an olive tree field near the house. The soldier happily told Sara that two Palestinian rebels were killed while attempting to infiltrate into the Jewish community. Sara became very angry and she insisted on reaching the spot where the assassination took place. Inside the olive field, she found a crowd of people and only two dead bodies lying in the mud. She asked the crowd about the little baby and they asked her in return whether she saw them before.

In her embarrassment, Sara told them, she became confident that the dead mother carried a baby after watching “the milk coming out of her breasts” (cited in Abu-Matar 1980:112). Sara feels sympathetic toward the Palestinian family particularly when she remembers that Hind’s
husband, detained in an Israel prison, will not be able to see his baby anymore. In addition to Sara, Hannah Ibrahim introduces Shlomo, another sympathetic Jewish character who takes care of the cows in the Kibbutz. Shlomo decides to help Said, a Palestinian villager, to bury the dead bodies of his two brothers, killed by Israeli soldiers for no apparent reasons. While the two brothers were carrying furniture of their own house, the soldiers killed them assuming that they were thieves. Shlomo decided to dig the grave insisting on helping Said to bury his brothers though it was a Sabbath. Explicitly, the novel reveals the bright side of the Jewish character because “Shlomo, the Jew, preferred to offer help to a Palestinian Muslim even if he disobeyed God” (Cited in Abu-Matar 1980 : 113).

The Humanization of the Jew in Palestinian Literature

The literary humanization of the Jew is a process which was originated in the Eighteenth century, accelerated in the Nineteenth century and continued to the present time. Western writers deal with the two great antipodes of the fictional Jewish stereotype, the Jew as a saint and the Jew as a devil, emphasizing the latter image. The fear and the basic impulse of animus surrounding evil Jewish characters such as Shylock, Fagin and others go back ultimately to the fabled role of the Jew in the Christian myth of God-killing. This nucleus served as lodestone which unfortunately associated the Jew with ritual murder, necromancy, greed, duplicity and lust. In the Arab world, the historical and political ramifications of the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine not only created long-term hostility between the Arabs and the Jews but also undermined the possibility of initiating a mutual dialogue between both sides.

One of the main elements of tension that increasingly plague Arab writers who engage the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in their literary works is their recurrent foci on hostilities between Palestinian militants and hawkish Zionists or stone-throwing Palestinians and gun-wielding Israelis. Further, in several Arabic narratives, the Jew is viewed not only as a senseless murderer of children but also as a downright sadist. The invisibility of moderate Jewish characters in contemporary Arabic literature contributes to the anti-Israeli discourse prevalent in Arabic writing and valorizes the Arabic fanatic perspective toward the Hebrew state. In the absence of Jewish counter narrative, in Arabic literature on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Palestinian militancy becomes a suitable alternative to the rhetoric about the suffering of the Palestinian people whereas the Jews emerge as the violent aggressors in the Middle East.

In traditional Arabic literature where the issues of nationalism and Arabism are one of the central foci of contemporary literary discourse, the question of representing the Jew, the cultural other, remains problematic and critical to any serious attempt to engage the Arab-Israeli issue from an objective perspective. In most of the Arabic literature written prior to the 1948 war, resulting into the foundation of Israel, the Oriental Jews were positively represented, even romanticized, as part and parcel of the social structure of their countries, in the Arab world. But the post 1948 war literature unfortunately witnessed the rebirth of a web of cultural stereotypes where the Jews are either systematically expunged from the narrative texts or when acknowledged, are associated with a status of ontological otherness, evil and inferiority.
Nevertheless, Ghassan Kanafani’s famous novel *Returning to Haifa* (1969) marks a turning point in Arabic literature after the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel because the author deploys positive images of the Jews challenging orthodox Arabic narratives. Unlike writers who either romanticize or demonize the Jew, Kanafani underlines human issues of common interest between the two sides of the conflict - the Israelis and the Palestinians - foreshadowing the political agenda of the novel. In *Returning to Haifa*, Kanafani introduces the Arab-Israeli conflict not only by incorporating Palestinian suffering and displacement, as in traditional Arabic literature, but also through an engagement with the Jewish history of Diaspora and genocide. The Jewish motif, in the novel, has precipitated the emergence of a new pattern of Jewish characters in Arabic literature associated with the nature of the cultural other. For decades, the awareness of such a motif which resulted from an encounter between the Palestinians and the Jews emerged as an outburst of literary consciousness characterizing major Palestinian literature on the conflict.

*Returning to Haifa* is “the story of a Palestinian couple’s return to the flat from which they were forced to flee twenty years before” (Campbell 2001:53). The main events of Kanafani’s novel cover the period that extends from the beginning of the armed clashes between fighting factions in Palestine prior to the establishment of the state of Israel until the post 1967 war era. After the 1967 war and due to permission from Israel, Said S. and his wife, Safiyya returned to their house in the Halisa area in Haifa looking for their son, Khaldun, abandoned behind during the occupation of the city in the 1948 war. When they entered the house, they were warmly received by a kind woman, Miriam Iphrat, who did not identify them in the beginning: «She was short and rather plump and was dressed in a blue dress with white polka dots. As Said began to translate into English, the lines of her face came together questioning. She stepped aside, allowing Said and Safiyya to enter, and then led them into the living room (Kanafani 2000: 162).

Miriam lost her family in the Nazi holocaust and immigrated to Israel. During the carnage perpetrated against the Jews in Europe, she escaped and hid in a neighbor’s house. When she came to Palestine, she settled in the house of Said which was given to her by the Jewish agency. She found Said’s abandoned baby son Khaldun / Dov in the empty house and brought him up as her own child. Obviously Miriam felt sympathetic with the plight of the Palestinian people. This emigrant woman, a holocaust survivor witnessed a massacre where Palestinians not Jews were slaughtered. She saw two Haganah soldiers (an Israeli militia) throwing the dead body of a Palestinian boy in a truck. The incident reminded her of the murder of her brother at the hands

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1 Ghassan Kanafani, a leading Palestinian critic, novelist, short story writer, journalist and political activist, was born in Acre and lived in Jaffa before the establishment of the State of Israel. When the city of Jaffa was captured in 1948 by the Israeli militias, he and his family fled toward Syria where they lived in Diaspora. In 1972 he was assassinated - together with his niece - in the explosion of his booby trapped car in Beirut. There was controversy about the identity of those who were involved in the assassination operation. The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) sources claimed that Israeli agents were responsible for his murder. According to other sources, he was killed by rival Palestinian or Lebanese factions. Among his famous works are *Rejal fil Shams* / Men In The Sun 1963, *Matabaqqa Lakum* / All That’s Left to You 1966, *Umm Sa'ad* 1969, *Aid Ela Haifa* / *Returning to Haifa* 1970. As an activist and politician he participated in the foundation of the PFLP (The Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine). He was the guru of the movement and its spokesman.
of German soldiers during the holocaust. To her, the Haganah violence against the Palestinian refugees is reminiscent of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany and Poland where she comes from.

In a flashback, Said S. the Palestinian refugee and main character in the novel recalls the bitter memories of the 1948 war when he was forced on 21 April to leave Haifa “on a British boat” and “to be cast off an hour later on the empty shore of Acre” (Kanafani 2000: 166). On April 29, 1948, Miriam and her husband, Iphrat Koshen, accompanied by a Haganah member entered “what from them on became their house, rented from the Bureau of Absentee property in Haifa” (Kanafani 2000: 166). Escaping from the Nazi holocaust Iphrat Koshen’s family “reached Haifa via Milan in the month of March under the auspices of the Jewish Agency” (Kanafani 2000: 166). In the beginning, the family had to live in a small room at Hadar, the Jewish quarter in Haifa. After the initial confrontation between Said S. together with his wife Safiyya and Iphrat's family, it seems that the Jewish woman has expected the visit of the Palestinian family: “I have been expecting you for a long time”, says the woman, “the truth is, ever since the war ended many people have come here, looking at the houses and going into them. Every day I said surely you would come” (Kanafani 2000: 163). The women told them that she came from Poland in 1948 to settle in their house which she rents from the Israeli authorities.

In Returning to Haifa Kanafani takes the readers back to Iphrat Koshen’s experience as a holocaust survivor in Europe: “He’d read Thieves in the Night by Arthur Koestler while in Milan, a man who came from England to oversee the emigration operation had lent it to him. This man had lived for a while on the very hill in Galilee that Koestler used as the background for his novel (Kanafani 2000: 166). The allusion to Arthur Koestler’s novel is significant because it recalls a highly romanticized account of a group of Jews who flee the Nazi holocaust and came to Palestine to build a little settlement in the late thirties. The characters in the novel aim to challenge the surrounding hostilities in order to establish a promising community constructing “houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruits of them” (Koestler 1967: 357). The novel, like American frontier literature, depicts an image of an isolated country conquered by young pioneers who stayed in the Jewish ghetto, in Haifa, in “a building choked with people”. Kanafani describes the life of Iphrat Koshen’s family in the “Emigres’ Lodge” where emigrants spend the night together, eating dinner together and “waiting for eventual transfer to some other place” (Kanafani 2000:166). Like the characters in Koestler’s novel prior to their adventure, Iphrat Koshen was not fully aware of the nature of Palestine.

Attempting to counter misconceptions and stereotypes that impede the cultural dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine, Kanafani, in Returning to Haifa, does not acquiesce to literary traditions which view the Jew as a militant Zionist. Instated, he deploys a reconciliatory discourse creating positive Jewish characters such as Miriam and Iphrat, two holocaust survivors, in an attempt to carve out a morally viable narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict. By locating Miriam, Iphrat - and their adopted child, Dov - at the center of his novel, Kanafani aims to dismantle local traditional conceptions about the Jews as Zionist invaders parallel to other European colonialists. Further, the holocaust motif is unequivocally and passionately introduced in an Arabic novel about the Palestinian tragedy to foreground parallel human calamities and suffering. Convinced that the Arabs were not able to distinguish between
the white settlers in South Africa and the Jews who escape from European anti-Semitism and Nazi holocaust, Kanafani, in Returning to Haifa, reveals a desire to build a new future, a desire that reveals identification with the other victim and the humiliated. The idealized portrayal of the Jewish characters in the novel and the representation of the Jew as an individual and a human being signify a sympathetic understanding that would hopefully develop into more understanding and tolerance between the two partners in the conflict in Palestine.

In a related context, Returning to Haifa is a testimony which undermines claims about anti-Semitism in Arabic literature on the Palestinian-Israeli issue. Zionist scholars like Neville Mandel and others argue that the Palestinian hostility toward the Israelis is not the result of anti-Semitic sentiments but because the former considered the latter as colonizers settling Palestinian territories. Obviously in Palestinian literature and culture, there is no anti-Semitism in the western sense simply because the issue of race is totally excluded from the Arab-Israeli conflict which is deeply rooted in political basis. The hostile attitude toward the Israelis in Palestinian literature initiates historically from the false conception at all the citizens of the Hebrew state, without exception, are militant Zionists who insist on transferring the Palestinians out of their land. This claim was introduced into school curriculum and was propagated by state-side media in the Arab world after the 1948 war and the establishment of Israel. Since the Palestinian-Israeli dispute lies in politics rather than race, the Palestinians approach the Israelis the same way the Algerians approached the French colonizers during the era of imperialism.

As a Marxist oriented scholar, Kanafani, in Returning to Haifa, creates thoughtful voices openly skeptical of traditional Arab views toward the Israeli survivors of the holocaust. In Arabic literature, it is easy to fall back on the negative stereotypes of the Jew, originally assimilated from western culture and built on models like Shylock in The Merchant of Venice and Fagin in Oliver Twist and other European fictional works. In an attempt to purge Arabic literature on the Palestinian / Israeli issue from the realm of the political propaganda, advocated by totalitarian Arab regimes, that views the Jews - in Israel- as sadistic Zionists and brutal invaders, Kanafani introduces a balanced vision of the conflict incorporating the holocaust motif as a sub-plot serving his aesthetic intentions. Refusing to look at the genesis of the conflict with a myopic eye, blinded by feverish militancy and religious attachment to institutions like al-Aqsa Mosque, Kanafani engages the perspective of the cultural other dismantling virulent stereotypes of the Jews assimilated in Arabic literature from western sources. Unlike writers who disseminate Jewish stereotypes to achieve ideological agenda, Kanafani weaves the holocaust motif into the Palestinian issue narrowing the gap between two histories of pain and exile.

Regardless the fact that Kanafani’s fiction is ultimately harnessed to the Palestinian national cause promoting native culture and identity, Returning to Haifa explores new horizons confronting Jewish stereotypes in Arabic literature. The novel simultaneously introduces two narratives reflecting the viewpoints of the partners in the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the first time in Arabic literature after the humiliating defeats in the 1948 and the 1967 wars between the Arabs and Israel, the holocaust motif is aesthetically articulated from a sympathetic perspective which honors the memory of the Shoah. Though, it is difficult to study Kanafani’s fiction in isolation from the discourse of Palestinian nationalism, Palestine is depicted in Returning to Haifa as the native land of both Palestinians and Jews. In this context, the novel is not only a
challenge to the Arab official master narrative but also a deconstructive critique of the Arabic version of the conflict.

Though Kanafani’s fiction is frequently dominated by what critics call “the discourse of resistance”, Returning to Haifa breaks new ground in Arabic literature dealing with the armed conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. In the novel, Kanafani unabashedly introduces Jewish images which undermine previous stereotypes about the Jews as antagonists to everything Arabic or Islamic. Through the narrow lens of an Islamic fundamentalist perspective, the Jew, in traditional Arabic literature on the issue of Palestine, emerges as an inimitable and inexorable counterforce to an ideologically pure Palestine. In Returning to Haifa, Kanafani indicates that the categorization of all the Israeli Jews as hard-core Zionists is completely out of touch with the exigencies of contemporary geopolitical realities. Explicitly, the argument and events in the novel consider the principle behind Jewish hatred as corrupt and self-serving.

The incidents of the novel which take place in the aftermath of the 1967 war narrate the story of a Palestinian couple, Said and his wife, Saffiya who return to their former house in the coastal city of Haifa. During the 1948 war, they were forced to evacuate the house leaving behind them their five-year old son Khaldun. Afterwards, the house was occupied by an elderly and sympathetic childless Jewish couple, Miriam and Iphrat, two survivors of the holocaust. The Jewish family emigrated to Israel from Poland in 1948 and settled in Said’s house which was given to them by the Israeli authorities. They adopted the Palestinian boy raising him as Dov, as a Jew and as an Israeli. After the 1967 war, the Israeli government allowed the Palestinians to return to their houses and flats in the occupied territory. In 1967, when Said and Saffiya returned to Haifa, their former house was only inhabited by Miriam and Dov after the death of Iphrat. During the visit of the Palestinian couple to their house and in a conversation with Miriam, she told them that Khaldun / Dov becomes an officer in the Israeli army and he is supposed to come back home within few hours.

Waiting for the return of Khaldun / Dov, Said told his wife the story of a Palestinian friend, Faris al-Labda - when Faris came back to his flat in Haifa he found it occupied by another Palestinian family who convinced him to join the Palestinian resistance forces. The novel moves toward its climax after the arrival of Dov and the final chapters witnessed the confrontation between Dov and his Palestinian / biological parents. Castigating Said and Saffiya for abandoning him Dov denounces his Palestinian origins affirming his identity as a Jew and an officer in the Israeli army: “I didn’t know that Miriam and Iphrat weren’t my parents until about three or four years ago. From the time I was small I was a Jew. I went to Jewish school, I studied Hebrew, I go to Temple, I eat kosher food. When they told me I wasn’t their own child, it didn’t change anything. Even when they told me - later on - that my original parents were Arabs, it didn’t change anything. No, nothing changed, that’s certain. After all, in the final analysis, man is a cause” (Kanafani 2000:181).

The young man continues his address to Said, his biological father: “You should not have left Haifa. If that wasn’t possible, then no matter what it took, you should not have left an infant in its crib. And if that was also impossible, then you should never have stopped trying to return. You say that too was impossible? Twenty years have passed, sir! Twenty years!
What did you do during that time to reclaim your son? If I were you I would’ve borne arms for that. Is there any stronger motive? You’re all weak! Weak! You’re bound by heavy chains of backwardness and paralysis! Don’t tell me you spent twenty years crying! Tears won’t bring back the missing or the lost. Tears won’t work miracles! All the tears in the world won’t carry a small boat holding two parents searching for their lost child. So you spent twenty years crying. That’s what you tell me now? Is this your dull, worn-out weapon?” (Kanafani 2000:185). Expressing his gratitude to his Jewish foster parents Dov remains in Haifa as an Israeli citizen. As Said and Safiyya drive back to Ramallah Said thinks seriously of allowing his elder son, Khalid, to join the Palestinian fighters. In the beginning of the novel, Said prevented Khalid from joining the resistance movement in Palestine but his meeting with Dov changes his attitude regardless of his fear of a potential confrontation between Khalid and Dov in the battlefield.

Moreover, Said and Safiyya started to see the Palestinian-Israeli question from a new perspective not only because of Dov’s response but also as a result of the confrontation with Miriam. As a holocaust survivor Miriam expresses sympathy toward a Palestinian boy brutally treated by some Israeli soldiers in Haifa. Drawing an analogy between the Palestinian boy and her brother who was killed by the Nazis in a Polish concentration camp, Mariam is able to change the hostile attitude of the Palestinian couple toward the Jews as a whole. The new awareness on the part of the Palestinian couple of the painful holocaust experience opened their eyes to new realities that should be taken into consideration in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Conclusion

Returning to Haifa was written during a period in Arabic literature that prioritized a work’s social function as well as literary merit. Sabri Hafez argues that the novel’s socio-economic and political aspects interweave somewhat with the national cause and contribute to its development” (cited in Harlow 1996: 163). This sense of commitment, in Harlow’s view gives way to deeper sense of alienation as the 1960’s wore on and it became apparent that grand socialist experiments like Nasser’s or grand political dreams like the idea of Palestinian reunification were going to fall short of their goals. In the dark days after the 1967 war, many Palestinians felt that the defeat of the Arab armies (the United Arab Forces) by the Israelis had also defeated “the very ideals of Pan-Arabism for deliverance and a victorious return to their homeland had largely been based” (Harlow1996: 72). This defeat of ideals led to a period of self-criticism, wherein one function of the literature of commitment was to posit which changes of ideals might result in a better future. Returning to Haifa embodies this principle by depicting two similar version of what ensues when Palestinians who have held onto these defeated ideals are forced to face the reality of their defeat.

Discussing the impact of the 1948 War of independence on the relationship between the Palestinians and the Jews, Edna Amir Coffin argues that the war intensified feelings of guilt on the part of the Jewish community in Israel: “the military victory put the Jewish community in the new position of perceiving itself not only as intended victims but also as potential victimizers defending itself but also expelling civilian populations from villages and homesteads” (Coffin 1982: 326). The reference to the dispersion of the Palestinian refugees as a result of the 1948 war
triggers an interrogative move toward a re-reading of the Arab Israeli conflict in Israel. In parallel lines with Coffin’s argument, the incorporation of the holocaust motif in Kanafani’s *Returning to Haifa* opens new horizons about the possibility of a revision of Arabic literature on the Palestinian-Israeli question that takes into consideration the painful history of the two partners in conflict.
References


‘Female-centered’ Diversity: Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place*

Pooja Kukreja
University of Delhi, India

Abstract

This paper attempts to read Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place* as an expression of the heterogeneity of the black women’s experiences. Published in 1982, the novel anticipates the focus on the diversity of women’s lives and the women of colour, that were to become the defining features of third wave feminism. The text subverts the traditional notions of black identity by portraying African-American women as a diversified and divided community, even as it interrogates the very notion of blackness. Through the various lines along which the community is divided emerges a nuanced image of the black community in which blackness is an ontological category, not to be tied down to ugly, beautiful or any other specifics.

Key Words: black woman, diversity, divided community, blackness, feminism
To be female-centered, I think, is to see the world “gynecologically”, to see the world through the eyes of a woman.

-Gloria Naylor, Interview: “The Human Spirit is a Kick-Ass Thing”

Because one character couldn’t be the Black woman in America. So I had seven different women, all in different circumstances, encompassing the complexity of our lives, the richness of our diversity, from skin color on down to religious, political and sexual preferences.

-Gloria Naylor, Interview to Ebony Magazine, March 1989

Gloria Naylor’s debut novel The Women of Brewster Place brought her tremendous acclaim and began her successful literary career. It explores the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality in the lives of the women of the African-American community. The novel is polyvalent in terms of narrative attention. It recounts the experiences of seven women; each woman’s experience counts and each woman’s story is significant. The structure of the novel suggests the diversity of black women’s experiences as their interconnected lives bring out important issues of African-American womanhood. In an interview, Naylor insists,

my work is saying that the African American community is a diverse people… a community of people who are both saints and sinners, who have beauty and blemishes. I don’t glorify the African American and say we’re all perfect. We’re all human beings and that means complexity, that means light and shadow (Naylor, Interview 257)

Mattie Michael’s is the first account to be narrated. Through the course of the novel, she becomes the older woman whose presence exudes an air of wisdom and experience in Brewster Place. When Ciel tells Mattie that her daughter even knows her father’s name; Mattie replies, “Better teach her your name” (emphasis added) (Naylor, Brewster Place 96). It is the black woman who is at the centre of Naylor’s “female-centered” novel. In Brewster Place Mattie finds a mother-figure in Eva Turner. Eva fits into the tradition of matronly figures of African-American women whose wisdom is based on years of experience. She advises Mattie to make Basil sleep alone; Mattie does not pay heed only to regret much later “a void in his being that had been padded and cushioned over the years, and now that covering had grown impregnable” (Naylor, Brewster Place 52).

The black woman is often seen heavily investing in the mother-child relationship with an absent or estranged father. The socio-economic conditions of the African-American society are largely responsible for the black man’s absence from the family and community. Consequently, motherhood is all that the black woman cares for and the child is all she has. The trope of motherhood is a central idea in the works of many African-American women writers. Mattie cannot see beyond her love for Basil and the law that convicts him is merely “blue loops, commas, and periods” for her (Naylor, Brewster Place 49). Cora Lee, obsessed with baby dolls since her childhood, grows up to have many children “who had grown beyond the world of her
lap‖ (Naylor, *Brewster Place* 112). She watches soap operas and neglects her children who live a miserable life as Cora is blind to her responsibilities towards them. Kiswana attempts to make Cora acknowledge her responsibilities when she tells her, “But babies grow up” (Naylor, *Brewster Place* 120).

Etta Mae Johnson espouses freedom and her story is a search for place. Through her seduction of the preacher Woods she wishes to concretize the relationship into marriage. However Woods exploits her and defeats her in her own game. Naylor exposes the hypocrisy of religious men as Woods employs the metaphor of playing cards and sexually exploits Etta. Etta realizes that she has lost the game and her search for place ends and we find her living in Brewster Place through the rest of the novel. Perhaps she finds her place within the community of black women.

The novel highlights female bonding and community ties. The sexism of black men in the novel divides the black community along the lines of gender. Mattie’s father is an authoritarian figure who embodies the patriarchal law. Lucielia Louise Turner is associated with the domestic chores and motherhood; and shares a tense relationship with Eugene who is an unconcerned father. C. C. Baker and his friends ruthlessly gang-rape Lorraine and leave her to die. Naylor admitted that “in *The Women of Brewster Place* I was romanticizing the female condition a bit… the women are mostly victims who are trying to transcend a situation” (Naylor, Interview 254). There are visible crevices in the black community of Brewster Place along the lines of gender.

The female bonding, however, is far from perfect. The relationship between “The Two” lesbians – Theresa and Lorraine is described in terms of their difference from the so-called normative sexuality of the other women of the community. However there are differences in the approach of the two women towards their own sexuality – Theresa views it as difference that alienates them from the other women while Lorraine emphasizes their similarities to other women of the community. They are different from each other despite their similar sexual orientation. Similarly all African-American women are different and cannot be homogenized. The homophobia of Brewster Place divides the female community along the lines of sexuality. The ostracism that Theresa and Lorraine face is symptom of the homophobia of the American society of the 1960s. It is ironic that the women of Brewster Place are able to accept Lorraine only after she has been raped and her body violated by men. In the act of sexual violence Lorraine loses her difference and becomes acceptable to the women of Brewster Place. Theresa, on the other hand, joins the women in tearing down the wall in Mattie’s dream. In reality the women of Brewster Place cannot willingly accept difference in sexual orientation despite being an oppressed community themselves. Writing about the homophobia of the American society and its impact on the black community, Cheryl Clarke has argued that “Homophobia divides the black people as political allies, it cuts off political growth, stifles revolution, and perpetuates patriarchal domination” (Clarke 78). The women of Brewster Place fail to unite and are divided on the basis of sexual orientation.

Pamela E. Barnett in *Dangerous Desire: Literature of Sexual Freedom and Sexual Violence Since the Sixties* analyses Lorraine’s rape in the context of the homophobia of the American society.

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2 Pamela E. Barnett in *Dangerous Desire: Literature of Sexual Freedom and Sexual Violence Since the Sixties* analyses Lorraine’s rape in the context of the homophobia of the American society.
Another division in the black community surfaces as Mrs. Browne from Linden Hills comes to see her daughter Melanie in Brewster Place. Naylor’s first novel set in Brewster Place has few scattered references to Linden Hills which becomes the setting for her second novel *Linden Hills*. Barbara Christian emphasizes the importance of place and setting in Naylor’s novels.\(^3\) She writes,

> Perhaps Afro-American writers have been particularly interested in setting, because displacement, first from Africa and then through migration from South to North, has been so much a part of our history... Perhaps place is even more critical to Afro-American women writers. For women within the Afro-American community have functioned both inside and outside the home, have been conservers of tradition. (Christian 99)

For Melanie Browne it is important that she locate herself within the black poor and adopt a name that is reminiscent of her roots. The process of naming and names themselves are important for Naylor. Mattie’s grandfather was hard of hearing and the people at the plantation had to call him twice to get his attention. After emancipation, a Yankee clerk of Freedman’s Bureau put it down and he became Michael-Michael. Names are important for Melanie as markers of identity. She adopts the “African” name “Kiswa” in order to go back to her roots. Having adopted the “African” name she leaves Linden Hills to live in Brewster Place and work for the welfare of the black community. Linden Hills embodies the integrationist approach of middle-class black people while Brewster Place is presented as a squalid black neighborhood with poor living conditions. The two neighborhoods located in close proximity to each other yet so different, spell out difference and diversity that characterize Naylor’s work. The class divisions between the blacks of Linden Hills and Brewster Place echo the class-divide among the African-Americans. As Kiswa points out to her mother, Linden Hills is inhabited by “educated blacks with a terminal case of middle-class amnesia” (Naylor, *Brewster Place* 84-85). She calls her mother “a white man’s nigger who’s ashamed of being black” (Naylor, *Brewster Place* 85). Kiswa has been a part of the Civil Rights Movement and has taken up the cause of her people at the grassroots level. Mrs. Browne reminds Kiswa that she has been associated with the NAACP for the last twenty-five years. Mrs. Browne represents the integrationist philosophy of the organization and believes that the black should be allowed to be what they are—“black isn’t beautiful and it isn’t ugly—black is” obliquely targeting the 1960s movement “Black is Beautiful” that encouraged straight hair and bleached skin among blacks (Naylor, *Brewster Place* 86). Kiswa is protected by her boyfriend Abshu and her own powerful class position. Through a verbal argument she incites Baker who retaliates by raping Lorraine. She stands out from other women of Brewster Place due to her class position. The African-American self stands divided by the barriers of class.

The women in Brewster Place struggle with the issues of class, gender and sexuality. Naylor offers no easy answer. It is only in a dream that the divisions along the lines of race, class, gender and sexuality are temporarily suspended. It is in Mattie’s dream that the women appear to come together. Even Theresa joins them in the tearing down of the wall that isolated Brewster Place. It is near this wall that Lorraine was raped and Ben, who served as a handyman

\(^3\) Barbara Christian in the essay “Gloria Naylor’s Geography: Community, Class, and Patriarchy in *The Women of Brewster Place and Linden Hills*” analyses the variety and complexity of the geographical world of Naylor’s fiction.
for the community and kept the community together, was killed. Critics have noted that Ben’s predicament is suppressed to allow for the novel’s “female-centered” viewpoint. Ben’s effacement from the tragic scene is problematic as Naylor focuses attention only on the women of Brewster Place. The blood-stained wall becomes a symbol of the oppression of women and the bricks are relayed out of Brewster Place by the women as the men and children look upon. In her book *Understanding Gloria Naylor* Margaret Earley Whitt writes, “Each of Brewster’s residents has a dream that has been deferred, and these dreams are referred to throughout as disappointments, life’s plans and hopes dashed. But in Mattie’s literal dream all the women of Brewster Place find resolution, solace, and ultimately, vindication” (Whitt 53). But it is only a dream, not reality! The Block Party being prepared for never takes place within the purview of the novel.

*The Women of Brewster Place* begins and ends with “Dawn” and “Dusk” of Brewster Place, of how the “bastard child” came to be and how it “still waits to die”. In the epilogue titled “Dusk” the death of the street is deferred. Even Mattie’s dream is deferred as it awaits fulfillment and the novel awaits closure. Jill L. Matus notes, “Naylor resists a history that seeks to impose a closure on black American dreams, recording also in her deferred ending a reluctance to see ‘community’ as a static or finished work” (Matus 63). Brewster place is a dead-end street inhabited by the poor black people who have nowhere else to go. The tearing down of the wall never takes place in reality and Brewster Place remains cut off from the city. Its marginal position is juxtaposed with the marginality of women who inhabit it. The women of Brewster Place form a diversified and divided community and illustrate the complexity of African-American womanhood.
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The fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound /ə/ in the speech of Advanced Tunisian English learners: problem and causes

Aicha Rahal
University of Kairouan, Tunisia

Abstract

It is probably true to say that most learners of a foreign or a second language fail to achieve their aim of native-like competence. Advanced Tunisian English Learners (ATEL) are an example; they faced problems to speak accurately due to inability to permanently correct persistent errors. This condition has become known as fossilization. This paper focuses on the fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound in the speech of ATEL. It analyses the problem and propounds the factors behind this phenomenon.

Key words: schwa phoneme, fossilization, L1 Interference, lack of understanding, and inconsistency of vowels
Introduction

To acquire command of Second/Foreign language, learners formally learn mainly the basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, a common observation in research into language acquisition shows that adult second language (L2) learners are not inevitably successful in acquiring the target L2. L2 students fail to achieve their aim of native speaker-like proficiency because they confront different problems. This phenomenon is known as Fossilization. One of the problems is the fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound. Most of Advanced Tunisian English Learners mispronounce the schwa phoneme and replace it by other phonemes. This paper is an attempt to analyze the problem and it tries to show the causes of this phenomenon.

Literature Review

The term fossilization was introduced to the field of second language acquisition by Selinker in 1972. Selinker defines fossilization:

…a mechanism…underlies surface linguistic material which speakers will tend to keep in their IL productive performance, no matter what the age of the learner, the amount of instruction he receives in the TL. (Selinker, 1972, p.229)

Thus, fossilization is both a cognitive mechanism known as the fossilization mechanism (1972, p.221), and a performance related structural phenomena. The former means that it was a constituent of a latent psychological structure that dictates a learner’s acquisition of a second language. The latter means that it denoted specifically the regular reappearance in second-language performance of linguistic phenomena (p.211).

Grammatical Fossilization

A considerable amount of second language acquisition research has focused on grammatical fossilization. Paul Buther-Tanak (2000) studies a group of Japanese adult learners who made grammatical fossilization. He classified their grammatical errors into two groups; errors relating to articles, prepositions, and pronouns, and errors relating to verb usage, including auxiliary and model verbs. The researcher claims, in his dissertation, that grammatical fossilization can be remedied if a consciousness-raising approach is utilized. Suzanne Gardner (2013) observed a study of an adult fossilized learner. She gave the example of Arthur who was born in Cuba. He went to primary school for only three years. He came to Miami when he was 29 years old and spoke only Spanish. He learnt English from Chinese immigrants when he worked in Chinese restaurant. At the age of 59, he has been incarcerated for 18 years and he has been in ESL classes. Arthur is a fossilized learner who struggles to progress. He makes grammatical mistakes in English. For instance, he uses the object pronoun “me”, when referring to himself as a subject. He uses the progressive without auxiliary. Garder (2013) shows the factors behind his fossilization such as the lack of attachment emotionally, psychologically, and socially to the mainstream American culture, motivation, and ego permeability. She points out what teaching methodologies have been successful for him. Michael Shroudner (2009) studies fossilization as a state in which a student’s grammatical mistakes do not improve despite error
correction and teacher-required revision of errors. He concludes that Chinese students showed high usage of dependent clauses and the Brazilian students showed an increase in perfect tense mistakes (p.85). Endang Fauziati (2011) studies error fossilization of Indonesian students, with specific focus on grammatical errors. He chooses to collect data four times: prior and after one semester instruction and two months afterwards. This study shows that errors can be classified into: verb, bound morpheme, sentence structure, noun used as verb, preposition, pronoun and article. Fauziati (2011) indicates that all of the learners’ grammatical errors could be eliminated (p.23).

**Phonetic Fossilization**

Although many studies have examined grammatical fossilization, very few studies have examined phonetic fossilization. In 2009, Mehmet Demirezen focuses on the mispronunciation of sounds. These sounds /ɔ/, /ɔ:/ are replaced by /ow/. He claims that this problem is due to the absence of such courses in phonetics. He points out that audio-articulation method can be utilized to rehabilitate the pronunciation errors. Demirezen (2010) studies also the causes of the schwa phoneme as a fossilized pronunciation problem for Turks. He claims that the articulation of the schwa phoneme is a serious problem for Turkish English teachers, teacher trainees and the students of other fields of study (p.1567). Fachun Zhang and Pengpeng Yin (2009) focus on the study of pronunciation problems of English learners in China. They claim that this problem can be due to the difference between the place and the manner of articulation of both languages. For instance, English /r/ and /ʃ/ are different from the Chinese /sh/ and /r/. Both researchers give other factors behind fossilization such as the interference of the Chinese language, age, attitude, and the insufficient knowledge of phonology and phonetic systems of the English language (p.141). Ayhan Kahraman (2013) studies EFL teachers’ fossilized pronunciation problem of dark /l/ and suggests solutions. He claims that one of the pronunciation problems for Turkish adult learners of English language is the English /l/ consonant sound. He uses the Audio-articulation method by Demirezen (2003) to cure such mistakes on pronunciation of the non-native EL teachers.

None of the studies included in the review examined phonetic fossilization of Tunisian English Learners. The present study, therefore, tries to show the fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound in Tunisian L2 learners.

**Method**

**Participants**

This study was conducted at a Tunisian University with the participation of 5 students from the English Department of Gafsa. They are enrolled in first, second, and third years. The participant’s ages varied from 20 to 26.
Tools of the study

A hidden word puzzle is used. The students found a word from the puzzle, and they pronounced it, in spontaneous way. I compiled short videos in which they are speaking, using the sound-editing program Audacity.

The description of the schwa sound

According to Skander and Burleigh (2000), “the term schwa comes from Hebrew, where it means ‘emptiness’ and designates a Hebrew vowel of the same quality” (cited in Mehmet Demirezen, 2010, p.1568). The schwa represents a mid central vowel in an unstressed syllable, such as the first syllable of “about”. It is also represented as /ə/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet.

The different pronunciation of the schwa sound and the causes

The schwa sound is a common error among Tunisian English Learners. They replace it with other sounds. There are three main different pronunciations of the schwa sound:

1-They pronounce /ə/ sound instead of the schwa sound in words like “about”, “ahead”, “ago”…

2-They pronounce /ɔ:/ sound instead of the schwa sound in words like “phonetics”, “phonology”, “forget”…

3-They pronounce /ɑ:/ sound instead of the schwa sound in words like “material”, “machine”, “familiar”…

2-The following table shows the fossilized transcriptions:
There are three main factors behind this problem. First, the use of /e/ and /əː/ sounds instead of the schwa sound could be classified as L1 Interference. Thus; the French language has an impact on the pronunciation of ATEL. A particular sound which does not exist in the first language poses a difficulty for the second language learners to produce. Second, the inconsistency of English vowels is another factor. Most of TEL, unless they have mastery of the pronunciation of each vowel sound; pronounce /e/ /əː/ and /æ:/ in the place of /ə/. This is because of their first background about each sound. So, they picture this thought in their minds as if each sound has only one kind of pronunciation. Learners need to understand that English is a non-phonetic language since there exists no one-to-one correspondence between the graphemes and the sounds actually pronounced. Third, it seems rather clear that TEL lack understanding of English phonetics. They need to study the production of English vowels. According to Han, lack of understanding is a potential cause of fossilization. In her book, she develops the idea of Perdue (1993) who sees that this factor can have negative impact on learners’ motivation to learn (cited in Han, 2004, p.32).

Conclusion

Pronunciation is very important. It is the first thing people notice when one speaks English or any other language. The study can be significant because it tries to study the fossilized pronunciation of the schwa sound. It points out the causes. L1 Interference, lack of understanding, and the inconsistency of English vowels are the potential factors behind fossilization. Future researches should pay more attention on the solutions to overcome this phenomenon because these types of replacement of phonemes affect learners’ auditory and perceptive abilities and certainly result in huge confusion and misunderstanding.
References


Cultural and Religious Rituals of Gestation and Child Birth of Muslims of Malabar: a Textual and Sociological Perspective

Mohamed Rafeek KP
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Abstract

Rites and rituals related to major events of human life like birth, marriage and death are prevalent from the infancy of human race in the world. The celebration of suchlike events varies as well as conforms in relation to the region, religion, language, class, caste and gender. In all communities around the world the birth of a child is considered as a blessing and ceremonies are held to celebrate this event. It seems as a moment of joy and happiness in the life of spouses and family members and they share it with their relatives and colleagues. However the celebrations regarding the birth of a child are conducted in multiple ways according to time and space. Post and pre delivery periods of pregnancy of a woman are also going through certain rites and rituals in various societies and religions. Here I try to scrutinize the major celebrations, rites and rituals of pre and post delivery period of a woman and child birth in a middle class Muslim family of Malabar through the textual narrations and sociological interpretations.

Key words: rituals, child birth, Malabar, Muslims
Pre delivery period

After the marriage woman usually goes to the husband’s house and conduct her rest of life with the family of husband as a member of that family and visits her natal family only at the time of certain festivals and banquets. After getting pregnant she will be in the extreme care of both families and the news of gestation spreads among the family members predominantly among the females. In the outset of gestation some women omits whatever they eat and some feel tired and unhealthy for a short period of time. In Malabar by the fourth month of pregnancy she will be carried into her natal family to stay there for one or two months which mainly intended to sup ghee and some other herbals. This ritual is known as neyu kudikkan kondavaraal. There is a persuasion that whatever she likes has to be fed in the duration of pregnancy otherwise the child will be greedy; So that the family members will be keen to hear from her the volition for some food items which are rarely available. After spending one month she goes back to her husband’s house and will stay there for two months. At this time husband’s family with some relatives visits her along with some bakery products. The intention of this visit is to gaze her belly and is formally known as palla kanan pokk.

In the fifth and sixth month, she is provided a kind of Islamic medicine which is only prevalent among sunnis of Malabar. The contour of the medicine is that the musliyar\textsuperscript{4} writes some Quranic verses in a plate with a special ink and pen every day and she removes that ink with the water mixed with raisin and drinks it. This is known as pinchanam ezhuthi kudikkal. In the end of seventh month the father of pregnant woman seeks the musliyar on which day and what time she has to be brought for the delivery from her husband’s family. Then after looking at Islamic calendar he fixes a specific date and time, then the husband’s father and maternal uncle of the woman with the musliyar goes to the husband’s home to bring her for the delivery purposes which is known as prasavathinu kootikkondu viral. For this occasion the husband’s family will prepare food for them and the musliyar perform the prayer and brings her into her natal home in a car. At that time she will be very shy and wears white dress whether it is sari or purdah or anything else. No body is ready to oppose this like activities due to the fear of adventurous situation of delivery process. At the time of pregnancy most of the women will be very pious and virtuous and they will recite holy Quran every night and offer some other prayers also. In the ninth month the woman’s mother will prepare all the things needed for hospitalizing her daughter for the delivery and when the pain of delivery starts the pregnant women informs her mother the situation. Then the mother along with grand mother and father go to hospital with the pregnant women and inform the husband’s family also. The husband’s father, mother and husband go to hospital and serve her for performing delivery.

\textsuperscript{4} Religiously educated man who becomes the priest of mosque
Birth and related rites

In Islam there is a concept that as soon as a child is born, satan attacks him/her, because human beings are his enemies so he never leaves them without harming. That is why the children are crying in the time of birth. The rationale behind this is a narration from the Prophet: "When any human being is born, Satan pinches the body with his two fingers, except 'Isa, the son of Maryam, whom Satan tried to pinch but failed, for he touched the placenta instead". (Sahihul Bukhari 4:506). To protect the newborn child from these quandaries they are following some major principles that prophet did and ordered to do at the birth of a new child. Predominantly there are five tenets to be done after the birth of a child as mentioned by the prophet. They are (1) reciting azaan\(^5\) and iqama\(^6\) in the ears of newborn (2) thahneek\(^7\) (3) thasmiya\(^8\) (4) shaving the head (5) aqeeqah\(^9\) and (6) khitan\(^10\). Here is the brief description of all these practices.

Reciting azaan

If a child is born in a family the most pious and virtuous person will recite the azaan and iqama in his/her right and left ears respectively. This is done immediately after the baby has taken bathed with lukewarm water. It is convinced that this practice ensures safety to the child from epilepsy. Hafiz ibn Qiyyim pointed out; the significance of reciting the azaan and the iqamah in the ears of the child is that the first words he hears have to be the greatness and majesty of Allah. The words of testimony are those which a man recites on embracing Islam. In other words, this is a pronouncement of the creed of Islam. Besides, these it is believed that at the sound of Azaan and iqamah, Satan distances himself from the child. It is intended that at this early age, the child is thus invited to Allah, to Islam and to the worship of Allah. This call forestalls temptation by Satan and ensures an unblemished faith. Moreover, it is a forearming against Satan and temptation.

The rationale behind this practice is a report from Abu Raf'I that, "I saw the Prophet saying the azaan of salah\(^11\) in the ear of his grandson, Hasan, when the child was born to his daughter Fatima". It is obvious that among the Muslims of Malabar this function is mostly done by the grandfathers (if they are alive) or father or any religiously educated person of the family. It also turns our attention to realize the fact that how much society is keen to pursue the religious rites at the time of birth, marriage and demise.

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\(^5\) Azaan is call for prayer announced five times from the mosques which starts with “Allahu akbar Allahu akbar” (Allah is the great, Allah is the great)
\(^6\) Iqama is a short form of azaan
\(^7\) Thahneek is a arbic word which means giving palatable thing
\(^8\) Naming the child
\(^9\) It is the practice of sacrificing an animal in the name of the child
\(^10\) Circumcision
\(^11\) Salah is the Arabic word of namaz (a kind of prayer)
**Thahneek**

Thahneek is the practice of chewing date and applying a part of the chewed portion to the palate of the child so that it goes down the child’s mouth easily. If date is unavailable, one may apply anything sweet, like sugar-candy, honey or juice, to the child’s palate. Thereby, the sunnah\(^\text{12}\) is fulfilled.

Mostly the dates are given after chewing to the child by the hands of most virtuous man and then women of that family. It is common among the mothers of pregnant women in Malabar to seek the dates which are brought from Mecca at the time of pilgrimage and collect it to give her grandchild at the moment of delivery. There is a report that when a child was born to one of the families of the Sahaba\(^\text{13}\) they would take him/her to the Prophet so that he would bless it, and apply the pulp of a date, chewed by him, to its palate. The wife of Prophet Aisha narrates that "the people used to bring their newborn children to the Prophet and he would bless them and perform the tahneek" (Sahih Muslim 1:560).

**Tasmiya**

People name their children to distinguish them from others and to call them by their names. In Islam also it is an obligation upon the parents that their child be given a good name. Some hadeeth\(^\text{14}\) indicates that the child is to be named on the seventh day along with Aqeeqah. However, the Prophet also named children on the day of their birth, as proven by other narrations. There is no harm if the child is named before the seventh day, but if the naming has not been done, then the child should be named on the seventh day. Among Muslims of Malabar Arabic names are most preferred one than local names. Now a day it also enlarges into Persian and Urdu languages. In the earlier periods most of the names had a nexus with the local and traditional language. When ever the family is naming the child they ask the meaning of Arabic names to the priest of the mosque of the Mahallu\(^\text{15}\) who is called Musliyar. Somebody also asks him to suggest good names for their child. If a priest is unable to tell the meaning of Arabic names he is considered as ignorant in Arabic language. Now a day there is a trend of naming the child by composing the names of father and mother. Some families give the name of grandparents to their grandsons as a reminiscence of their forefathers and foremothers. Often the naming of the child happens according to the will of father’s family where mother’s family has no role in that ritual.

Naming the child with a beautiful and lovely and meaningful name is very important. The Prophet always chose names with good and beautiful meanings, even telling people to change their names if they had unpleasant meanings. Ibn Umar reported that Allah's Messenger said that "the names dearest to Allah are Abdullah and Abdur-Rahman" (Sahih Muslim, 3:5315). Ibn

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\(^{12}\) Pursuance of prophet

\(^{13}\) The companions of prophet

\(^{14}\) Hadeeth is the technical term to the saying, acts and nods of prophet

\(^{15}\) A regional form for the muslims, like parish for christians
Umar reported again that Allah's Messenger changed the name of Aasiyah (disobedient) and said “you are Jameelah (good and beautiful) (Sahih Muslim, 3:5332&4747). It is believed that on the day of resurrection, a person will be called by his name and the names of his parents. Therefore, a good name must be selected. That is why people are seeking the nod of Muslaiyar at the time of naming.

**Shaving the head**

The hair on the head of the new-born has to be shaved on seventh/fourteenth/twenty first day of the birth. It is desirable to give gold or silver as charity to the poor and needy equal to the weight of his/her hair. Shaving the hair of the head provides the child with strength and opens up the pores of the skin. It is also beneficial to the eye-sight, the hearing and the sense of smell. It is reported that the Prophet, asked Fatimah to have his son’s head shaved off and offer silver equal in weight to the hair as sadaqah. The hair weighed a dirham or a little lesser than a dirham. The entire head must be shaved. To shave some hair and to leave some on the head is called qaz and is disallowed.

In Malabar this is celebrated in the mother’s house with a great joy and happiness by inviting the relatives from both sides of father and mother. It is known as mudikalachil. Mostly it is conducted on the fourteenth day of the birth. A team of family members from father’s side including a barber and a musliyar goes to mother’s house in the morning to perform this practice. The grandmother of child from father’s side will present a plate with some rice, coconut, areca nut, tobacco, betel leaf and his wage to the barber and he starts to shave the head of the child; while the child will be in the lap of the grand mother. The barbers from Muslims are known as ossan and only they are invited for this practice not the non Muslims. After this ritual barber ossan and musliyar will return but the family relatives stay there till the end of feast provided at the lunch time. A group of neighbours and relatives from father’s side goes in five or six vehicles to the mother’s house to participate in the feast prepared there.

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**aqeeqah**

Etymologically the Arabic word aq means 'to cut'. In the terminology of Shari'ah it is the sacrifice of a goat for the child on the seventh day after the birth. According to a hadith, every child is pledged to his aqeeqah that may be sacrificed for him on the seventh day; the same day he must be named and his head shaved. The sacrifice on behalf of a boy is two goats and for the girl one goat or their equivalent. The Prophet did the aqeeqah of Hasan and Husain on the seventh day after their birth. It may be done on the fourteenth or twenty first day. It is desirable not to break the bones of the sacrificial animal. This is a sign of good omen of health and

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16 Sadaqah means charity
17 A unit of weight in Arabian countries in earlier periods
strength of the child. The poor and the neighbors get large pieces, too. However, there is no harm if someone does break the bones of the animal.

The animal that is valid for sacrifice in the day of Eidul Azha is valid too in the offering of aqeeqah. The animal must be one year old, fully. However, a six-month old ram may be offered in sacrifice and aqeeqah if it is sufficiently fat and healthy and looks like a year old. The goat must be a year old. The animal must be free from defect. It must not be blind, squint eyed or so much thin that there is no marrow in its bones. It must not be so lame which cannot walk by itself to the place of sacrifice. That animal, also, is invalid for sacrifice whose tail or ear is cut off more than two-thirds, or most of its teeth have fallen off, or it has no ears since birth or is so much mad that it does not eat or drink. The sacrifice of an animal is valid if its ear is torn or a horn is split. Also, if an animal is lame but it can walk on its three legs. If some of its teeth are broken but most are intact, the animal is not very mad or the ear, tail or hip is only one-thirds cut off, then, in all such cases, the sacrifice of this animal is valid. The sacrifice of a cow or a buffalo is not valid before it is two years old. The camel must have completed five years of age. It is legitimate to share in aqeeqah and sacrifice. On the birth of the child, the animal offered in aqeeqah is to obtain proximity to Allah.

In Malabar the practice of aqeeqah is quite interesting because of its numerous implications of social status of a family. In higher class families the number of animals sacrificed will increase from three to four, in middle class families it is one to two, while in poor families this practice sometimes do not practice or reduce it into a goat. Mostly buffalos are brought for the sacrifice because of its availability and less expense in comparison with goats. The animal will be conveyed to the mother’s house a day before the ceremony and will be nurtured from there for rest of the time. The father’s family goes to the mother’s house on the date of occasion with close relatives in the morning along with the barber, musliyar and butchers of their village. The musliyar is carried out to chop the neck of animal. It is believed that the musliyars know how to chop it clearly. Before the slaughtering, animal is given little water to sip as its last drink, then butchers prepare it for slaughtering and musliyar begins to chop by uttering three thakbeers. The format of thakbeer is allahu akbar allahu akbar allahu akbar, lailaha illallahu allahu akbar, allahu akbar valillahil hamdu. Then the duty of preparing it for eating goes to the butchers. They will make it in different covers to distribute among the family members and the inhabitants in the vicinity of father and mother of the child. Here mother’s family gets preference to select how much they need; and only the rest is allowed to the father’s family. It is believed that this meat cannot be given to a non Muslim. Now we turn into the rites related to the mother after delivery and what are the major peculiarities of those events.

Khitan

Etymologically, khitan means to cut the skin that is at the tip of the reproductive organ. In Shari‘ah it is the round part on the edge above the conical vascular body of the penis. Narrated Abu Hurayrah, I heard the Prophet saying "five practices are characteristic of the Fitrah".

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18 Also known as Bakried
19 Primitiveness
circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, cutting the moustache short, clipping the nails and depleting the hair of the armpits”. \textit{(Sahih Bukhari 7:779)}. According to a hadith, circumcision is \textit{sunnah} for men and virtuous for women.

Basically the practice of circumcision emerged in following the practices of the earlier prophet Ibrahim as Allah says in the Qur'an “Then we have inspired you (Oh Muhammad) follow the religion of Ibrahim, the true in faith and he was not from polytheists” \textit{(Surah An-Nahl 16:123)}. In this verse, the Prophet and his adherents are commanded to follow the religion of Ibrahim; therefore it is known that circumcision is from the religion of Ibrahim. Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim have related that Abu Hurayrah said that Allah's Messenger said, "Ibrahim did his circumcision with an adze (hand tool with a steel cutting blade) at the age of eighty". \textit{(Sahih Bukhari 4:575. Sahih Muslim 4:5844)}. Circumcision of the boy is recommended before he attains maturity. It is advisable to do it with \textit{aqeeqah}. At that age he does not suffer much pain. The question of his being shy does not arise, too. The prophet had the \textit{aqeeqah} and circumcision of his two grandsons Hasan and Husain performed on the seventh day after their birth.

In Malabar circumcision is known as \textit{(markam kalyanam or sunnah kalyanam)} and is celebrated by inviting the relatives and friends and preparing feasts for them. Mostly it is held in the house of the father at the 3\textsuperscript{rd} or 4\textsuperscript{th} year of the child. The boy after wearing dhoti is led to the doctor who does the circumcision with some close relatives from both sides of father and mother. Family relatives will present variety of food items like egg, horlicks, and banana; and some other gifts to the circumcised boy. In some rich families the practice of presenting golden ornaments like rings and bangles are also prevalent. The mother’s family is supposed to present the golden ornaments. He will be treated with intensive care at every time before curing the wounds of circumcision. Only the boys whose circumcision is over can go to the mosque and offer the prayer.

\textbf{Post delivery period}

Close relatives of mother and father comes to the hospital to appreciate and participate in the joy of the family with some fruits or any other gifts for the baby. They talk with the mother and take the child in hands and try to make it laugh. After completing the medical checkups from the hospital she will be carried into her natal home in most of the cases; and she will under intensive care by a trained home nurse for forty days. The father’s family will book and arrange the nurse even at the first or second month of pregnancy. Everybody in the family watches the home nurse’s activities whether she is doing her duty punctually or not; and how she behaves with the family members and help in their deeds. It is her duty to look after the child and mother with intensive care; whenever child cries she has to take him/her and make quiet even if it is in the midnight. Washing the dresses of child and mother, preparing special food for mother and making her and child bath with herbal oil are major responsibilities of the home nurse.
The family relatives from both sides of mother and father will visit the delivered women with presentations which include eggs, bananas, horlicks, boost, fruits, baby soaps, powders, Ayurvedic medicines and dresses for the child. The visitors also provide some money to the home nurse which is known as the price for seeing the child. The variations in the offerings express the status of a visiting family in the society and how much close they are to the delivered women. She is provided many things to eat in this period especially dug of goat and some homemade medicines which are prepared by mixing dates, fenugreek and shallot.

The delivered women are forbidden from offering prayers and reciting Quran until ceasing her afterbirth blood. Its minimum is one second and usual time is forty days and maximum time is sixty days. In the usual condition on the fortieth day of delivery there is a celebration known as nalppath. In that day the closest relatives of mother and father will go to the mother’s home with some golden ornaments like ring, bangle, necklace, waistband and earring; and garnish it on the child. The father’s mother begins the garnishing and follows by those who brought the ornaments. Here also the fiscal capacity of a family comes into consideration among the society. It is an obligation on the blood relatives to offer golden ornaments to the newborn child and the same magnitude of gold or little bit more will be given back when suchlike occasions happens in their homes. On that day the delivered women will take bath from her afterbirth blood and comes out of bathroom along with her younger brother with an umbrella by looking at the most fruitful coconut tree. The logic behind looking at fruitful coconut tree is the reproduction of more children throughout her life. The mother’s family will prepare feast for the guests at the lunch time. By this day the service of home nurse will come into end and she will be paid approximately RS 20000 along with some dresses and sent to home. If any women’s bleeding didn’t stop by forty days the celebration of nalppathu is postponed into the sixtieth day and is called arupath. In usual case the women resides with her family for ninety days after delivery while she recover all her health problems and will be capable to do domestic works; by then she will go back to the husband’s family.

Cultural and social relevance of rituals

A ritual is a set of actions performed mainly for their symbolic value. It may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including by a religious community. The term usually refers to actions which are stylized, and usually excludes actions which are arbitrarily chosen by the performers. The purposes of rituals are varied. Rituals can fulfill religious obligations or ideals, satisfy spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthen of social bonds, provide social and moral education, demonstrate of respect or submission, allow one to state one’s affiliation, obtain social acceptance or approval for some event - or rituals are sometimes performed just for the pleasure of the ritual itself. From this stand point of view the aforementioned rites and rituals among Muslims of Malabar can be read through various aspects.

Rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all known human societies, past or present. They include not only the various worship rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults; but also the rites of passage of certain societies, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and presidential inaugurations, marriages, funerals, club meetings, sports events, veteran’s parades and many other social practices. In
religion a ritual can comprise the prescribed outward forms of observation within a religion or religious denomination. Although ritual is often used in conjunction with worship performed in a religious tabernacle. The actual nexus between any religion’s doctrine and its rituals can vary considerably from organized religion to non-institutionalized spirituality. Rituals can help create a firm sense of group identity. Humans have used to create bonds and even to nourish interpersonal relationships through rituals and rites. The practices of aqeeqah, khitan are best examples of improving the interpersonal relationships and making harmony and coexistence in the society.

What roles might the concept of ritual play in the study of contemporary society and culture is the major question arrives at scrutinizing the cultural rituals of the society. Ritual is arguably a universal feature of human social existence: just as one cannot envision a society without language or exchange, one would be equally hard-pressed to imagine a society without ritual. And while the word ‘ritual’ commonly brings to mind the exotic images of primitive others diligently engaged in mystical activities, one can find rituals, both sacred and secular throughout ‘modern’ society. Ritual is in fact an inevitable component of culture, extending from the largest-scale social and political processes to the most intimate aspects of our self experience. Yet within this universality, the inherent multiplicity of ritual practices, both between and within cultures also reflects the full diversity of the human experience. It was then neither pure coincidence nor primitive exoticism that placed ritual at the centre of the development of anthropological thought: it was instead ritual’s rich potential insights as an object of socio cultural analysis.

The major questions arise in scrutinizing ritual are what in fact is ritual? Where does ritual originate? What forms does ritual take, and how do these various forms constitute ‘ritual”? What are its effects and how are they achieved? How does ritual frame our social experiences and how does actor’s input in turn re-frame ritual? What are the relationships between ritual symbols across social fields (religious, political, sexual)? Who exercises control in rituals; or do rituals exercise control upon their actors? And how in the end does the study of ritual processes contribute to an understanding of contemporary socio cultural processes?

Rational-choice accounts argue that rituals are ubiquitous features of social life because they provide the common focal points and common cultural knowledge that provide actors with information about how others will act. This makes mutual assurance possible and helps actors solve the coordination problems that usually bedevil and obstruct effective collective action. Armed with common knowledge, actors can more credibly make commitments to one another and mutually orient their actions to one another, often without the need for organization. Cultural practices such as rituals facilitate coordination develop and persist because they are, ultimately, efficient and enhance the productivity of social action. Not surprisingly, rituals are foundational to voluntary collective action, as is especially evident in religious groups. Durkheim’s theory of rituals provides a powerful social mechanism that reinforces group coherence and produces social solidarity, but he does not explain how social groups originate or how they change, dissolve, fracture and so on. Innovations in social life including the formation of new solidarity groups seem to occur only because of exogenous events, since in Durkheim’s sense rituals are
merely forces for reproduction. From a functionalist perspective social and cultural innovations, however rare are quickly normalized and institutionalized through ritual practices.
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Far beyond the Pages, a Morose Man Brushes Hair: Hugo Montmorency, Corrosive Masculinity, and the Irish Gothic in Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September* (1929)

Jericho Williams
West Virginia University, USA

Abstract

As one of Ireland’s most prominent writers during the first half of the twentieth century, Elizabeth Bowen explored the lingering effects of the Irish Potato Famine and the decline of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy by incorporating elements of the literary gothic in her novel *The Last September* (1929). In this essay, I argue that in addition to two haunting settings, an apparition, and an atypical villain, the author adapts the gothic mode in depicting the danger caused by the disempowered, aimless, and intractable Hugo Montmorency. Following in the prose footprints of prior Irish writers Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker, Bowen portrays Hugo Montmorency to suggest the dark, parasitic danger of suppressed masculine aggression upon modern women’s lives and the Irish family unit.

Keywords: Irish literature; gothic; masculinity; terror
In her preface to *The Last September*’s second edition, Elizabeth Bowen calls the novel the “nearest to my heart” of her works and described its chilling final scene—the burning of Danielstown—as “more real than anything I have lived through.”¹ Set in 1920, but written in 1928, *The Last September* is her only work deliberately set in the past, during the years of her own young adulthood. Bowen used her experience as an inspiration for the novel’s central character, Lois, and Bowen’s family’s house, Bowen’s Court, served as the model for Danielstown, the setting that shelters and troubles the novel’s principal characters. Given her family’s Anglo-Irish background, the relations between the Anglo-Irish and the English during the early 1920s presented a troubling and terrifying situation for Bowen. The uncertainty and terror enveloping the Irish countryside blossom in *The Last September* in the form of the Gothic, seeping, fog-like, into what is ostensibly a novel of manners. This use of elements from multiple literary modes coupled with Bowen's distinct writing style—characterized as peculiar, difficult, and occasionally maddening—shields *The Last September* from categorization within a canon of traditional Gothic literature.

In this essay, I explore Elizabeth Bowen’s engagement with the Gothic tradition and trace the influence the Gothic bears on the behavior of the wayward Hugo Montmorency in *The Last September*. Prior critics have discussed the novel’s Gothic features within the confines of genre, paying particular attention to Gothic settings (Danielstown and the old mill), an apparition (Laura), and a villain (Daventry).² They have paid much less attention to another important Gothic figure in the novel, Hugo Montmorency. Living a disordered and unfulfilling life, Hugo changes moods from assertive to nurturing to depressed repeatedly. At the root of his personal struggle is his Anglo-Irish mindset, which traps him despite his desperate attempts to break free from it. In this essay, I argue that the tortured Hugo Montmorency is a quintessential remnant of the nineteenth-century dispossessed Anglo-Irish male found in Irish literature.³ Misplaced ambition following the sale of his estate, declining funds, and an invalid wife plague Hugo. With no escape route, isolated and conflicted, Hugo imagines himself as a feminized figure because of his inability to flourish within Anglo-Irish masculine tradition. Even more frustrated by aimless drifting and an overbearing wife, Hugo reacts in aggressive, erratic ways, threatening two central female characters, Lois Farquar and Marda Norton.

**Elizabeth Bowen, the Nineteenth-Century Gothic Tradition, and Sheridan Le Fanu**

Critics consider Elizabeth Bowen’s Modernist writing style perplexing, partially because of her complex use of language, and partially because of the way she freely borrows from a variety of disparate literary influences. Maud Ellman, one of Bowen’s staunchest defenders, writes that Bowen’s style “resists categorization.”⁴ For Ellman, Bowen’s signature moments appear in “those electric passages where style breaks free from the constraints of action and revels in its fleeting independence.”⁵ In slightly more concrete terms, Susan Osborn identifies
the characteristics of Bowen’s “fleeting independence” as “weird and inconsistent mimeticism, the dramatizations of impasse and non- or dissolved present, and the elliptical dialogue and lacunae in plotting that both invoke and discredit a sense of meaning.” If Ellman and Osborn attempt to pinpoint part of what makes Bowen’s writing Modernist, Bowen’s work suggests deeper complexity when she freely borrows from older modes of literary representation. Ellman notes that Bowen gleans the use of the omniscient narrator from classic realists. Shannon Wells-Lassange argues that Bowen borrows tropes from an array of popular nineteenth-century literary modes, particularly the sensation novel, the Victorian quest romance, the detective novel, and the Gothic. In The Last September, Bowen uses the novel of manners as her foundation, but the Gothic tradition wields influence on the atmosphere and plot.

Bowen mined the Irish Gothic tradition in general, but her primary Gothic inspiration came from nineteenth-century Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu. According to Jarlath Killeen, the rich Irish Gothic canon from the nineteenth century includes the following foundational texts: Charles Robert Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s Uncle Silas (1864) and In a Glass Darkly (1872), Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) and Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897). Of these four writers, Le Fanu, best known for his novel Uncle Silas (1864) and his novella Carmilla (1872), most clearly informs Bowen’s writing style. Carmilla concerns Laura, a young, lonely, and naive girl threatened by the sexual advances of a female vampire. Finding herself isolated and attracted to a newcomer, Laura provides a template for the isolated Lois Farquar, whose mysterious mother, also named Laura, hovers ghost-like throughout The Last September. Whereas Laura’s loneliness compels her to act coquettishly toward Carmilla, Lois’s boredom induced by dull confinement at Danielstown encourages her flirtations toward Hugo Montmorency and Marda Norton. The similarities between Laura’s and Lois’s situations reveal a common interest for both Le Fanu and Bowen: a solitary country house’s debilitating effect on its inhabitants.

It would be difficult to overstate Le Fanu’s influence on Elizabeth Bowen throughout her career. In Pictures and Conversations, a late autobiographical work, Bowen names Jonah Barrington’s memoirs and the novels by Sheridan Le Fanu and Maria Edgeworth as central to her origins as a writer; she describes their exertion on her growth as a process of “infiltration.” Later, Bowen’s knowledge made her a central authority on Le Fanu’s work. She wrote an introduction to a 1947 edition of Le Fanu’s novel Uncle Silas, where she praised his “genius for the unexpected—in mood as well as event.” Bowen and Le Fanu both wrote ghost stories, each adapted at least one into novel, and their work within this sometimes-maligned genre complicated their reputations as serious writers at one time or another.

For both writers, the ghost story genre offered a plain to explore moral issues, and their longer works, often described as Gothic in case of Le Fanu and Modernist in the case of Bowen, do not signal a complete break from their earlier ghost stories. Writing about Bowen’s ghost
stories, John Coates characterizes the “sharp division” between Bowen’s ghost stories and novels as “somewhat artificial.”

Even though her ghost stories comprise roughly one-tenth of her short fiction, their content—particularly supernatural moments—informs works such as The Heat of the Day and The World of Love. The Last September provides the best example. Like Le Fanu’s Uncle Silas, which began as the short story “A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess,” Bowen’s second novel bears a strong resemblance to her story “The Backward Drawing Room.” Unfortunately, Bowen’s ghost stories fueled the argument for Bowen’s designation as a “middlebrow” writer. Brook Miller identifies the lingering limitation this label had upon Bowen’s reputation and posits that critics should consider Bowen’s use of “experimental practices,” such as Gothic elements, in her fiction when arguing for her importance.

A prime example of Bowen’s “experimental practices” is her use of Le Fanu’s ominous, psychological style as a model for her tone in The Last September. W.J. McCormack calls this tone a “nervous literary style,” and Bowen uses it to suggest disarray or tension within seemingly normal settings. Hermione Lee offers the clearest description of her style when she writes that Bowen creates a “constant sense of peril … with edgy, unaccountable, macabre, images, odd turns of phrase, sinister details.” Bowen’s scenes where nonhuman images creep toward the characters further corroborate her debt to Le Fanu. For Moynahan, this indebtedness extends from nonhuman to human, particularly when characters feel paranoid or insecure at the suspicion that others are watching or listening. Like Le Fanu, Bowen considered the Anglo-Irish Big House interesting—particularly in the possibility, as Ellman notes, of “lonely mansions” that “vampirised [their] owners.” Bowen’s borrowing of Le Fanu’s disconcerting technique and her use of an isolated setting hearken back to nineteenth-century Irish Gothic fiction, also the basis for Bowen’s troubled character Hugo Montmorency.

A Troubled Man on the Periphery

Hugo Montmorency’s Gothic presence in The Last September has much to do with how the larger Anglo-Irish family helps define him as a lonesome outsider. In short, he lacks a comfortable position at Danielstown among either the older or younger generation. The older group, comprised of the Naylors, Francie Montmorency, and Marda Norton, overshadows and irritates Hugo. The Naylors cling to Anglo-Irish tradition, while Francie takes advantage of her husband’s weakness and makes him her servant. Marda Norton, though closest in age to Hugo, lives outside the cloistered confines of Ireland and plans to marry an Englishman. The youngest generation represented by Lois and Laurence offers him no solace. They experience extreme disillusionment with Danielstown, and their situation differs from Hugo’s because they are young and in transition. Lois bides her time exploring the concept of love, while Laurence embodies the role of a dandy, placating himself with food and thwacking his peers with sarcasm and wit. However, with the possibility of growth and nourishment outside of Ireland, these two
also represent a potential post-Anglo-Irish generation, while Hugo, one generation older than they are, displays a darker possibility of what could happen to them. At the other end of spectrum, the most ardent traditionalist is Richard Naylor. As the head of an Anglo-Irish Big House, he occupies the more conservative social position that Hugo cannot fulfill. As a nineteenth-century relic, Naylor is impossible to emulate, so a trapped Hugo resigns himself to perpetual melancholy, punctuated by moments of irrational behavior. He reacts and behaves differently from both the rebellious young generation and conservative older generation because he has no feasible plan or reasonable hope. In remaining reticent and not asserting himself and in snubbing tradition, Hugo recoils from connecting with anyone. His isolation creates a sense of entrapment, which results from the changing conception of Anglo-Irish masculinity during the tumultuous nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century in Ireland rendered the Anglo-Irish Big House lifestyle obsolete, as it brought the Acts of Union of 1800 and the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s in real life, and in fiction, the rise of the Irish Gothic novel. The Acts of Union helped initiate a sharp division between Irish landlords and the poor. K. Theodore Hoppen describes many of the Irish landlords as corrupt, “exploiters of the poor, [and] absentees.”23 The gap between the wealthy landowners and the poor became more pronounced during The Great Potato Famine, which began 1845 and stretched through portions of Ireland through 1851, and incited a large societal change. David Lloyd notes that at least one million Irish died and another million Irish emigrated, causing a “disappearance of at least one quarter of the population.”24 Not surprisingly, this catastrophe impacted the Irish literary world. In his book *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton explores the influence of nineteenth-century Irish politics, colonial relations with England, and the Great Potato Famine on the Irish literary world. While Eagleton notes that the Act of Union of 1800 encouraged many writers to emigrate to London, leading to a decline in Irish writers living in Ireland, the souring economic situation—coupled with the Potato Famine of the 1840s—led to Irish’s fiction’s marginality in terms of output when contrasted with burgeoning English writing.25 However, in spite of environmental catastrophe and emigration, Ireland’s nineteenth-century Gothic writers thrived, nurturing a long tradition of authors that includes Maria Edgeworth, Charles Robert Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Bram Stoker. For Eagleton, this development comes as no surprise as the Gothic, “in which the clammy hand of the past stretches out and manipulates the present, reducing it to a hollow repetition of itself,” best represented the “true nightmare” for the Anglo-Irish landowner.26 Eagleton’s analysis details the economic challenges and artistic context that informed Elizabeth Bowen in *The Last September*, which features and lampoons one Anglo-Irish landowner, Richard, and one former landowner, Hugo. The lifestyle that comes with owning Danielstown prevents Richard Naylor from understanding either Lois’s or Laurence’s perspective, leaving him stuck in an impossible past. Simultaneously, parting with an Anglo-Irish Big House does not guarantee an improved life, as exemplified by Hugo’s post-ownership struggles to find meaning.
For Bowen and for Anglo-Irish landowners in the early nineteenth century, Hugo Montmorency’s hapless position equates to the ultimate form of human terror. In a letter entitled “Why Do I Write?” Bowen describes the danger of shapelessness: “Shapelessness, lack of meaning, and being without direction is most people’s nightmare, once they begin to think.” Bowen assumes intelligent people strive for purpose and direction, and yearn for growth instead of remaining stationary. Making forward progress accumulating knowledge or an improved status defines success. The nightmare, shapelessness, characterizes Hugo, who literally drifts from place to place with his wife and who struggles internally to make meaning of his life. Hugo remains uncertain and lacks a role model, and his exertions prove fruitless. Thus, he holds back and unhappiness devours him as he waits: “He was not due to leave the ship in which they were all rushing out into time till ten years after the others, though it was to the others that he belonged.”

A continuing shrinking supply of money and his crippling wife ensnare him, compounding the problem of being alone. Stifled, paralyzed in doubt, and depressed, he cannot discern a feasible escape route. Though his shared background allows him to understand the Anglo-Irish, Hugo cannot continue the tradition by idealizing their lifestyle. Some scoff at or whisper about Hugo because he represents, more vividly than anyone else, what they could become: houseless and transient.

Without an Anglo-Irish Big House, but with an Anglo-Irish background and its accompanying expectations, Hugo epitomizes a threatened bird with one broken wing. He soars awkwardly and crashes, a step or two ahead of danger. Unfocused yearnings control him, and they materialize repeatedly in his either impossible or dysfunctional decisions. No role model guides Hugo; instead of progressing forward, he dawdles in uncertainty, replete with melancholy feelings and a lack of a stable identity. Toward the end of the novel, evidence of Hugo’s inability to endure mental disarray appears. When Francie, his wife, complains that her closest friend at Danielstown, Myra Naylor, is becoming unbearable, Hugo replies, “My dear Francie, life is too short for all of this,” as he thinks, “Though that was not the matter with life, really; life was too long.” The thought of continual transiency with Francie and instability depress him. At this point, with the couple’s impending departure, Hugo prepares to move forward to another destination, conscious of the fact that soon his wife will be his only form of company.

The contrast between what Hugo says and feels indicates the extent to which he mirrors the Anglo-Irish identity crisis that Jim Hansen discusses in study of the Irish Gothic tradition. Though he does not reference Elizabeth Bowen, Hansen uncovers the work that grounds Hugo as a Gothic figure in *The Last September*. Whereas Terry Eagleton identifies the political and socio-economic reasons for the Gothic genre’s flourishing in the nineteenth century, Hansen documents the effects of its success and the resulting influence on Irish modernism. Hansen argues “Unionist Gothic” Irish writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Charles Maturin rewrote the
Gothic, borrowing the mode from the English tradition and using it to criticize British colonialism. With the Anglo-Irish experiencing difficult circumstances, Edgeworth and Maturin projected the characteristics of distressed English heroines onto Irish men. In “Unionist Gothic” works, Anglo-Irish masculinity flounders, and as Anglo-Irish men imagine themselves becoming more feminine, terror seizes them. The resulting fear troubles the male protagonists, and often prompts feelings of paranoia and a rebellious urge toward violence. Isolated in Gothic settings, the Anglo-Irish male finds himself in a “Gothic double bind”—he is first the “feminine terrified,” or shaken by the thought of appearing more feminine, and then, upon overacting in defense of waning masculinity, a “masculine terrorist.” As a result, the conflicted subject displays aberrant thinking and atypical behavior.

From the beginning of the novel, emotional isolation and social estrangement engulf Hugo. According to Hansen, the Irish Gothic male suffers from a lack of domestic affection and is “figurally and literally dispossessed by the social logic” of his society. Hugo’s predicament facilitates his isolation; his break from Anglo-Irish Big House ownership and the burden of his marriage crush him. When the Montmorencys first arrive near the beginning of The Last September, Hugo is happy to return because Danielstown represents a comforting, stable spot from his past. So comfortable, in fact, that Hugo confesses to his wife his preference for Danielstown over his former Anglo-Irish Big House, Rockriver. Though Rockriver receives only a passing reference in the novel, its brief appearance and subsequent absence convey Hugo’s break from the Anglo-Irish expectations. When Hugo sells Rockriver, a potential Anglo-Irish family vanishes, while Hugo, the instigator or perhaps the rebel, dreamily imagines a Canadian escape. However, he finds no possibility for a Canadian relocation because of his wife’s poor health aside from leaving her, which he cannot do. His dependence upon Francie prevents him from going against her wishes. From the moment he enters the story, subservience to Francie defines him. His marriage is the overarching organizational structure that encloses him, preventing him from the post-Anglo-Irish potential of Lois and Laurence. Instead, he broods and behaves erratically: “But he, prey to constant self-reproach, was a born lover; conscious of cycles in him, springs and autumns of desire and disenchantment, and of the intermediate pausing seasons, bland or frigid, eaten at either margin by the past or coming shadows of change.” With only financial worries, he roams entangled with Francie from place to place, internally trapped.

Hugo’s reputation as a traveler and his young appearance heighten his misery. Often, he sidesteps criticism as others misperceive his aimlessness for youthful boldness that never recedes. For example, when she hears from Lady Naylor that Hugo is returning to Danielstown, Mrs. Pat Gegan exclaims, “It is the way the young ones do be a bit wild.” Others, equally as happy to see him, comment upon Hugo’s disposition. When traveling with Lois, the pair stops at Michael Connor’s farm. Lois asks Connor if he remembers Hugo, to which he replies, “Sure indeed I do! … You are looking grand, sir, fine and stout; I know you all these years and I
Connor’s haggard appearance, by contrast, shakes Hugo. As they are going home, he informs Lois: “That is not the Michael Connor I remember. He was a foxy man with a chin.” Older Danielstown people show signs of aging that bypass Hugo, an important detail that Bowen uses to emphasize that Hugo’s physical stasis. A parallel situation occurs later when Hugo walks with Marda. They stumble upon the home of Danny Regan, a man who once hunted with Hugo. Nearly blind, with a “white beard, helpless and eager,” Regan greets them, ecstatic at seeing Hugo. Regan compliments Hugo as a “lovely gentleman, as fine and upstanding as ever.” Connor’s and Regan’s declining appearances suggest the passing figures of Irish country life, but also Hugo’s everlasting period of youth. From their perspective, Hugo represents the limitless possibility of Anglo-Irish manhood. The irony arrests Hugo—repeatedly, his former Danielstown peers compliment his youthfulness while he suffers from internal disarray. These minor characters reaffirm Hugo’s stagnation, while—with their declining appearances—they also suggest the only realistic solution for his misery, death.

Attempts at Escape

Hugo acts as Francie’s caretaker, a crutch she wants more than needs. The ways that Mrs. Gegan, Mr. Connor, and Mr. Regan perceive Hugo—young, wild, and restless—contrast with his behavior in Francie’s presence. Around her, Hugo’s ambition withers, and he transforms, becoming “old-maidish.” From their initial appearance in the novel, she controls him: “They might well say she had taken the brilliant young man he’d once been and taught him to watch her, to nurse her, and to shake out her dresses.” In his presence, Francie coordinates his attention, demanding Hugo’s doting response and full affection. Hugo’s behavior toward Francie causes others to view her differently. Marda wonders at one point, “Isn’t she his mother—practically?” If Francie’s demands of Hugo characterize her motherliness at times, she also succumbs to fits of despair that require his attention. At one point, he fiercely works to wrap his wife’s knees; during another, he prescribes Francie something to help her sleep. In the most symbolic sequence, Lois accidentally stumbles upon Hugo brushing his wife’s hair in front the mirror. Francie observes Lois “standing still in alarm.” Their eyes meet and they exchange smiles while Hugo, lost in his labor, fails to observe the exchange. Lois’s hidden shock, Francie’s indulgent response, and Hugo’s complete obliviousness to their interaction capture Hugo at his most resigned moment as a personal attendant.

Away from Francie, Hugo tries and fails to impress Laurence, a young man belonging to the succeeding Anglo-Irish generation, with his dated conception of masculinity. Unlike Francie, who visits for the first time in twelve years, Hugo makes regular visits to Danielstown. Part of his reason for his repeated trips is its appeal as an escape, a place that occasionally reminds him of the comfort of past times. Thus, when Laurence mentions the possible destruction of Danielstown, it offends Hugo. Laurence, alienated by the house’s remoteness and its grotesque
parade of visitors, whines about his frustration to the point when Hugo tells him, “Why are you here at all if you don’t like it—as Hercules said? I was happy here at your age, I was full of the place. I asked nothing better.”46 When Laurence, ignoring Hugo’s opinion, replies that he would love to be present when Danielstown burns, Hugo responds, “Quite impossible; quite unthinkable. Why don’t you fish or something?”47 Fond memories of Hugo’s youth at Danielstown—a place to refresh or fish rather than complain or criticize—comfort him; when the young Laurence cannot imagine, much less reciprocate, those feelings, Hugo feels “more than ever his isolation, his homelessness.”48 Outdoor sports such as hunting, fishing, or tennis, refuges of masculinity for Hugo, serve no purpose for the next male generation. Laurence regrets his inability to be elsewhere, and as he scoffs at Hugo’s prescription for melancholia, Hugo’s terror of isolation grows in response to the generational divide. His fallback is Francie. Francie’s needs define him as caretaker, a tangible role, as the young Laurence pointedly finds his ideas of about outdoor sports ridiculous.

Finding neither friendship with Laurence, nor the possibility of becoming his mentor, Hugo attempts to experience Danielstown as a place of internal renewal. As he peers back into the past to avoid reality, Hugo cannot find solace because memories of his youthful athletic ability and his pre-Francie freedom smother his chance to experience renewal or growth. This failure emphasizes another discrepancy between the two male generations: the way they respond to disillusionment. From Laurence’s perspective, Hugo cannot voice what troubles him—Hugo’s “refuge was manly talk.”49 Hugo’s viewpoint about the appropriate response to internal struggles sharply differs: “Life was to him an affair of discomfort, but that discomfort should be made articulate seemed to him shocking.”50 Laurence voices his rebellious feelings whenever he likes, while tradition, respect, and fond memories of Danielstown quiet Hugo. What separates the two is what scholar Joanna Tapp Pierce identifies as Hugo’s deep connection to Danielstown.51 Describing Hugo’s feelings for Danielstown, Tapp explains, “[they] do not enrich his life or broaden his perspective. … Rather, they contract it, illustrating how feelings of place, when tied to feelings of possessiveness or covetousness, can be destructive.”52 Here, Tapp identifies Hugo’s complex desire regarding Danielstown as a comfortable place. The house and his experiences there were pleasant for him in the past, but now, surrounded by Francie and no one to relate to, the only peace that Danielstown offers Hugo is its rural environs where he can walk away and escape. Though the desperation that he exhibits during these sojourns is often completely irrational and counterproductive, Hugo attempts, and fails, to find a present purpose mining the fond memories of his past. Acting “manly” leaves him feeling completely isolated because of the decline in value of Danielstown as a distinct place for the next male generation. Hugo rejects Laurence’s pessimism, but he cannot successfully combat it. Refusing to see Danielstown as a place of imprisonment, Hugo retreats outdoors.
Going outside and away from the decaying house alone is Hugo’s last refuge. Without completely embracing Anglo-Irish tradition and without his own Anglo-Irish Big House, Hugo cannot relate to Richard Naylor, and lacking the freedom of being single and the feeling of separation from Anglo-Irish tradition, cannot interact with the cynical Laurence. Men important to his past, minor characters such as Michael Connor and Danny Regan, hastily decline and mark the coming of death. Yet, Danielstown’s landscape remains the closest thing to consistency for Hugo, though the skirmishes between the Irish rebels and the English soldiers threaten its stability. In one instance, Hugo’s anger about rural Ireland as a playground for war appears. While riding with Lois, he proclaims, “And so much bitterness over this empty country!” Here Hugo expresses more passion than any one moment with Francie. Another significant moment occurs when Hugo escapes to outside of the house to walk in the rain. Moments after he steps out, Francie, then Myra, and finally Richard all hasten to chase after him to make sure he has an umbrella. Frustrated, Hugo “pretended not to hear and walked on with a back view of positive hatred.”

This scene captures Hugo’s mounting frustration with the house’s claustrophobic environment, both the house as a structure and the whispers and secretive discussions it shelters and facilitates. His attempt at an outdoor walk is his method of escape. Though no longer a landowner, Hugo appreciates the rural Anglo-Irish countryside for the past memories it evokes that are unknown to the outsiders, the English soldiers and the Irish rebels.

The most important place for Hugo is Darra Valley, an isolated area where Hugo attempts to think about his life and fails because of human conflict. Once a setting where he experienced a tempestuous fight with Laura (Lois’s mother and Hugo’s former love) many years before, Darra Valley again serves as a backdrop for violence in the present. By the time Hugo walks with Marda and Lois to Darra Valley, he no longer recalls his fight with Laura. Here readers recognize something that Hugo cannot: the irony that the arguably most soothing place in Danielstown’s vicinity offers Hugo little but disruption and terror. Marda, Lois, and Hugo stumble upon the old abandoned mill, a symbol that harkens back to nineteenth-century Ireland before the twentieth-century English occupation. While Marda and Lois explore the dark recesses of the mill, Hugo smokes by the stream and considers both his troubled relationship with Francie and his growing infatuation with Marda. In his most emotionally honest moment in the novel, Hugo wonders, “It is like this … what I need is—?” Suddenly, a gunshot shatters his thought, and he abruptly assumes and then displays the role of a masculine protector. The injured Marda exits the mill with Lois and assures Hugo of their safety. Hugo remains unconvinced and then becomes angry because Marda, like the gunshot to his prior reflective thought, denies him the possibility of assuming a comfortable role. Hugo “violently” says, “Let me go past,” twice, attempting to display his sense of masculinity. Marda and Lois command him to stop, which leads to Hugo exploding: “You deserve to be shot!” Socially silenced, as Marda and Lois effectively delete him from the main action in the most violent encounter in the novel, Hugo’s only response is to explode uncontrollably and selfishly. Later, his “irresistible angle” resurfaces when Hugo returns alone to Darra Valley again, after Marda’s departure.

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A Masculine Nuisance

Hugo external attempts to assert his masculinity result in his poor relationships with the women in the novel. Hugo’s sense of masculinity is the one thing he imagines that he owns; the fear of losing it frightens him. As result, Hugo’s behavior becomes troubling when he senses his masculinity beginning to recede. John Foster notes that one distinguishing trait of Bowen’s depiction of the Anglo-Irish is their marked “obsession with the right behavior.” Hugo’s sensitivity to Anglo-Irish expectations while in the company of Anglo-Irish people overwhelms him. When the fearful Hugo suspects a challenge to his masculinity, he overreacts in an aggressive manner, embodying the “Gothic double bind.” The actions resulting from Hugo’s “masculine anxiety” sever his connections with multiple women in The Last September. The harder that Hugo tries to follow masculine behavior patterns approved by prior generations, the more treacherous he crashes. With Francie, he maintains a semi-functional, dependent relationship primarily because he adheres to her commands or commiserates with her frustration. At Danielstown, his former relationship with Laura, and her inexplicable presence, still thrives in the minds of others. Furthermore, when he tries to act masculine in the presence of Lois and Marda, he fails as they each perceive his behavior as aberrant.

Hugo’s treatment of Laura remains one of The Last September’s pressing mysteries. Narrative references to Laura’s rages, obscene drawings, and forgotten suicidal wishes point to her strong resistance to a potentially oppressive life with Hugo. Though she does not appear alive in The Last September, the lingering aftereffects of her presence do two things. It elevates the sense of shadowy darkness that enshrouds Danielstown and informs Hugo’s relationships with other women in the novel. The stormy relationship between Hugo and Laura ended sourly. Hugo’s recollection of Laura remains vague, though Laurence knows more of their story. After leaving Hugo and Danielstown, Laura married Mr. Farquar, the “rudest man in Ulster … with a disagreeably fresh complexion and an eye like a horse.” More importantly, though, she abandoned the Anglo-Irish lifestyle enraged, particularly by Hugo and Richard; then married and died, “without giving anyone notice of her intention.” Laura’s passion contrasts with the inertness of Hugo’s wife, Francie, and Laura’s relics remain at Danielstown. Trunks full of her rotting clothes fester in the attics. She leaves behind a suicidal wish for herself and Hugo at Darra Valley and “an insulting drawing of somebody, probably Hugo,” which Lois finds. In one scene, when Mrs. Carey accuses Hugo of “avoiding things,” she also levels a more particular indictment: “Look how he didn’t marry Laura.” Immediately, though, she regrets the statement, characterizing it as “ridiculous,” and possibly exaggerated. However, Laura’s anger toward Hugo and Richard, coupled with her abrupt exit and death, suggests her urgent denial of the Anglo-Irish lifestyle. Hugo’s direct influence upon Laura’s life and death remains unclear,
but his interactions with Lois and Marda make his mysterious past with Laura seems all the more treacherous.

For Lois, Hugo provides an “agreeable matter for introspection,” a constant presence because their close proximity. Moreover, he appears complicated in a way that the young soldiers that she meets are not. When the Montmorencys first arrive, she realizes that Hugo would not attempt to understand her. This appearance of rejection, in turn, makes Lois more curious about him and him more dangerous to her. She is already nervous about Hugo because of his long ago relationship with her mother and because of her recent interest in men. At the first family dinner with the Montmorencys, Lois reflects that her vision of Hugo from childhood contrasts Hugo’s present look: “intelligent, dulled, [and with] a sub-acid smile.” Moments later, she becomes self-conscious during a heated discussion about guns with Richard Naylor not because of the issue so much as what she perceives as Hugo’s penetrating glance aimed directly at her. Her urge to argue and draw attention to herself swiftly increases as she becomes more self-conscious. Finally, when she looks back toward Hugo, he glances elsewhere with what she imagines as the “most scornful repudiation.” Her perception of Hugo’s judgment troubles Lois, but it is false. The narrator informs readers that Hugo’s prior gaze, rather than glance, analyzed Lois and predicted her early marriage. Lois understands this false look of disapproval as threatening, and yet he becomes alluring for Lois, temporarily complicating her vague feelings about Gerald.

Because of his melancholy temperament and erratic decisions, Hugo exists throughout the novel as an emotional threat to Lois. With his wild mood swings, Hugo sometimes behaves like the young Lois. Lois presses him for information about her mother’s thoughts about being young and in love, to which he responds, “I don’t suppose she had made up her mind,” a statement in direct conflict with Mrs. Carey’s later jab at Hugo’s lack of commitment. Hugo’s insight here, a rare reference to Laura, suggests a similarity between mother and daughter, as if Laura’s ghost lives through Lois. This scene captures the awkwardness of Lois and Hugo’s relationship, which appears most vividly during their journey throughout the county together. Lois is uncertain about love and how to respond to her suitors, which Hugo suspects. When Hugo mentions a hypothetical marriage with Laura, Lois simultaneously compliments and makes a pass at him by acknowledging his potential to be a better father than her own father. This repels Hugo, and he changes the subject. In bringing Laura into the conversation, Lois activates Hugo’s desire to exit. Lois, though, remains infatuated with Hugo until her friend Viola’s blunter reprimand: “Don’t talk of yourself with that elderly man.” This nixes her romantic interest in Hugo, but as a deviant from the Anglo-Irish, Hugo also represents a dark warning for Lois about the need to escape Ireland and Anglo-Irish lifestyle. His indecisiveness, and the associated consequences, can easily become her own. With the help of Viola’s criticism and her observations, Lois awakens to the potential danger before it is too late. Describing Lois’s departure before the burning of Danielstown, Derek Hand notes that Lois has no guarantee for life improvement.
Leaving Ireland “might also signal a future of dislocation from home and family, with her condemned to be a homeless wanderer rather than be[ing] in a single place.” For Lois, Hugo’s inability to find conviction, certainty, and clarity amidst “conscious cycles … springs and autumns of desire and disenchantment” poses a threat.

If Hugo briefly tempts Lois romantically and serves as a poor role model, he more aggressively inconveniences Marda Norton. Older and more confident than Lois, Marda Norton swoops into Danielstown, saddled with the baggage of prior bad experiences and knowledge of her impending marriage to an Englishman. Her approaching marriage compounds her already inferior status and whimsical behavior. Hugo finds her immediately alluring: “His look, coming wavering round his interruption, had, in regard to herself, a peculiar intensity. She was real to him as a woman.”

This infatuation never dissolves. Hugo preys upon Marda during walks, finding her a welcome diversion from his wife. Eventually, Marda manages to repel Hugo, leaving him emotionally wrecked once again. The most pivotal scene detailing the risk that Hugo presents for Marda occurs during her conversation with Myra Naylor after getting shot at the mill at Darra Valley. Marda says, “We must be thankful that nothing worse has happened this time,” while both she and Myra think immediately about Hugo, both sure that the other is not thinking about him. Both women privately know the danger accompanying Hugo’s plight as a married suitor, and each remains quiet because of Anglo-Irish tradition. At Danielstown, Hugo’s awkward advances present Marda primary test. Even after she leaves, he wants to communicate again via a letter from his wife. Hugo’s spirit declines once he realizes there is no hope in maintaining the connection and that an affair with Marda is impossible.

In borrowing from the Gothic mode, Elizabeth Bowen asks readers to consider the effects of the English occupation on the Irish people and to uncomfortably experience the final stages of Anglo-Irish decline. Bowen understood that the archaic lifestyle at Danielstown had to end, paving the way for an evolution in Irish culture. In her use of a setting that harkens back to Ireland’s nineteenth-century past and allusions to otherworldly imagery such as ghosts, shadows, and Satan, Bowen insists on change by linking the past with regression or decay. She is hopeful for a future generation, despite the ambiguity surrounding fates of the young characters, Lois and Laurence. Their youthfulness suggests potential, though it could easily, if mismanaged, develop into something horrific like Hugo Montmorency. Drawing from prior Irish Gothic writers, Bowen reimagines the brooding Hugo as a remnant of the nineteenth-century Irish Gothic. He is too old and too young; too feminine and too masculine; too cynical and too romantic; too tied to past experiences and too flighty; too perceptive and too oblivious; too in favor of travel and too captivated by the idea of place. A lost man, Hugo lingers beyond the novel, and serves as a reminder of the potential danger of locking oneself in the past amidst abrupt historical and generational change.
References


3 For additional examples, see Annibal Montorio in Charles Robert Maturin’s The Fatal Revenge (1807) or Jonathan Harker in Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897). For extensive commentary, see Jim Hansen’s Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York P, 2009).

Of these types of characters, Hansen notes, “In the end, in fact, many of the male characters in the Irish Gothic novel find themselves cut off not only from the public sphere, but also from history itself” (22).


5 Ibid., 19.


7 Ellman, 20.


10 Elizabeth Bowen. Pictures and Conversations. (New York: Knopf, 1975), 62. Here, Bowen projects a form of herself as a young artist. She also suggests the importance other writers: “Origins. My own: Anglo-Ireland and its peculiarities. The infiltration—I believe?—of at least some of these peculiarities into my books. This documented by Jonah Barrington’s memoirs, Le Fanu and Edgeworth novels, and others” (62). The identification of the first three suggests a more immediate debt. For a concise list of the other artistic influences drawn from Bowen’s other work, see Hermione Lee. Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation. (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1981), 19.


13 Ibid., 294-295.


16 Ibid, 353; 355.


18 Lee, 48.

19 Ibid., 48.


21 Ellman, 51.


26 Ibid., 194.

29 Ibid., 271.
30 Hansen, 5.
31 Ibid., 6.
32 Ibid., 12.
33 Ibid., 23.
34 Ibid., 119.
36 Ibid., 89.
37 Ibid., 91.
38 Ibid., 123.
39 Ibid., 123.
40 Ibid., 86.
41 Ibid., 20.
42 Ibid., 110.
43 Ibid., 35.

44 Ibid., 151.


46 Ibid., 57.

47 Ibid., 58.

48 Ibid., 58.

49 Ibid., 58.

50 Ibid., 58.


52 Ibid., 61.

53 Bowen, The Last September, 86.

54 Ibid., 149.

55 Ibid., 183.

56 Ibid., 183-4.

57 Ibid., 184.

58 Ibid., 257.

59 Ibid., 257.


61 Hansen, 6.

62 Bowen, The Last September, 154.

63 Ibid., 21.

64 Ibid., 154.
65 Ibid., 175.

66 Ibid., 192.

67 Ibid., 166.

68 Ibid., 166. Just before this, Myra Naylor, says, “Of course one hates to say it, but one does know what Hugo is...” This is another situation when a character narrowly avoids sharing something integral about Hugo. A gunshot thwarts Hugo’s chance to express his thoughts and social convention silences Myra Naylor’s opinion, though her body language enables Mrs. Carey to understand Hugo in way that readers can only speculate about.

69 Ibid., 12.

70 Ibid., 6.

71 Ibid., 33.

72 Ibid., 33.

73 Ibid., 88.

74 Ibid., 88.

75 Ibid., 97.


79 Ibid., 194.

80 Ibid., 248-9.
Creative Writing Essay

Does Jack ‘Masterly’ Speak?

(The said and unsaid story of Jack)

Dibkar Pal

University of Calcutta, India

Abstract

The proverb goes, Jack of all trades, master of none. Everybody laughs at Jack for his superficial knowledge but laughs for John (say) for his mastery. But today's master becomes a novice tomorrow due to fast advancement of knowledge and technology. Modern age is the age of interdisciplinary approach viz., Biophysics, Biochemistry, Psychophysiology, etc. As such present day master must have knowledge in different subjects. Expertise in one discipline renders him a marginal player. So today's master is Jack but not John. Thus we have pleaded for Jack the present day master but not John as others do. In some culture the phrase, “Jack of all trades” signifies superficial knowledge being Jack “master of none”. But in some societies the phrase has different resonance, where "Jack of all trades" is generally considered a very positive trait and it is assumed that a Jack of all trades is someone who has, in fact, mastered those trades.

Keywords: Jack, John, novice, master, complex expert, simplex expert
An empty vessel sounds much. Jack sounds much, since Jack is empty. Jack wants to speak whatever he thinks. He wants to communicate whatever he sees. Jack always wants to remain empty. He has a ‘vomiting’ character. He absorbs nothing. He is an extrovert. Thus, he vomits everything. So he has no disease. As such, Jack is immortal. So, Jacks are found in all ages. Thus, their very existence is observed through generations. On the other hand, John sees everything, hears much, bears more than that, but speaks nothing. He is an introvert. They say he has a reserve personality. Perhaps this is the cause of his premature death. John is vigilant. He looks before he leaps. But Jack leaps everywhere. He leaps first without any fear or hesitation where John does not. So he falls down and breaks his crown. Jack is restless. He pays no attention to a thing for a long period of time, for he has commitment elsewhere. In short, Jack is a first-class fool having ‘zero’ sense of hard reality. He seldom considers the fact that money and fame are the first and foremost crying needs of a successful individual for long-cherished recognition.

Jack has subjects but John has object. For, the fact is that John has definite object. He takes appropriate measure to realize his ambition. As a consequence, he achieves his desired goal at ease and becomes successful in every sphere of life. His life is pre-calculated. As such he faces no problem from cradle to grave. His life is a life of no problem. So they humorously remark that John has no problem and that it itself is his problem. Conversely, Jack is interested in all the numerous subjects of the whole universe. He has a classical belief that all subjects belong to knowledge which is being ceaselessly emitted from a single source. So, he loiters in every field, viz., grass-field, paddy-field, new field, ‘Sheffield’, etc., and tries to be ‘J. C. Nesfield’, the great grammarian, in vain. He fails successfully and his successful failure chases him from one field to another to welcome success.

Jack nurtures an optimistic philosophy in his mind. He argues whenever an individual tries for something, there are two possibilities. Either he may fail or he may fail to fail. An individual should simply try for the latter one. Experienced John always fails to fail. But innocent Jack is so unfortunate that he always fails. Seldom has he failed to fail. So, misfortune dogs Jack wherever he goes. Yet he is an optimist. It seems he is an autonomous body who is again a self-encouraging personality as well.

Jack is ill-famed for his superficial knowledge. But this ill-fated fellow has a general and genuine inquisitiveness. His discontentment pushes him from his house to the outer world. He sees many unknown things there, gathers various experiences and wonders and cannot help speaking. He loves everybody but remains unloved. Incidentally Jack has come to know that, ‘time is short, but art is long’. He does not believe in rebirth because he is neither learned nor wise. So he remains un-illuminated by the light of this imaginative hypothesis. So, he wants to learn everything in this life with the sincere intention to be master of all trades. But a man cannot be master of all trades within the short tenure of a single birth. In other
words, one cannot learn the whole part of knowledge because the fountain of knowledge is never closed.

As a matter of fact, Jack has an intuitive power to grasp any subject very easily. This very intuitive power encourages him to wander in different fields restlessly and is singularly liable to render him the so-called Jack of all trades. It is alleged that Jack has no depth of knowledge on any particular subject. It is five hundred percent correct. But it does not mean that he lacks in quality to be a master. A good student does not write different thing. But he writes differently. Jack belongs to that different category.

One can tolerate the heat of sun-rays, but one cannot bear when a convex lens concentrates the same. Jack’s intellect is scattered and if that scattered talent can somehow be concentrated then Jack can reach in any field in its deepest level with widest span. Thus Jack becomes John. He can be a John in any field for his diversified inquisitiveness that rendered him Jack. So he cannot conclude whether to him these characteristics are a curse or a blessing or both simultaneously.

However Jack has a wide spectrum of knowledge. His knowledge is wider than it is deep. This is due to the pressure to learn everything within the short life-span. Had he not this pressure, this versatile fellow would have been master on different fields like John whose knowledge is narrower having much depth in any particular field only. Thus John could not be versatile. For his basic instinct is single-minded with strong determination to succeed. He is a realist. He is sincerely professional. But Jack is an amateur. Jack is romantic. He is a diverted genius. Somebody crowns him as a misguided missile. He has an inborn capacity to learn anything and earn from any field which John lacks in. Thus Jack can be John but John can never be Jack.

Jack’s life may be compared to a river. A river becomes wider, and looses depth, when it reaches the sea, the ultimatum of its inevitable destiny. Jack believes that this is his first and last birth. As such he tries to learn everything in haste. It seems he dwells on the threshold of glamour and wisdom. Unfortunately, his whole-hearted achievements throughout his entire life remain unevaluated. Rather neither this world praises for his good effort nobody appreciates his innocent sentiment. On the contrary, conspiracy renders him a universal laughing stock. For this act of the society he is badly criticized and thereby sadly hurt.

Now, it seems clear if Jack’s son becomes master Jack becomes happier more than his son thinking that his son will enjoy a secured life at least and thereby will be honored and respected everywhere. But Jack mourns when he comes to know that his son has been identified as another unfortunate Jack, just like him. Because the grey-haired Jack knows that every ‘Jack’ dies unfed, unwept, unsung, unknown. So he laments over the failure of his son out of fear. Thus father Jack’s mourning is universal like a father of the hard reality.
This world is of John by John for John. So John dominates in every sphere of life. He is omnipresent like God. As such they say John is God-father. Who is not a Jack? He who knows one thing is John. He who knows more than one thing is a Jack. He who knows many things is a better Jack. He who knows everything is the best Jack. In school a student is taught many subjects for full blooming. A student is never encouraged to read one subject only. Because all subjects have definite influence to build up the career of a student. So the society paves the way to be a Jack. But that very society praises John and laughs at Jack. This tricky behavior of the society is quite strange. Shrewd John is quite aware of it. But innocent Jack cannot understand it. So he follows the advice of the education system and becomes valueless.

Political leaders are better than best Jack. A political leader is a piece of a rare species. For he can deliver extempore a speech on any subject with the deepest and the latest knowledge in such a way that even the so-called ‘John’ will be afraid and astonished simultaneously because a leader is heard to speak on quantum mechanics in the morning and on quality control in the evening. So what is the real identity of a politician? Is he a Jack? Or is he a John? Or is he a ‘cocktail’ of both?

In any educational institution rivalry and hatred are observed among different departments. One department says that all other departments except itself, are undeveloped hence inferior to it. Another department recognizes the other disciplines as merely developing. The third school of thought laughs at the other departments for being underdeveloped like third world countries. Each department behaves like a fascist. So there is little interdepartmental communication. But Jack pays equal respect to every field. But John is partial. He likes not to divert his attention. He belongs to any department and pleads on behalf of the same only. But Jack beats everybody’s drum. He is a link man. Thus Jack is democratic, while John is a dictator.

To Jack, all disciplines are equivalent from the point of view of knowledge. The question is: who is greater, a scientist or a poet? It is quite absurd. Jack believes that both of them are engaged in search of truth. Thus Jack is the practitioner of peace whereas John creates hoo-ha. Society for its own need produces John but never Jack. Everywhere we observe the infrastructure for the birth and growth of John only. But there is no such opportunity for Jack from his cradle to grave. In fact society is just like a machine for manufacturing John only. Every production has its by-product. Jack is that very by-product. But we observe that Jacks are many and Johns are numbered. It causes anger and anxiousness of the society, since John is wanted and Jack is unwanted. To civilization, parasite is the real identity of Jack that grows in abundance. For, ill weeds grow apace. Thus he is simply neglected. But Jack cares not for invitation of the society for its birth and rise. He believes that his rise and downfall does not depend on anybody’s will. He is so undaunted. He appears silently and disappears quite in unaware. He knows that in this world everything is uncertain except death which is only sure and certain. In fact arrival and departure i.e. birth and death of an individual are certain, but time of their occurrence is quite uncertain. Nobody knows when
a man will be born. Similarly, death is quite unpredictable. Thus, certainty is controlled by uncertainty. Conversely, uncertainty is also controlled by certainty.

John may be compared with the wife and Jack with a lover. Wife gets recognition. But a lover is ignored. Wife is just like the rose of a garden that grows with the tender touch of the affectionate gardener. A lover is just like a flower of an un-trodden hill of far-off land. No gardener looks after it. It experiences heat and hailstorm. Yet it rises high alone. Nature is its real mother. Thus it grows, blossoms and is withered away silently, unnoticed. The arrival and departure i.e. the chronicle of life of a lover remains unknown to the society. But the memories of the lost lover render an individual melancholy, indifferent and nostalgic.


Jack’s approach is quite exceptional. John has bartered his soul away to the society for his success by any means. Thus once born free John now everywhere he is in chain. But Jack has no such binding. He has no obligation to please anybody except himself. Those who gamble with money are gamblers and those who gamble with life are great gambler. Jack belongs to the second category.

Now, the question arises: who is an expert? They say, an expert is one who complicates simple things. Another school of thought defines; an expert is one who simplifies complex things. The former one may be called ‘complex expert’ and the later one as ‘simple expert’. Then who is a novice? We may conclude, a novice is one who can neither complicate nor can he simplify anything. The complex expert complicates anything to enjoy sadistic pleasure from the sufferings of people around him caused by complication created by him. He as well as everybody knows that only he can remove the complicity and thereby simplify the complex situation. He is so genius that he knows the solutions of any complex situation created or contributed by him or anybody. He is quite active as well as alert to maintain his demand of his expertise knowledge alive always. He does not play with straight bat. But straight batting is liked by the simple expert. Simple expert is so callous and helpless that they become perplexed whenever situation is strange or does not favor them. Simple expert is optimist and simple by nature. They hate complexity and keep safe distance from the complexity of life and shrewd genius like complex expert. But life is not a bed of roses.

Rather life appears with various problems, known or unknown, with greater dimension and magnitude as well. As such the demand of complex expert is ever increasing. In some culture the phrase, “Jack of all trades” signifies superficial knowledge being Jack “master of none”. But in some society the phrase has different resonance, where "Jack of all trades" is
generally considered a very positive trait and it is assumed that a Jack of all trades is someone who has, in fact, mastered those trades.

John is famous for his mastery. He is an expert. But today’s expert becomes a novice tomorrow due to fast advancement of technology. Thus the age of John seems to be no more. Those days of John are gone. Today’s John must have knowledge on various fields. So, today’s master is Jack but not John because present age is the age of interdisciplinary approach. And Jack believes in mastery of multiple disciplines or interdisciplinary as a theory. So, we find different mixed fields, viz., Bio-physics, Bio-chemistry, Socio-economics, Psycho-somatics, etc. Now a student of Bio-physics must know both biology and physics. Knowledge on any single subject cannot crown him in this compound field. With partial knowledge on either discipline, he will be a marginal player. Half and incomplete knowledge will produce half-genius who is dangerous more than a non-genius.
No Face No Title: A Dramatic Piece with No Genre

Nizar Zouidi

University of Mannouba, Tunisia

Dramatis non-personae

Young man

Young woman

Masked people without gender

Text:

Scene one: (darkness. A spot of light crosses the audience to discover a young man. The man steps onstage. )

Young man: home sweet home (light fills the stage. Discovered is an empty room. No furniture. The wall facing the audience is dark (suitable for projection). I hate faces. I see nothing but faces all the day long. Yeah, it’s right. An Englishman’s home is his castle. (darkness pervades again. Project the photos of British castles 15 minutes. Light. A young woman is discovered where the man disappeared)

Young woman: home sweet home. What should I do to feel better? Empty. Empty. (enter masked people with boxes on them hiding their chests and waists carrying different pieces of furniture. The masks are white. No special features are drawn on them. Just some holes for the eyes.) (Pointing to a corner in the house) yes put the sofa here. (exit all but the young woman)Yes now I feel better. I can sit on my sofa and watch the news. (darkness prevails. Music of the news.)

A voice: It’s breaking news. (Darkness. A short porn scene is projected 4 minutes. Light the man is discovered)
**Young man:** breaking indeed. I can’t do anything. I am alone. My heart is breaking. Faces and voices are not that bad after all. When was the last time I had sex? I can’t remember. Was it last night? It wasn’t real sex or was it real? (black out)

**Scene two:** (young woman is discovered using a computer)

**Young woman:** do you really like my smile … my boobs yes they are big. Do you want to see them? … ok naughty boy. (removes her shirt) … What will you do with them. Oh yeah, you make me wet. (Darkness prevails. There is music and undistinguishable words. Clamor. There is nothing distinguishable. (Light fills the stage)

Voice of the young man: maybe the solution is to open that door. Yeah, open it and go meet the people and talk to them. (A short silent film is projected 5 minutes. Young man is featured in the film trying to talk to every person that passes by but seems not to find his voice film ends light fills the stage. Young woman is discovered chasing a masked person)

**Young woman:** I am.. my name… you asked not about my name. Speak. Ask me. I charge thee speak.

(darkness prevails. Shots from kaspar (the cartoon) light young man is discovered reading a book)

**Young man:** words words words that’s what we need. Hamlet had lots of words. A ghost from the past. All we need is to speak to the past. In a book the past may speak. I will fill my heart with precious memories. They will protect me. The world is falling apart. It was a better place sometime. Dad and mom used to love each other like Romeo and Juliet. Brave new world… brave new world. Thou makest cowards of us all. We do not talk to each other. People talk in books only. Sometimes they talk on T.V. They talk and talk and talk and give us no chance to tell them anything. I know everything about everyone of them. I mean everything the press tells me. (darkness prevails long time. The stage is discovered. The room looks like an antique shop young woman is discovered reading a beauty magazine).

**Scene three**

Young woman (throwing the magazine that flies to hit a copy of the Monalisa) fake fake fake … (looking at the painting) you too are fake. Idol, you do not speak (her eyes travel through
the room that is filled with statues) You too are dumb. And you and you. Fake Fake. Illusion I charge thee speak. I turned myself to a stupid idolater in search of company. Oh, cursed stones. You are fake, fake, fake. (Black out)

**Alternative scene three**

Light fills the room. Young man is discovered in meditation posture.

**Young man:** Thus ridding myself of all the earthly matters, my soul shall fly freely into the infinite space. I do not need all that belongs to the world of materialism. I am free, infinite, and ethereal. What need have I of flesh? I am fortified, chaste, and impenetrable. (Darkness)

(black out)

**A Bastard Scene**

(many men and women with smiling masks on their faces dancing together.)

A man and a woman sit on a table facing the audience.

**Young woman:** I feel as if you were the first one to speak to me. Maybe you are.

**Young man:** me too. I hate silence it is hideous.

Young woman: ok then speak.

**Young man:** what should I say?

**Young woman:** anything just does not sit like this.

**Young man:** What should I say?

**Young woman:** Anything.

**Young man:** Anything? Anything is not easy to say. The mask your mask was to about fall. Mine too was … actually …This is not something one can say to a woman, is it?

(They start to laugh. Darkness luckily, the mask does not fall even as they laugh is projected one letter after the other. Black out)

**Finis**