

Blurred Lines: Grey Zone Politics in William Shakespeare's *The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

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Abstract

Sitting on the throne of Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet is undeniably ahead of its time. It presents the readers with historicised records of political endeavours in Denmark, which above all other things meant the world to Hamlet. Without it, he is reduced to shambles. Within the Danish court, he manoeuvres prisoned in a discourse that he created exploiting a religious construction: purgatory. For a thought-provoking construction like purgatory, in which unseen characters with power dwell, new stages are erected. For these, numerous plays are rewritten. Instead of religion as a commodity traded for the sole purpose to maintain the grip on power, contemporary power dynamics make use of new privileged constructions. With a high rate of similarity, currently, there are new Hamlets. Each suggests that the world would be corrupt without them. Unable to resist the rain of disinformation, their followers are purged and fed with new knowledge and truth to join the cause. Taking all these under the spotlight, this study aims to offer an upside-down perspective on power relations in Hamlet suggesting parallels between the historicized world of Denmark and the contemporary landscape of Anglo-American power dynamics. Just as Hamlet manipulated the privileged term of purgatory reinforced by the story of the ghost to further his own agenda within the Danish court, leaders of these countries or the power behind them have also discovered similar methods to sway opinions and control outcomes in their favour. In a world where new Hamlets continue to emerge, readers are prompted to question the intricate tapestry of power relations, its construction, and its impact on individuals and societies within the Anglo-American context.

Keywords: Hamlet, Grey Zone Politics, Anglo-American Policies, Propaganda

1. A Concept of Purgatorial Discourse

*A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and
eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.*

(Hamlet, IV, iii, 25-26)

The inspiration for this study stems from the thought-provoking exploration of purgatory in Stephen Greenblatt's (2013) work, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, which adds a new layer of meaning to the term. By fusing the concept of purgatory with the realm of politics and manipulation, the writer aims to shed light on a fresh perspective that may initially seem perplexing. Traditionally associated with religious connotations, the term purgatory carries a weighty significance in both the realms of *Hamlet* and contemporary society. It serves as a metaphorical barrier between heaven and hell, signifying a place of uncertainty and transition. In his book, Greenblatt reveals meticulously researched details of a religious practice once adopted by different churches. Although this practice seems to have transformed since antiquity, it remained a matter of debate during Shakespeare's time. Yet, it is instrumental in exploring and understanding the rivalry between two major sects of Christianity. During those times, while Catholics were eager to rely on "the church's spiritual power to remit punishment due to sin", Protestants pursued a belief that salvation could only be achieved by purification through grace (Greenblatt, 2013, p. 261). A conclusion that Greenblatt's book might offer could answer the question of how these religious sects had exploited their subjects through the practices for the dead that their churches prescribed for years. Nevertheless, the majority of the book is dedicated to the meanings embedded in the legendary ghost. His fascination with the ghost of Hamlet's father urges Greenblatt to look for the traces of ghosts and their meanings in history. What is more, he clarifies that "My goal was not to understand the theology behind the ghost; still less, to determine whether it was "Catholic" or "Protestant." (p. 4). Rather than what, he was much more interested in why and how. Trying to do so, just as Greenblatt's quest for understanding the reasons behind why Shakespeare utilized such a vivid character, Hamlet's quest for seeking answers to his father's controversial death is guided by a supernatural being.

In the case of a politician like Hamlet, strategically positioning oneself in the purgatorial realm can be seen as a calculated move to maintain a safe and advantageous

position. After all, the place a politician stands holds certain qualities and implications. However, choosing sides without explicitly committing to a particular stance reflects the inherent nature of grey zone politics. Hamlet's ability to navigate power dynamics without openly exposing his true intentions solidifies his place in history as a master strategist. It serves as a testament to his cunning and foresight in wielding power while keeping his true motivations hidden via the stories of the ghost.

The ghost bears traces of a hidden message from the socio-cultural fabric of Renaissance society. Greenblatt (2013) asserts that "Hamlet immeasurably intensifies a sense of the weirdness of the theatre, its proximity to certain experiences that had been organized and exploited by religious institutions and rituals" (p. 253). Dangerous and provocative as it may seem, he unravels a topic most could not readily dare to question. He tries to explain the complexity of how perilous his attempt to topple the conventional interpretations of what a ghost is. He recounts an encounter he had when he was in Berlin. The person he met was an Islamicist maintaining the hardships of being a rational thinker and speaker because of all the definitions imposed on individuals. Greenblatt (2013) agrees but also adds that "I found myself thinking, and not for the first time, how slyly amusing and acute Plato was in the *Ion* in pointing to the tension between the work of the rational philosopher and the work of the rhapsode or, let us say, the literary critic" (p. 5). As he claims, creating meanings anew requires dismantling layers of timeless knowledge structured and coded into the genes of critics. Then, re-evaluating dissected parts with new bases adds unfamiliar perspectives to the critic's mind. After all, knowledge is the fruit of thought. However, thought is chained by the thinker's identity. Definitions are always restrained. To quote Hamlet, "there is nothing either good / or bad but thinking makes it so" (II, ii, 239-240).

Thoughts governed and shaped through the filter of Catholicism define purgatory as an interim destination where sins are purged away. The dead must be cleansed of the sins that weren't remitted before entering the realm of the afterlife. Purified souls step into heaven to reach an exalted joy upon a face-to-face meeting with God. Gerald O'Collins (2008), in his *Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction* claims that "With death, the history of each person assumes its complete, irreversible character, and is 'judged' by God in what came to be called the particular judgement" (p. 66). As in O'Collins' portrayal of the circular journey of each person, histories belong to the realm of the living. Its pages are divinely sealed upon death. In

the afterlife, the one and only judge is God. His particular judgement can only be delivered by Him. On the other hand, according to Protestants, catholic clergy seems to have swindled mourning followers of their sect by selling false hope claiming that they have the power to affect the flow of events that are going to take place in the afterlife. O'Collins (2008) continues in regard to this claim that "the official church granted 'indulgences', or remissions of punishment in purgatory, for sinners who had repented of their sins but had died without making full satisfaction for the harm they had caused" (p. 37). The money that was gathered via the trade of indulgences helped, with the order of the Pope, pay the building expenses of the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Graham Tomlin (2004), in *the Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, identifies the term indulgence as "certificates issued by the church which remitted punishments imposed as part of the penitential system" (p. 43). Moreover, he adds that "indulgences had begun to be applied not only to the church's 'temporal' punishments but to the punishments to be endured in purgatory as well" (p. 43). Foucault (1997), too, comments on the Church's pastoral power. He witnesses a change in their objectives. He criticizes that "It was a question no longer of leading people to their salvation in the next world but, rather, ensuring it in this world. And in this context, the word "salvation" takes on different meanings" (p. 334). Using an instrument of trade and profit in matters beyond human touch was, for some, a shock. Martin Luther opposed the idea and found himself among the pioneers of Protestantism. Indulgences left him outraged and furious. Much to people's regret, the ritual endured for quite some time. The attention that it received from Greenblatt proves it to be an issue worth reconsidering because power invests heavily in lucrative businesses.

The concept of *purgatory*, from here on, could be taken as a new metaphor for global politics, particularly among major powers like the U.S.A., Russia or China. Although a solid meaning for the term itself is still unavailable in dealing with issues in international relations, Lyle J. Morris et al. (2019) propose eight crucial characteristics of grey zone activities which could be categorized under "the threshold for a military response, gradual unfolding, lack of attributability, extensive legal and political justifications, avoidance of vital or existential threats, coercive leverage through escalation risk, emphasis on nonmilitary tools, and targeting specific vulnerabilities" (pp. 8-11). The propositions clarify that the grey zone is a commonly visited place by powers to run covert operations so as to destabilize an opponent. Leaving armed and open conflict as the last resort, these operations are tailored for specific

purposes. Either by a state figure or by anyone with influence on society, the image of the rival centre of power is repeatedly attacked. Therefore, the grey zone could be deemed as a cauldron specifically forged for power politics. Hamlet manoeuvres within his 'grey zone' solely to regain what he reckons has been stolen from him most villainously. Thus, this concept of purgatory as a grey zone can undoubtedly be applied to modern-day world politics. In this area, superpowers often, without immediately resorting to armed conflict just like in the monarchies of Shakespeare, negotiate or broker deals to secure their gains. Highly confidential strategies and tactics are employed to gain the upper hand. By doing so, while dealing with even two opposing states, the potential damage is minimized as the grey zone acts as a buffer.

In short, following the footsteps of Greenblatt, the focus will be on how Anglo-American policies and Hamlet's tactics draw a parallel. Catholic Church purifies sinners in purgatory reaching from the realm of living to grant them a safe passage to paradise despite furious opposition by the Protestants. The conflict for power between the two left ill-informed followers segregated and abused as well. Hamlet's actions resemble the conflict between the Churches. He too utilizes a character from purgatory to persuade the readers that a Denmark without a new Hamlet would be corrupt. He spreads false consciousness through his covert ops. He sells salvation. Hamlet's discourse becomes his ideology. As Slavoj Žižek (2019) asserts in his *Sublime Object of Ideology* that "The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive naiveté: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it" (p. 24). The theory behind ideologies is generally perfectly organized. However, its implications might suggest the opposite. Since the dawn of the twentieth century, those with political power in Anglo-American states have implemented an updated version of the Hamlet-esque political manoeuvring. With the advent of the two world wars and the subsequent Cold War period, the use of power politics and the associated propaganda tools has risen dramatically; the goal of these tools has often been to entrap people into a duality of beliefs and thought processes just like in *Hamlet*. Despite this, the ultimate power tends to remain in the grey area, with those in the upper levels of power controlling the narrative to their own advantage. It is this ability to remain in the shadows yet still have a deep influence on the actions of the masses that has allowed political power to remain in the same hands for centuries.

1.1. Hamlet-esque Manoeuvrings in Grey Zones

Power does not choose sides. It creates all. It does not jeopardize its own existence by simply investing in only one side. In addition to creating and sustaining systems, it also transforms them. It is the centre where the decisions on the definitions of acceptable behaviour, the values that society should nourish, and most importantly who gets to benefit from the existing system are made. As Jonathan Dollimore (2003) asserts, “In proverb and myth, in theology and philosophy, one human discourse after another insists that there are things we should not know” (p. xxxi). As stated in the quotation, various forms of discourse repeatedly teach that any system of thought and knowledge should remain inaccessible to dissident inquiry. As a subject, what can be known is framed under the boundaries of such discourses conveyed through different means. Therefore, with a twist, seeing that Greenblatt’s purgatorial evidence in how the church manipulated people to turn them into a means of income, Hamlet’s stance in state politics juxtaposed the land of the living and the dead to veil the reality. Roger Shattuck (1996) remarks that “Don't peek. Leave well enough alone. Here is a quandary for believers. Does doubt corrupt or enlighten? Does faith survive best on ignorance or on knowledge? Need we verify all traditional beliefs by rational inquiry?” (p. 6). Such a dilemma forces one to question the nature and similarities between Hamlet’s tragedy and contemporary examples of it. So, what’s in it for Hamlet? An interpretation of his self-dedication to revenge his father’s alleged murder could be that he seeks power which he handed over to his allegedly incestuous uncle with the passing of his father. Another one could be that he’s purely doing what he’s doing because he is a dutiful son who loved his dearest father. In the play, both interpretations are portrayed. The impact that each could have can only be channelled by the stories of Hamlet. It is Hamlet who informs the readers and audience whom to believe and how to think. However, Hamlet progresses as planned without stepping out of his interim place: his actual purgatory. In there, he marks everyone around as good and evil stripping each and every reader of their own particular judgement under his discourse.

Among the tactics Hamlet uses inside his purgatorial grey zone, the most influential one is propaganda. It is an act of deliberately spreading biased or distorted information to support a political affinity. Essentially, it is manipulation in its purest form. It is aimed at managing the beliefs and attitudes of a collective group. It affects the cognition of certain symbols that are crucial in decision-making processes. It persuades the victims that what they

decide is right and their own idea. As Edwards Bernays (1928) put it, “It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world” (p. 10). Unconscious subjects are presented with a truth to be believed in without being given any chance to question it. And stories are captivating apparatuses in this respect. With the help of stories, Hamlet creates a purgatorial prison. In there, he captivates the readers with a history of a ghost. He speaks with the past. The ghost is the tongue of Hamlet’s false consciousness. He invents a story basing it on a supernatural character only a few in the play could see. Moreover, out of these people, Hamlet is the one and only human being who can actually speak to the apparition. More interestingly, he could talk with it beyond anyone’s sight. Simply, Hamlet’s fervent cries and promises to revenge his father’s murder could be regarded as slander. Gertrude’s lines support the idea that Hamlet’s mind is responsible. She tries to calm down Hamlet by saying “This is the very coinage of your brain. /This bodiless creation ecstasy /Is very cunning in” (III, iv, 137-139). Alas, Hamlet is hell-bent on avenging his father’s death on groundless accusations against his uncle. He desperately needs an alibi to demonize Claudius.

In the play, Hamlet’s power game is in action. James (1964) states that “the power game is said to have its own ‘language’, its own ‘laws’, its own ‘harsh logic’” (p. 308). As can be inferred from the quotation, this game is self-oriented. Obviously, its subjective approach threatens the opponent by creating suspense, and hatred via the help of stories fed by fellow members in the circle of power. From the circle, Horatio cries “Stay, illusion” (I, i, 128). Oddly, he insists on trying to make the ghost speak by saying “Speak to me. / If thou art privy to thy country's fate” (I, i, 132-133). It is intriguingly unexpected to demand a ghost to speak about the fate of a country as soon as witnessing it. From the moment the play begins, an information feed starts flowing. As the apparition makes itself seen, witnesses flock to gain news from the unknown world about their country. Even though they seem unsure, they go on trying to envisage him as their dead king. First, Marcellus calls him a “thing” (I, i, 21), then a “fantasy” (I, i, 23), and lastly an “apparition” (I, i, 28). Again the same Marcellus names Horatio a “scholar” (I, i, 42) and Horatio defines it as an “illusion” (I, i, 128). Marcellus’ being an officer and Horatio a friend to Hamlet couldn’t be a random choice. As they are from the circle of Hamlet, the validity of the information they provide as the curtains open should be questioned. There is an intense process of meaning-making for the ghost. Interestingly, a scholar leads the signification process. Conventionally, ghosts signify fear.

However, here, it is seen as a valid source of information. Hear Barnardo when he says “Sit down awhile, / And let us once again assail your ears, / That are so fortified against our story (I, i, 30-32). Another puzzling statement from Barnardo might signal that this story has already been circulating and people have been whispering about it. If not so, why should their ears be fortified? Is there a reason not to believe in the “story” that he’s going to share? What is certain is that the beginning of the play opens with a “game”. And that game is initiated by a story.

Ghost and its story blur the perception. Some things remain a secret due to the presentation of this story from the very early stages of the play. Only after a careful reading can a reader unwrap what has been served as a package. For instance, Shigeo Kikuchi (2010) in *Unveiling the dramatic secret of ‘Ghost’ in Hamlet* claims that the people of England in Elizabethan times had to abide by laws concerning crimes that prohibit personal vengeance. On the other hand, he asserts that “People’s sentiment sought vengeance and retribution. Shakespeare, satisfying these various social codes, seems to have presented an intellectual challenge to the intellectual classes in society” (p. 114). Inferring from the quotation, it can be asserted that legally, Hamlet has no right to seek vengeance from his uncle. His move represents a rebellion against the norms of society, thus proving that he seeks power, not vengeance. As in another example, Anselm Haverkamp (2006) in *The Ghost of History* declares the ghost “a liar” and states that “He is a phantom who is not the ghost that he claims to be; it is the ghost in which History takes the stage and presents itself as a phantom full of lies” (p. 173). What he proposes is that histories are nothing but fiction. Ghost’s story is a historical design to plot against the new king, which eventually would justify Hamlet’s efforts to overthrow Claudius. Karin De Boer (2002) Enter in *the Ghost/Exit the Ghost/Re-Enter the Ghost: Derrida's Reading of Hamlet in Specters of Marx* stresses that “if he killed his uncle - whose marriage also threatened to deprive him of the crown - he would probably be condemned as a traitor himself” (p. 28). Instead, he chose to continue manoeuvring in between since he was quite sure that the story of a supernatural character would not readily be accepted as truth without basing it on solid ground. De Boer (2002) finds Hamlet “akin to the ghost” as he carries the same name as his father (p. 33). What Hamlet fundamentally lacks is the power that his father used to have. For Hamlet, the end of his lineage implies the ruin of Denmark. Although Claudius claims that “As of a father, for let the world take note / You are the most immediate to our throne” (I, ii, 108-109), Hamlet, with the fear of losing it

forever, demands it right away. He knows that he is to be banished to Wittenberg. Agreeing with Linda Charnes' claims (2006) in her *Hamlet's Heirs Shakespeare and Politics of a New Millennium* "Prince Hamlet is the namesake of a legitimate king who, despite being dead, refuses to 'give up the ghost' of his power" (p. 18). That's why his physical presence and mind reflect a shadowy and ghostly image. According to Dover Wilson (1951), "the Ghost is the linchpin of Hamlet; remove it and the play falls to pieces" (p. 52). Roy W. Battenhouse (1951) agrees with Wilson (1951) and adds that

the Ghost in Hamlet does not grieve over his delay; he does not long for God or sorrow for what separates him from God. He longs for revenge. He grieves over the loss not of the divine vision but of his possessions. He also seems to resent having to pay for his sin. (p. 164)

The apparition doesn't seem to fit any religious definitions. It persistently deals with earthly affairs. Vengeful spirits generally represent repressed feelings of the ones that are left behind after a beloved member of the family departs from this world. Therefore, the ghost and its story are entirely Hamlet's propaganda. It's a kind of displacement of Hamlet's repressed desire for power.

Stephen Ratcliffe (1998) in *What Doesn't Happen in "Hamlet": The Ghost's Speech* states that the ghost is the equivalent of "everything the audience does not see performed on the stage of Hamlet (things we only hear about)" (p. 127). It denotes an alternate reality from which a kind of intrusion is made to pave the way to Hamlet's victory. As John F. DeCarlo (2013) puts it in his *Hamlet and the Ghost: A Joint Sense of Time*: "The Ghost represents an intrusion from another world or space-time continuum, alternatively existing and not-existing in the earthly continuum" (p. 9). It disrupts the natural flow of events to provide a second reality which eventually merges with the actual one, which is reified by Hamlet and becomes the absolute truth. Alan L. Ackerman (2001) in *Visualizing Hamlet's Ghost: The Spirit of Modern Subjectivity* states that "What is especially curious in this provocative argument about Hamlet's search for material knowledge is its elision of the spirit, the Ghost as a ghost, who, after all, instructs Hamlet's "soul," and epitomizes betweenness" (p. 121). After a while, the story of the ghost is pushed back and Hamlet becomes the ghost. They become one. His propaganda reigns throughout the entire play. As a character, Hamlet loses his personal traits as a subject and turns into an instrument abused under the spell and ecstasy of power. That is, what makes Hamlet a prince also devours his soul. He oscillates between his ambition and his humanity. Hamlet exploits a significantly religious term and conducts his moves in his newly created purgatory. His purgatory works as an institution. Manipulating

people's sentiments, he aspires to justify his ambitions. It would be suggested that he is more than sure that in power politics, being powerful denotes being right. In his world, the King signifies the utmost power and wealth. That's why he has a single target.

Despite how difficult it may appear to draw seemingly straight comparisons between today's Anglo-American policies and Hamlet's enigmatic character, several aspects of modern politics, in particular, bear the possibility for similarities. For instance, there is an elaborate web of affairs that Hamlet weaves together in his power relations. Acting more like an angler, hiding beneath the sands, he lingers his torch of wisdom in the air to lure his victims into a trap. Set his trap in his grey zone, he impales small fish like Polonius on his hook to catch bigger fish. He is willing to expend all characters that serve his interests. His techniques might vary, but mainly his political ambiguity masks his real intentions. Similar to Hamlet's story of the ghost, global powers often make up stories to justify their aggressive policies that might hold the potential to totally cripple or destroy their opponents. The joint invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the U.S. and English troops could only be initiated by such a grand narrative, which beneath the superficial meanings confesses that it aimed "to perpetuate a favourable global balance of forces" (Callinicos, 2005, p. 593). The last great conflict between the two ended up in millions of deaths and devastation. After the Second World War, the West decided to form an alliance to be able to protect each from any possible danger that might affect the member countries. As one can easily guess, the name is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also abbreviated as NATO. The founding purpose of the organization was to repel the Russian expansion after the Second World War. According to the *NATO Handbook* published in 1998 for the fiftieth anniversary, it is explicitly stated that "it offers prospects for cooperation and the furtherance of common goals which could not have been envisaged less than a decade ago" (p. 15). What was Hamlet's common goal? Was it vengeance? Was it a Denmark without corruption? Was it to prevent his mother's marriage to his uncle? Was it to reclaim the crown? Which goal is privileged? Or, was it all about faking one's appearances?

Hamlet, in the play, never loses his fake appearance until he reaches the shores of death. He always stays in the shadows. His mood keeps changing. He plots against the king and tries to trap him with a play that he thinks would reveal the crime that he fervently believed in. In fact, his target should have been somebody else. If the origin of his hatred is literally Gertrude's marriage to him, why doesn't he target both? Hamlet, hiding in his grey

zone, fights for power. Similarly, when comparing the conflict between the West and the East, no Horatio is needed to tell the resemblance between the two. Cunning and deceptive as they are, their stages are most like Shakespeare's. Such reasoning confirms that deception is of primary significance among the techniques that politicians generally employ. To restate the quote from Hamlet, "A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king and / eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm" (IV, iii, 25-26). Hamlet's political intellect shines in these lines. Grief is his bait. It is a deceptive device he uses when cloaking his plans to regain power, which also keeps him hidden under the black clouds. He is a prime example of the interconnectedness and cyclical nature of power relations in the international arena of politics. It represents the temporary nature of wealth, power and even royalty. In the grand scheme of things, even the lowliest of creatures is a reminder of the fluidity of power. Hence, the states with the upper hand in international politics often cope with constant competition and struggle by implementing a balanced strategy towards their opponents. Although Hamlet's quotation above might claim the opposite, both the cyclical and balanced nature of power relations reveals that power is transitory. Interactions between nations and shifts in the balance make it compulsory to follow a more nuanced and comprehensive stance in order to secure one's position as the authority. Thus, the grey zone in international politics functions as a quasi-arena. States in conflict often engage in this area. Even though they exhibit diplomatic manners in open meetings concealing their truer intentions, power politics never stops pursuing its agenda. Hamlet approves of such a disposition by saying "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (I, ii, 159). The quotation implies that he is well aware of the fact that whenever he loses his fake appearance, he will fail to trap the king and lose his chance to regain the crown.

Political leaders as such generally approach a challenging situation with caution exhibiting ambivalent attitudes. For instance, in recent years, the United Kingdom voted in June 2016 on whether to stay in the European Union or not, which was later publicly known as Brexit. Harold D. Clarke, Matthew Goodwin and Paul Whiteley (2017) provide the drives for a leave vote from such a powerful community in world politics as "public concerns about a perceived loss of national sovereignty to the EU", "an opportunity to vent their deep frustration about their relative deprivation", and "the role of public anxieties over immigration" (p. 5). The prime minister of the time, David Cameron, was named "a gambler" by Clarke et. al. (2017), and they asserted that "Cameron's legacy would soon forever be

associated with the result of the 2016 referendum” (p. 3). His campaign lacked clarity about the consequences and future relationship with the EU. His successors included Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak. In almost six years, England has tried four PMs. The dynamics behind such a storm of change is a study of another field of research. However, it is understandable that public opinion showed clear-cut confusion about whether to stay in the EU or not by ending the polls with a percentage of 51.9. Although campaigned by Cameron to remain a member of the union, the list of concerns supported by the international spheres of power forced public opinion to separate. In a democratic atmosphere, populist choices reigned the polls. Clark et al. (2017) claim that “In a populist era of ‘people versus politics’, the larger political system is not immune either” (p. 229). Populism has close ties with democracy as both emphasize the power of the common people. However, as Cas Mudde & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) asserts that it “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (p. 8). One famous figure associated with populism is the former President of the United States, Donald Trump. His political rhetoric and campaign style appealed to many voters by positioning himself as a champion of the common people against the political establishment. He tapped into grievances and frustrations among certain segments of the population, promising to give power back to the people. What eventually happened is the defeat of Trump since he failed to resist the pressures and demands from a larger political structure which cannot be seen with the naked eye. It can reshape the dynamics of the political system, leading to shifts in policies, electoral outcomes, and public discourse. Therefore, returning to the U.K., out of sheer populism, the issue of immigrant flow from countries that the European Union defines as underdeveloped or developing might be addressed as the chief reason behind the U.K.’s detachment from the union. The discourse was that these immigrants and refugees from various countries, largely of Middle Eastern and African origins, were taking away the jobs and opportunities of UK nationals. Such a disposition of an unwillingness to share access to public services, healthcare and housing generated conflicting opinions and inconsistent policies. Instead of recognising the vital role these people can play in boosting the national economy and society, the leaders saw them as an expandable instrument for a political power struggle, though the Union has fervently adhered to the policies that promote human rights. More remarkably, the current situation is

that the majority of people without adequate income and welfare in their countries owe their insufficiency to whom they are so eagerly trying to seek refuge. A range of factors, including corruption, political instability, war, and poverty; factors that often arise from the actions of those in power on a global scale forced these people to flee their homes to seek a better life elsewhere. Therefore, while addressing the root causes of mass migration, representing oneself as benevolent and a saviour raises scepticism. All the factors mentioned earlier are related to an unseen perpetrator. It is another Hamlet that prepares a stage for a play to construct a poll box with no options to choose other than to guilt and manipulate the opinions against a target. Then, it turns into a matter of perspective whether the success of a nation firmly depends on a leader or not. The question is: Are the leaders led?

In their own battles of perception and authenticity, political leaders like Hamlet may grapple with public opinion and hidden agendas. Such an interplay between appearance and reality is also evident in Hamlet's response to Gertrude's inquiry into his seemingly excessive mourning. While the context may differ, the notion of leaders being led, or the intricate dance of deceit and authenticity, remains an intriguing question worthy of exploration in both realms. The following lines present a counter-attack by Hamlet to his mother Gertrude when she solemnly tries to seek an answer to the reasons why he has been mourning seemingly more than everyone else:

GERTRUDE Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET Seems madam? nay it is, I know not seems.

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

Nor customary suits of solemn black,

Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,

Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,

Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,

That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play,

But I have that within which passes show -

These but the trappings and the suits of woe (I,ii,75-86)

His looks mask his plans. He might indeed be grieving, however, the overdose in his portrayal of his grief seems unusual. The shows that are displayed after a funeral might as well be found insincere, though the inner self always leaves a loose thread. When pulled with

adequate force, what was woven would unfold rather rapidly. But Hamlet uses his deceit in two ways. Along with an effort to conceal his plan, Hamlet also depicts his disbelief about the behaviours of people within proximity. When his uncle addresses Hamlet as his son, aside, he murmurs “A little more than kin, and less than kind” (I, ii, 65). This line is clear proof that he rejects being a son to his uncle and keeps his undercover fight in his grey zone.

The nature of this affiliation is akin to Turkiye’s engagement with Asia and Europe. Anglo-American states often name Turkiye as a bridge between the two, and a powerful ally. However, Huntington (1996), when commenting on Turkiye, claims that “a bridge is an artificial creation connecting two solid entities but is part of neither” (p.149). As stated in the quotation, an implicitly transmitted message could be that Turkiye would never be a partner and she would stand as long as she is attached to their land. Therefore, Hamlet might have thought that if his uncle intervenes in his place in the lineage, then the order is lost and Denmark would be corrupt. However, another interesting contradiction comes from NATO. It defines itself as “the instrument for guaranteeing the security, freedom and independence of its members” (p. 15). The organization offers an ideal world for the ones that are only voluntary to accept “democratic values and the emergence of European democratic institutions” (p. 15). Besides, it claims that “the Alliance helped overcome the adversarial relationship between East and West in a way that has allowed a new, constructive and inclusive security relationship to develop” (p. 15). Even so, recent developments suggest an alternate reality. If what NATO declared was accepted as the absolute truth, akin to the tale of the Ghost, then the reality on the ground would contradict the idealism that was presented by NATO. Within such organizations, affiliations create sub-groups and engage in lobbying and propagandising against one another. In the implementation of such an effort, their actions mirror Hamlet’s grey zone tactics. In addition to the changing dynamics of global power, the emergence of new geopolitical actors also jeopardises the traditional East and West paradigm that NATO was designed to address. As the world progresses to be multipolar, the organisation fails to comply with the norms it inaugurated. Controversies surrounding military interventions and alternate alliances raise questions about transparency. In such a pseudo-reality, the lofty ideals of democracy, freedom, welfare, and peace become flexible and are manipulated for maximum advantage.

Recently, Turkiye, a NATO member, has witnessed four real-time wars at her borders. The first one was in Iraq. The US-led coalition powers invaded the country. The motive was to prevent Saddam Hussein from using chemical weapons primarily against his own people. The second was Syria's civil war, which later turned into a battleground for US and Russia against ISIS. The third was between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Only Iraq and Syria do not have any affiliations with NATO. Other nations mentioned earlier are a part of this organization. Neither the U.S. nor Russia has a real-time war on their lands. They struggle for power in the lands of minor fish. NATO soil and their neighbours have become their grey zone. Sadly, it is said that all ended up with a death toll that reaches millions. Nowadays, the fourth war is still hot. Thousands of people had to sacrifice their lives because of a conflict between Ukraine, encouraged by NATO, and Russia, lured by America and its allies. In a recent article, it is reported that more than two hundred thousand lives from both sides had been lost since the war began and millions had to leave their countries (Lock & A.F.P., 2022). Leaders from all over the world hailed both leaders to immediately cease fire and stop the bloodshed. Ironically, frontlines have constantly been reinforced. Endless supplies of weapons were sent to each by their allies. Ukraine and other NATO members in and around Europe today are in the grey zone for superpower conflict. In there, people are purged to have new identities. For a country which has lost its identity as a former Soviet Union republic, Ukraine's plea to be a part of the West was declined. Bolstered with support from the United States, Ukraine has had to endure casualties.

A political figure like Hamlet does not move without a motive. The characters that he addresses in his dialogues exist for a purpose. They all serve his main interests. That's why, while scrutinizing his lines, it is needed to expect the unexpected. Talking with the dead, masquerading himself as a madman, using a theatrical play to deter his uncle the king, and victimizing himself with banishment can be counted among the examples of Hamlet's tools for spreading his discourse. He insistently prioritizes his self-interest through the discourse he creates using these tools. As Alan James (1964) maintains that "States are viewed as scheming and scrambling for power, for all those resources, tangible and intangible, which can be used to prosecute national policy in the international field and, if required, to obstruct the implementation of other States' policies" (p. 308). Maximising state power regardless of the consequences as a survival strategy is consistent with the politics of power-hungry states. In the absence of a higher authority, the self-interest of the States functions to secure an

advantageous position in the international system. Without hesitation, they continually race to gain access to riches and influence to advance their interests. Ironically, one common perception is that power is a critical determinant of the global order. That's why Hamlet continuously feels the urge to replace his uncle and get rid of what he considers corruption.

In parallel, the global concern of climate change has been amplified, with various actors, including celebrities, influencers, and state institutions, highlighting its catastrophic consequences. Administrators have actively pursued measures. It has turned into a new capitalist and globalist discourse originating mainly from Europe and the U.S. Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2017) claim that "globalization and global warming are no doubt connected phenomena, capitalism itself being central to both" suggests new perspectives apart from the imminent doom that awaits humanity if the precautions are not taken immediately (p. 1). That being said, in 2020, the United States of America exited Paris Agreement, which aims to counteract climate change by trying to keep the global temperature rise below two degrees Celsius. The decision by the US to exit the Paris Agreement has cast a shadow over global efforts to combat climate change. However, Lynn Wagner and Jennifer Allan (2020) state that "China pledged to achieve net zero by 2060 during the celebrations of the United Nations' 75th anniversary. Japan announced that it will align with the European Union to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. South Korea has made a similar pledge" (2020, November 4). Although her major rivals pledge to align with the decisions that are taken in the Paris Agreement, the exit of such a colossal power in world politics, which makes up almost a quarter of world economics, creates doubt over the nature of such agreements on a global scale. These agreements might as well aim to slow down the development of rival states by simply selling manipulated data to secure their own interest. In any case, it could be frankly asserted that there is only one absolute purpose, and that is total dominance, just as in the case of Hamlet's made-up motive for the murder of his uncle and the deletion of anything related to him supported by the discourse constructed within the ghost's story:

Ay thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain,

Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven! (I, iv, 96-104)

His distracted globe is his mind which is fixed on murdering his uncle only because he is sitting on his throne. He sees all that is about his uncle as trivial and swears to wipe them off the face of the earth and from the minds. Deep inside, he knows that if his father's lineage ends with him, he will be the one that is going to be forgotten for once and for all. Therefore, he holds on to the story of the ghost produced by his distracted globe. He vows to kill his uncle by saying goodbye to him as in "So uncle, there you are. / Now to my word:/ It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me. / I have sworn't" (I, iv, 110-112). In addition, he randomly confesses his real motive to Horatio by saying "He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother, / Popped in between th'election and my hopes, / Thrown out his angle for my proper life" (V, ii, 64-66). There are more reasons than normally revealed before to hate Claudius in these sentences. His tongue slip and spills out what was hidden and confesses that Claudius's actions changed the order of succession, which in turn delayed his crowning. In a similar sense, globalization and its discourse on global warming, though strictly warning people to ensure a survivable planet for posterity, might have a second agenda under their sleeves. Forrest Clingerman and Kevin J. O'Brien (2017) see the impacts of climate change as "a new kind of problem", which provocatively suggests that it tends "to embrace the inevitability of apocalyptic change, increasing instability, and an Anthropocene age that calls for new kinds of religion and spirituality" (p. 1). Such a theological change, which would shake the very foundations that nations sit for centuries, in any system is possible if only a threat exists. Just like the corruption in Denmark usurping the order of succession, increasing concerns, regarding the view that climate change is not a temporary or localized problem, are seen as an escalating global challenge that affects the stability of many established states. In fear of an impending inability to meet the needs of the new generations, countries, in political spheres, look for new manoeuvrings to stop or slow down the consumption not of themselves, but of their rivals. Considering the relation between economic growth and the population boom in recent decades, Tim Dyson (2005) states that "what still locks so many people in conditions of material poverty is their reliance upon economies that remain overwhelmingly 'organic' i.e., they have no real access to the energy supplied by fossil fuels" (p. 147). Poor nations already lack access to technologies that could enable them to utilize fossil fuels to accelerate their growth rates both economically and culturally. Therefore, by exiting the Paris

Agreement, it becomes apparent that the global discourse on climate change, global warming, and reducing the burning of fossil fuels may also serve, for the U.S., as a means of preserving dominance over their rivals to main their own economic advantage. In this context, the parallels between Hamlet's motives and the geopolitical dynamics surrounding climate change become even more significant. Just as Hamlet's actions were driven by a desire for power and dominance, the global discourse on climate change may be intertwined with strategic interests and attempts to control the trajectory of international relations.

One of the distinct characteristics of the ghost's story is that it highly reinforces the image of taking the life of King Hamlet unlawfully. In general, every act of murder is inherently classified as a murder and there are no circumstances or exceptions that change this classification. In other words, the act of taking someone's life unlawfully is always considered murder, regardless of the specific details or context surrounding it. Nevertheless, murders in the play should be classified as the ones that occurred on the stage and off the stage. The latter is the one that is assumed to have happened in an imaginary garden with no witnesses at all, which means that it only takes place in the minds of readers. As an exception, it is reinforced with a play. The play poses such a great significance for Hamlet. In one of his dialogues with Polonius, Hamlet minds the players so highly that he commands Polonius as:

HAMLET 'Tis well, I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. - Good

my lord, will you see the players well bestowed ? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

POLONIUS My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET God's bodkin man, much better. Use every man after his desert, and who shall escape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity; the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in. (II, ii, 479-488)

Hamlet's political mastery once again is at play. He cunningly orders Polonius to take good care of the players, even more than they deserved. He doesn't want any loose ends in his propaganda mission to declare his uncle the King to be a murderer. He demands such an exquisite play that no one could ever unwrite it from the minds of the audience and the tomes of history. Though in the play a king is poisoned, in Denmark, Hamlet's plot has more body counts. What kills Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia and Laertes is a series of delirious

incantations of Hamlet's ghostly mind. It is this mind that declares that death came to his father utilizing a poison poured from the gates of his ears. Poison as an instrument for the murders works both metaphorically and physically. The real poison actually works in the minds of readers since the ambiguity cannot be totally unveiled. Comparably, just as Hamlet strategically plans the play within the play to expose his uncle's guilt, media in the real world holds the power to shape public perception and control the narrative surrounding events. The U.S., being a dominant global power, has a significant influence over global media platforms and networks. This control allows them to shape narratives, control information flow, and project their own interests and agendas on a global scale. It can lead to the dissemination of information that may not fully unveil the truth, leaving room for interpretation and manipulation. According to Paul E. Rutledge (2020), Trump manipulated the facts by downplaying the spread of COVID-19 and painting a positive portrait of preparedness, even at times deferring to an apparent magic conception that the virus will just disappear. He also aggressively pitched treatments for the symptoms of COVID-19 without following the usual protocols of testing, clinical trials, and controlled experiments. Additionally, Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have been pressuring the intelligence community to push the narrative that the COVID-19 virus was made in a lab in China, something that Dr. Fauci, who was the chief medical advisor to the president from 2021 to 2022, clearly discredited as false (pp. 3-5). What matters about the war between the Trump administration and the experts in immunology was that even the most powerful country's president is prone to the attacks of the unseen. This war sadly took the lives of many although it was initially claimed to be under control. Rutledge (2020) concludes that "the impact on the federal government's response to COVID-19" resulted "in a loss of American lives that over a 2-month period has surpassed the number of deaths resulting from nearly two decades of war in Vietnam" (p. 5). A lie, a false consciousness, a representation, denial, or propaganda, whatever one might call it, is a war of maintaining power. Hamlet and Trump's stories gave them extra time to lead but took the lives of many.

To conclude, though at first glance, a piteous aura covers the readers' minds seeing that Hamlet damns the incestuous relationship that his mother seems to be willingly involved with his allegedly murderous uncle which eventually led to his father's downfall, one requires a thorough reading to try to grasp an alternative meaning that resides between the lines. His emotional response to his father's death might seem quite humane. However, reading

between the lines, Hamlet confesses that his mind is the decision-maker of his reality. His reasoning that Denmark is a prison, which was ignited by suspicion with no concrete proof at all, coerces him to feel that he is totally stuck in a state governed by an unworthy king who stepped onto the throne by secretly murdering his father. Shakespeare's ghost is vital to the plot. Because it is the main propaganda tool in the play. The realm that it dwells in is the source where new stories are invented. Shakespeare masterfully relieves his readers of command of their minds. Showing great skills at illusion, he serves the ghost as the centre of truth. As the play progresses, it becomes mundane since it is used to divert the attention of the readers, and the players too, from Hamlet's ambition. Primarily, fuelled by Hamlet's desire for power, because he inherently believes that he is the rightful owner of the crown and the throne, the tension in the play is resolved only after the death of all inside the hegemonic sphere. Hamlet once again confesses, even if he is about to die, that his ghostly mind is conquered by the idea of sitting on the throne as in the following lines:

H A M L E T Oh I die, Horatio,
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
I cannot live to hear the news from England.
But I do prophesy th'election lights
On Fortinbras; he has my dying voice.
So tell him, with th'occurrences more and less
Which have solicited - the rest is silence. *Dies* (V,ii,331-337)

Even if he is about to give his last breath, Hamlet thinks of the election. No words about avenging his father spill out of his mouth. He does not imagine the afterlife he got in his holy mission, nor does he dream of uniting with his beloved and glorious father. Yet again, he still finds in himself to behave like a prophet and try to get news from the afterlife. He prophesizes that Fortinbras will be the King. Alas, what remains is his silence. Hamlet's story ends with his death.

One might argue that the realm of world politics is governed by sharp theatrical professionals who possess the ability to manipulate and distort the truth, much like Hamlet. Their actions resemble well-crafted scripts or a series of carefully tailored scenarios. They are predestined, with predefined lines and assigned roles, while the stage itself is meticulously set. These political actors send sealed envelopes, to be opened at precise moments on the predetermined stage, containing messages that conjure up formidable monsters to be vanquished. Within the lines of these letters lie new truths, but each truth exists in a separate

universe, capable of shifting and assuming countless forms and meanings. For instance, in a post-apocalyptic universe, random killing might be deemed a survival necessity, whereas in today's world, murder is universally recognized as a criminal act that demands immediate punishment. In this chaotic world, even privileged notions undergo a reversal. Good becomes evil, and evil becomes good, as dualities repeatedly swap places. Remember Hamlet's famous lines:

HAMLET Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.

HAMLET A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons; Denmark being one o'th'worst.

ROSENCRANTZ We think not so my lord.

HAMLET Why then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison. (II, ii, 234-240)

Shakespeare might be right when he says that this world and all its organisations and leaders confine their subjects in a prison. Hamlet's intricate power struggles in the Danish court and today's global political arena build prisons for societies. In those prisons, subjects are purged, redefined, manipulated and lastly consumed at a supper. Indeed, an undeniable truth remains that no individual on this planet can elude the relentless grip of power. Regardless of one's station in life, power exerts its influence, leaving none untouched by its sway. From the mightiest leaders to the humblest citizens, the whip of power cracks across all realms of society. It knows no boundaries, sparing no soul from its reach. It is an omnipresent force, weaving its intricate web, entangling the lives of all who reside within its grey domain. Power's sway is all-encompassing, a constant reminder of the inherent vulnerability of humanity in the face of its relentless pursuit. Thus, in this intricate dance of power, let alone superpowers like the U.S. and England, every individual becomes entwined, compelled to navigate its treacherous currents, forever subject to its lashes.

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The Trickster's Twist on Scottish History in Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off**

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Abstract

Liz Lochhead's play, Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (1987), offers a distinctive reimagining of sixteenth-century Scotland. Lochhead challenges the reader/audience's capacity to attain a clear glimpse of historical truth through the character of La Corbie, a female crow in the play. Crows have long served as symbolic metaphors in literature since they function as intermediaries that deepen our understanding of human nature and the cyclic nature of the natural world. Across diverse cultures, crows are associated with a wide range of meanings, encompassing mystery, intelligence, and wisdom. Given their protean nature and sardonic demeanor, they often embody the archetype of the trickster figure. In the given play, Lochhead draws inspiration from the trickster qualities traditionally associated with crows in (Scottish) folklore with an attempt to incorporate these qualities with her feminist and nationalist concerns in one trajectory. Lochhead's employment of La Corbie and her role in framing the past, challenge conventional historical narratives and cast doubt on the unquestionable authority of historians. This, in turn, paves the way for a more inclusive and diversified comprehension of Scotland's historiography and national/gender identity. In line with this, this paper seeks to explore how Lochhead liberates Scottish history from historically prevalent anglocentric, androcentric, and anthropocentric perspectives, thereby offering a broader insight on the multifaceted dimensions of Scotland's history and the complex nature of historical storytelling.

Keywords: Liz Lochhead, Scottish Literature, Scottish history, History, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*

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1. Introduction

The presence of animals such as crows, ravens, and coyotes in literature traces its origins back to ancient oral traditions, and these creatures are often associated with the enduring tradition of trickster figures. These animals, through the supernatural characteristics attributed to them, are utilized as a means to convey powerful social commentaries by transcending the established moral codes of a given society. They entertain the audience while simultaneously challenging the audience's preconceptions and encouraging deeper contemplation on some significant concepts such as life, death, war, peace, and human relationships. This tradition is widespread and can be found in many diverse cultures throughout history. In Native American oral stories, the abundance of these animals as trickster figures demonstrates their enduring role in storytelling (Ballingar, 2000). They are employed to suggest wisdom, lessons, and humor, often with a subversive twist. In Celtic and Greek Mythology, the crow, among various trickster figures, occupies a particularly notable position. It is a messenger which symbolizes transformation, mystery, and intelligence. The messages it carries often hold profound meanings, making it a complex and intriguing symbol that resonates across different cultures (Rosalind, 1987).

In *Mary Queen of Scots got her head chopped off* (1987), Liz Lochhead introduces a crow trickster figure through a character, La Corbie. She is half-crow and half-woman character and embodies "fantastically grotesque narrator" (2013, p.120) in Scullion's terms. As the narrator of the play, La Corbie carries the traits of unreliability, contradiction, and manipulation. Lochhead employs a diverse range of narrative styles, including fables, folktales, comical chorus-like drama, and historical voice, to illustrate La Corbie's ever-shifting roles and her playful use of language. Moreover, the structural framework shaped by La Corbie, along with

her frequent interruptions within the dialogues, establishes a good foundation for interpreting the historical play as a tale of a trickster to contribute a skeptical stance to the past. In this regard, La Corbie, as a trickster character, disrupts the conventional notions of unquestionable, fact-based, and objective scientific historiography. Her unique perspective, embodied as a hybrid creature - part bird, part woman - cleverly dismantles the stereotypical depictions that have often been associated with Scotland, Scottish identity, and the iconic historical female figure, Mary Stuart who is frequently portrayed in polarized images, vacillating between being viewed as a martyr or a villain. Within this context, this paper aims to delve into the narrative of this trickster figure by closely examining La Corbie's continuous transformations and linguistic shifts. By doing so, the paper seeks to elucidate how Lochhead challenges the traditional understanding of history, offering new perceptions on Scottish history and historical figures, transcending the confines of established stereotypes.

2. Crow Imagery in Literature: An Overview

In the realm of literary writings, the crow represents a mysterious and dark aspects of life. Therefore, the secrets and insights associated with crows blur the boundaries between the physical and spiritual worlds. This dark creature can act as a harbinger of death, and its unique ability to transcend the divide between realms highlights its potential to lead the reader on a deep and intricate exploration of the human condition. Crow imagery is particularly abundant in poetry, where it is used as a powerful symbol for expressing complex and often ineffable concepts. Ted Hughes's "Crow" (1970), for instance, stands as one of the most significant examples of the crow's portrayal as a trickster figure. Within this work, Hughes constructs his own mythological framework, providing a vehicle to convey the unsayable and the ineffable in a society governed by strict social norms and conventions.

Scottish literature also often explores the symbolism and cultural significance of the crow, employing it as a multifaceted symbol that conveys a variety of themes and emotions. In Scottish folk culture, the crow facilitates a timeless and dynamic symbol that evolves in different contexts over time. Lochhead in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) incorporates crow symbolism by blending this cultural motif within Anglo-Saxon traditions with popular culture. Crows also play a central role in Celtic mythology, which has influenced Scottish and Irish culture (Clark, 1987). However, it is the widely renowned Scottish ballad “Twa Corbies” that encapsulates themes of life, death, and betrayal through the poignant dialogue between two crows conversing over the dead body of a fallen knight. Lochhead, as acknowledged by Gioia Angeletti, “has a unique talent in forging stories both new and drawn from popular traditions, history and myths” (2018, p.69). Indeed, the presence of a crow and the ballad “Twa Corbies” in the play is not a coincidence. The ballad and the image of the crow have a considerable influence on Lochhead’s play as it inspires its central themes, structure, and the character of La Corbie. This influence is particularly evident in Act Two, Scene Six, where La Corbie directly refers to this ballad and sings it to foreshadow upcoming deaths and evoke similar themes and emotions. Moreover, just as the conversation between the crows in the ballad begins with the question, ““Where sall we gang and dine to-day?”” (Twa Corbies, Line 4), Lochhead’s play starts with La Corbie’s question: “CORBIE. Country: Scotland. What is it like?” (Lochhead, 1987, I.i. p. 11). This similarity establishes a thematic and structural link between Lochhead’s play and the ballad by showing the extent to which folklore can be used for the exploration of Scottish identity in the play. Furthermore, Lochhead draws inspiration from Highland folktales, particularly from the “Hoodie Crow”. These tales emphasize the shape-shifting characteristics of the crow, a quality that contributes complexity and ambiguity to the character of La Corbie.

Juxtaposition of cultural myths, legends and historiography is a common motif in Lochhead's oeuvre. As Adrienne Scullion (2013) postulates, Lochhead "deconstruct[s] both legitimate history and popular culture and activates metaphors of playing, acting, story-telling" (p. 120). What makes Lochhead's deconstruction distinctive and makes it more complicated is the use of the crow as a main narrator or a story-telling device. La Corbie, a female crow, who resides within the play's narrative but remains invisible to the other characters. Through La Corbie's voice, Lochhead nurtures and reshapes Scotland's cultural past during the 1600s with an attempt to providing new perspectives on the historical narrative surrounding Mary Queen of Scots. However, La Corbie's narration intentionally challenges the traditionally neutral and scientifically oriented approach often associated with historical writing. Besides, her gendered, sardonic, and Scottish voice allows for a deeper exploration of the dual exclusion of Scottish female identity within both historical and fictional narratives. Therefore, La Corbie, the crow character, transcends being a mere symbol and emerges as a bridge connecting the contemporary skeptical perception of the past to Scotland's historical representations. In doing so, she invites reader/audience to embark on a journey to consider power relations between nation, gender and texts by fostering female experiences within a distinct Scottish context.

3. La Corbie, The Trickster: A Provocative Voice in History of Scotland

The connection between history writing and La Corbie's role, is presented in Lochhead's stage directions in Act Two, scene one, as follows: "*Riccio rips out the sheets of paper, takes them over to Mary. She plucks a feather out of La Corbie's coat sleeve and signs flamboyantly*" (Lochhead, II.i.39) This flamboyant act of signing with La Corbie's feather carries meaningful symbolism, representing the past and the act of historical writing from La Corbie's unique perspective as a female bird-like creature. In this context, La Corbie's feather assumes the role of a mediator between actual events and their textual representation.

This portrayal aligns with Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of the trickster figure, as outlined in "The Structural Study of Myth" (1955). Lévi-Strauss's Trickster, within his model, serves as a complex mediator between various "polar terms" which encompass the moral ideals of a society and their raw instincts, between different modes of survival (such as hunting and gathering), and even between humanity and the divine (1955, p. 440). This type of mediation goes beyond being a mere compromise but it involves dynamic interplay and interaction between opposing forces. It, therefore, creates a state of mind that help one simultaneously grasp both extremes, as observed in the realms of myth and ritual.

Drawing a parallel with Levi-Strauss' model, La Corbie's role as a trickster figure can be understood as a mediation between the realms of fiction and reality, with a focus on questioning the reliability of historical narratives. While Lévi-Strauss's trickster navigates between moral ideals and instincts, Lochhead's La Corbie, in her own unique way, navigates the boundaries between fact and imagination. She challenges the conventional understanding of history by questioning its reliability, thus functioning as a mediator between the sayable and the unsayable, between the known and the unknown, to prompt critical reflection on the nature of historical truth and representation.

La Corbie's introduction in the play emphasizes these blurring boundaries between real and imagination. She appears as chorus, accompanied by a melancholic fiddler's tune. The stage directions describe her as "[a]n interesting, ragged ambiguous creature in her cold spotlight" (Lochhead, I.i.p.11). As clearly suggested in her description, La Corbie embodies a manifestation of the indefinable but later she furthers into the role of representing both Scotland itself and the other characters in the play through her own distinct voice. She starts her monologue with a pivotal question: "Country: Scotland. Whit is it like?" (Lochhead, 1987, I.i.p.11). Her inquiry sets the stage for a captivating exploration of Scotland's portrayal, framed

through the lens of a female Scottish trickster. What follows this is a series of potential definitions of Scotland which offer stereotypical perspectives. They are inflicted upon dichotomies perceived from the standpoint of individuals, depending on their societal positions within the multifaceted entities of Scottish life. These definitions embrace a broad spectrum of contrasting images in a panoramic view:

It is a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.
It's a cauldron o lye, a saltpan or coal mine.
If you're gey lucky it's a bonny, bricht bere meadow or a park o kye
Or mibbe... it's a field o' stanes.
It's a tenement or merchant's ha'.
It's a hüre hoose or a humble cot. Princes Street ot Paddy's
Merkit. (Lochhead, l.i.p.11)

The excerpt articulated by La Corbie conveys a plethora of contrasting images that collectively contribute to the definition of Scotland's complex historical identity. Employing a series of dichotomies, La Corbie challenges and deconstructs the oversimplified and monolithic characterizations that have been historically imposed on Scotland, which often reduced it to a singular image of a mountainous, green, and poor nation. Instead, she introduces a diverse array of images, including the mysterious peatbogs, dark forests, industrious cauldrons and coal mines, as well as the idyllic meadows and rugged fields of stones. La Corbie, with her supernatural abilities, juxtaposes different eras of Scotland's history. Thus, she sheds light on its enigmatic past of Scotland as a remembering figure or rather an embodiment of collective memory.

Further aspect to be considered is her characterization as a ringmaster in a circus, a choice that invokes ritualistic elements often associated with crow imagery in literature. Crows have traditionally been used as shamanic, trickster, and ritual figures in literary works, particularly in the works of Ted Hughes (Panecka, 2018). While Lochhead's use of the crow motif seems inspired by Hughes, she subverts the familiar connotations commonly linked to crows. La Corbie, instead of conforming to the expected trickster role, takes on the

commanding role of a narrator within the play. La Corbie takes on the responsibility of orchestrating the actions of other prominent characters in front of the audience. Thus, Lochhead acknowledges her role as the authoritative narrator directing the unfolding narrative. Significantly, her use of a whip, in line with Brechtian techniques, prompts the reader/audience to reassess the influence of representation within narratives. It fosters the idea that the act of representing can be used for various ideological objectives through means of manipulation, redirection, and even punitive measures. In this context, Lochhead assigns La Corbie the pivotal role of representing not only Scotland but also the nation's complex past and historical figures. From this vantage point, La Corbie evokes the role of a historian. Like a historian, she prepares the presentation of characters according to her own narrative agenda and exercises the authority to be selective and editorial in the portrayal process. Amos Funkenstein's following postulation is quite relevant to La Corbie's position: "'facts' gain their meaning and even their very factuality from the context in which they are embedded, a context reconstructed solely by the historian, whose narrative makes and shapes the fact" (1992, p. 68). Just as historians choose what aspects to emphasize and what to conceal in constructing historical narratives, La Corbie, too, engages in a selective presentation of characters, highlighting preferred facets while obscuring unwanted elements. This parallel between La Corbie's role as a historian-like figure and the narrative power she exerts has great resonance in play's commitment to the past and history by calling for a reconsideration of how history is constructed, perceived, and presented.

Another remarkable dimension in Lochhead's skeptical interpretation of the past takes its premise in La Corbie's partiality. La Corbie emerges as an assertive and self-conscious storyteller in a postmodern context. She places a significant emphasis on her unique voice and perspective as the narrator. Her proclamation, "Ah dinna ken whit your Scotland is. Here's mines" emphasizes her subjective lens and her role as a symbol of Scotland within the play

(Lochhead, l.i. 11). This non-neutral stance becomes even more evident in La Corbie's deliberate fusion of her mystical or mythical identity with the authentic socio-cultural diversity of Scotland. This amalgamation is shown by her self-definition as a crow in three distinct languages: "National bird: the crow, the corbie, le corbeau, moi!" (l.i. 11). As observed in the given quotation, Lochhead also links her partiality identity to multicultural population of Scottish culture and, more specifically, frenchified Queen Mary's perspective.

The connection between La Corbie and Queen Mary is particularly evident in La Corbie's efforts to evoke sympathy for Mary and is emphasized by his use of the French language. Queen Mary is portrayed as a character distinctly different from Elizabeth, driven by her emotions and sensuality. Her upbringing in France alienated her from her native Scotland and its culture. However, La Corbie's depiction of Queen Mary portrays her not as a martyr or a victim, but as a human being with flaws and shortcomings. The link between La Corbie's voice and the depiction of Queen Mary can be relatable to the deceptive characteristics of trickster and the stereotypical misrepresentation of Queen Mary in historical narratives. Analyzing the concept of the crow as trickster in the narratives of various cultures, J. Ramsay (1978) observes that the typical trickster figure in West Indian mythologies exhibits qualities such as greed, hypersexuality, selfishness, mischievousness, and a capacity for cunning and wit. Actually, this figure, according to Ramsay, represents "all too human" in his imperfections; and whose incredible survival despite repeated fatal come-uppances points to the persistence in us of the unreconstructed id" (1978, p. 114). While it may seem difficult to draw a direct parallel between Mary and the trickster crow suggested by Ramsay, Mary's enduring reputation and La Corbie's persistent voice in the play convey important insights into the enduring impact of the past on the present and survival of these ideological constructs.

Moreover, La Corbie's favor of Queen Mary and Scotland is evident during Queen Mary's confrontations with characters like John Knox, where La Corbie feverently supports her. La Corbie calls him as "nox as black as nicht, nox lik' a' the bitter pousons, nox lik' three fearfu' chaps at the door, did ding her doon" (Lochhead, 1987, I. iv. p.20). Her sharp and sarcastic language against Knox paints a vivid picture of defiance and resistance. She reflects her condemnation of Knox's rigid and misogynistic views, which have had a lasting impact and great resonance on Scotland, contributing to the prevalence of patriarchal and religious authoritarianism in the country. Through La Corbie's narrative, Lochhead dismantles the biases found in male-dominated official history and religious authority. This invites reader/ audience to engage in a critical evaluation of various forms of authoritarianism, whether in real-life contexts, politics, religion, or narrative constructions.

Furthermore, in the play, La Corbie enacts the provocative voice of history by drawing attention to the traditional norms and roles of historians by questioning and distorting their authority in the perception of the past. The following quotation unmasks her enigmatic identity by intersecting her identity with Scotland's long historiography:

How me? Eh? Eh? Eh? Voice like a choaked laugh. Ragbag o' a burd in ma black duds, a' angles and elbows and broken oxter feathers, black beady een in ma executioner's hood. No braw, but Ah think Ah ha'e a sort of black glamour.

Do I no put ye in mind of a skating minister, or, on the other fit, the parish priest, the dirty beast?

My nest's a rickle o' sticks.

I live on lamb's eyes and road accidents.

Oh, see, after the battle, after the battle, man, it's a pure feast- ma eyes are ower big even for my belly, in lean years o' peace, my belly thinks my throat's been cut. (Lochhead, I. i. pp. 11-12)

In the provided quotation, La Corbie's self-identification is aligned with the representation of Scotland and its past. She makes use of Scottish clichés such as "The Skating Minister" on

Duddingston Loch and the “Parish priest” and locates her place on those clichés. However, it is also worth to note that her references to religious figure of Scotland as “dirty beast” surprise the reader/audience as she, as a Scottish character, is expected to embrace the Scottish national church. However, with her sarcasm by “dirty beast”, she evokes John Knox, the founder of the Scottish Church (the Kirk) in somewhat derogatory manner. The attempt to vilify John Knox, a historically remarkable and religious character through a crow character evinces how past is elusive and discursive and it is based on the ideological standpoint of the narrator. As Thomas Skouteris (2012) points out, “the same historical fact can be read differently by different discourses while within each discourse there are different readings over space and time” (p. 170). From this vantage point, it can be said that the religious heroic and iconic figure of Scotland, John Knox can be historically humiliated in the representation of feminist history writer.

The employment of fragmented, almost stream-of-consciousness language and the metaphor of a “rickle o’ sticks” as La Corbie’s nest also symbolize the vulnerability of her voice as a remembering figure and the fragile political landscape of Scotland. Moreover, her mention of “lamb’s eyes” reminds the reader/audience of power dynamics, often depicted as a lamb and wolf or victim and predator, between Scotland and England. The reference to a “feast” following the battle further strengthens the argument, as Scotland’s history teems with conflicts and independence wars, during which crows, symbolic of carnivores or Anglo-Saxon beasts of battle, could benefit from the bloodshed. Through these clichéd depictions of Scotland, La Corbie disrupts the linearity of history and offers an irreverent interpretation of history. Her amoral and cawing voice deconstructs stereotypical representations of Scotland.

Lochhead also forges a connection between the narrator, La Corbie, and the national identity of Scotland. This cultural bond is made clear as she introduces La Corbie as “our

chorus” instead of merely “chorus”, positioning her as an emblematic representation of the Scottish collective consciousness. Such framing attributes La Corbie to the role of narrator or a storyteller deeply entwined within Scotland’s cultural entity. Her use of Scots in her narration also accentuates La Corbie’s Scottish identity by evoking “place, weather, culture and history” (Gish, 2013, p.52). However, La Corbie’s national role goes beyond blind nationalist connotations but instead, her speech carries the traits of a cunning trickster, skillfully wielding various forms of Scots which is, as Nancy K. Gish (2013) puts it, “both defamiliarized and accessible” (p.52). This exuberant plurality constitutes a hallmark feature of Lochhead’s literary corpus as she strips the sense of nationalism from monolithic and masculine definitions to make it more multivocal. Within this context, La Corbie exhibits a fluid linguistic dexterity, adeptly transitioning between playful and pun-full language to more solemn and poetically rendered expressions. This linguistic versatility is notably exemplified in her rendition of the longstanding rivalry between Scotland and England and the binary opposition between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Tudor. Rather than adopting a traditional serious historical narrative style with a sole focus on veracity, La Corbie embraces a storytelling style reminiscent of fairy tales, fables, and myths as observed in the following lines, “Once upon a time there were twa queens on the wan green island, and the wan green island was split intae twa kingdoms...” (Lochhead, l.i.12).

La Corbie’s narrative shift assumes profound significance. This change in storytelling strategy can be understood as a playful reflection of the establishment of the relationship between the two nations and the two women, constructed within the framework of time-honored and stereotypical dichotomies. The adoption of a fairy-tale narrative form serves as an astute choice, aptly suited to encapsulate the didactic and dialectic representation of opposing forces—a characteristic frequently found in the narratives of children's stories, such as the dichotomies of good and evil, poverty and prosperity, beauty and ugliness. La Corbie’s

preference for narrating in the voice of a crow enables Lochhead to delve into the complexities of the historical relationship while embracing the familiar tropes and patterns of fairy tales. This narrative strategy, by design, encourages readers and audiences to engage in contemplation concerning the role of storytelling and interpretation in conveying multifaceted historical themes

La Corbie's cynical tale also disrupts the male-dominated historical narrative by advocating for the visibility of females in both text and context. Act One, scene five lays bare Lochhead's feminist refusal of male domination as she allocates a chapter to Mary's assertive voice and the murder of Alison Craik, a raped and murdered female figure in the past, who is also portrayed by John Knox with pejorative terms in *The History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland*. In the play, Queen Mary reprimands Bothwell, emphasizing her desire for women to feel safe in her country. As her feminist concerns overweigh in the inclusion of this misrepresented or neglected historical female figure, Lochhead, through the voice of La Corbie, creates a sort of counter-history against the anglo-centric, male-dominated historical accounts. This attempt is quite meaningful when considering Alan Munslow's following remark: "precision in the generation of facts is literally meaning-less unless and until those facts are turned into stories, explained further with arguments, and offered as sustained and coherent ideological positions" (1992, p. 172). The attempt to incorporate female agency and increase their visibilities can be argued as main ideological agenda of the play. This feminist movement resonates in the play with Bothwell's excuse his actions with history. Yet, Mary refuses to listen to his excuse and facts and she expresses her rejection with a crescendo, "I dinna want to hear your history! / *Doom. A drumbeat*" (Lochhead, 1987 I.v.p. 28). Indeed, La Corbie's narrative role in the play compels the audience/reader to perceive the play as part of Lochhead's "herstory" project, which aims to record history from a feminist perspective and rectify historical gaps and misrepresentations related to women.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, through the portrayal of La Corbie as a female narrator and author-figure within the play, Liz Lochhead not only empowers marginalized voices but also disrupts established concepts of truth and authority. La Corbie's narrative strength holds a strategic and political significance with the aim of liberating women misrepresentations and promoting their agency as narrative subjects. This is evident in the narratives of Alison Craik and Mary Queen's execution, where La Corbie's presence redefines the representation and perception of women in historical contexts.

Also, La Corbie takes shape not merely as a gendered persona, but rather as an elusive and ever-evolving concept. La Corbie's character eludes a fixed definition due to its dynamic nature, which consistently shifts in style and perspective throughout the play. The subject matter also transforms, ranging from her involvement in Mary's political struggles to her introspective reflections on Scotland's history. To sum up, Lochhead's clever use of La Corbie as the character re-framing the happenings in the past draws inspiration from Scottish folklore but expands the traditional role of the crow into a Scottish remembering or re-telling figure of the Scottish past in a trickster tradition. Her partiality, sardonic voice and cunning narrative slipperiness create an atmosphere of unreliability, so it allows for multiple and varied perspectives on the past and characters.

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The Laugh of Circe: An Ecriture Feminine Journey to the Madeline Miller's Retelling

TÜRKAN ETİZ

Abstract

This essay aims to analyze the underlying reasons behind the infamous reputation of Circe, a mythological goddess, as depicted in Madeline Miller's 2018 novel "Circe," within the context of a fantastical world where male hegemony is strongly felt. It explores Circe's act of writing as a mythological woman through Miller's pen and her regaining of fame in the modern world, drawing on Helene Cixous' feminist theory of "écriture féminine" discussed in her article "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976). The concept of women's writing and the belief that a woman's voice will be heard through her writing, central to Cixous' theory, are also examined by relating them to another mythological female character, Medusa. The essay emphasizes their shared context of infamous reputation and highlights the necessity for mythological female characters to vindicate themselves through writing, respecting the framework of "écriture féminine." It concludes that the essay serves as a tribute to this theory and asserts that even in the realm of mythology, the superimposed notion of the supernatural does not prevail over female characters but rather accurately portrays the reality of gender inequality..

Keywords: Patriarchy, Hegemony, Woman, Writing, Mythology

1. Introduction

Throughout history, the experience of being a woman has been marked by pain, frequent discussions of gender inequality, and uprisings against injustices faced by women in every corner of the world. Being a woman evokes the imagery of embracing femininity and fighting within this reality every day, which can be likened to a fantastical mythological world for creative minds. One of the goddesses from this mythological realm is Circe, whose experience of being a woman will be examined in light of Helene Cixous' 1976 work, "The Laugh of Medusa," through an exploration of Madeline Miller's adaptation of Circe. The education, reading, and writing of women have been extensively addressed by numerous feminist writers throughout history. Cixous, in particular, emphasizes the encouragement of women's writing through her theory of "écriture féminine," asserting that as women write, their voices will be heard and they can access their own voices. This essay focuses on Circe, as

portrayed by Miller, who gradually gains strength as a woman and finds her own voice. It draws parallels between Circe's story and the example of Medusa presented by Cixous, showcasing women in mythology who resist male hegemony, even if in a mythical context. The essay aims to provide a close perspective on the goddess's life and uncover the underlying reasons behind the negative reputation associated with her, similar to the purpose of Cixous' work. The experience of being a woman has been scarred throughout history, with many philosophers and religious figures openly asserting that women are dangerous creatures. According to Miller (2017), Heinrich Kramer's 1487 work, "*Malleus Maleficarum*, described women as being chiefly addicted to Evil Superstitions and blamed their greed, credulous nature, feeble mind and body, slippery tongue, jealous nature, and inherently evil disposition for their tendency to succumb to the Devil's influence."

2. Circe in Mythology

Circe is a goddess from mythology and was reimagined by Madeline Miller in 2018. In mythology, Circe is the daughter of the sun god Helios and the Ocean nymph Perse. She is renowned for her extensive knowledge of plants and her ability to create powerful potions. Indeed, she is strong against her enemies. Additionally, she punishes those who harm her by transforming them into animals with her magical staff. Miller's portrayal of Circe offers a different perspective from other accounts in history, giving Circe the opportunity to participate in shaping her own destiny. In this mythological story, Circe learns to govern herself as a woman. This also brings the reader to a common point that aligns with Cixous' (1976) "The Laugh of Medusa." Throughout all of their stories, mythology sends the same message about women. It approaches women with beautiful attributes, almost enchanting the reader and convincing them of how ugly and wicked women truly are. Cixous (1976) states, "To look at Medusa straight on is enough to see her. And she is not deadly. She is beautiful, and she is laughing." Circe, as a goddess, shares a similar fate with Medusa. The art of potion-making that she developed to protect herself from malicious acts gave her a negative reputation. However, by presenting Circe's perspective, it becomes possible to interpret and understand the pain of being a woman in this mythological world, shedding light on the misunderstandings and offering an understanding of her experiences.

Before delving into Miller's portrayal of Circe as a female goddess, it is necessary to mention earlier works that have featured her throughout history. In mythology, the first and most notable work that comes to mind when Circe is mentioned is likely Homer's *Odyssey*. On his journey back from the Trojan War, Odysseus visits the island of Aeaea, where Circe resides. However, Circe transforms many of his crew members into animals. Odysseus insists that Circe restore his crew to their human forms, and he stays with her for a year. During this time, Circe becomes the mother of their two sons, Latinus and Telegonus. Another significant work where Circe is featured is the adventure of Scylla and Circe, observable in Book 14 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Ovid & Riley, 1995). In this work, Circe's

enchantment of Scylla through her magic is also depicted. Circe, who falls in love with a mortal named Glaucus, cannot bear his love and interest in Scylla, so she turns her into a monster. As a result, dogs emerge from Scylla's waist. In revenge, Scylla kills some of Odysseus' men but cannot destroy the fleet of Aeneas because she has been transformed into a rock. Circe is a witch, and all of her actions stem from jealousy.

Circe, a powerful mythological female character with her abilities, has been portrayed as ruthless, malicious, and devoid of emotions throughout history. Indeed, Circe is so beautiful that she enchants sailors and causes their deaths. This also brings to mind the sirens. In mythology, sirens are known as sea monsters living on an island called Scopuli. They enchant sailors who pass by with their alluring voices and cruelly kill them. From this, it can be understood that some female mythological characters have gained a reputation as wicked but beautiful women. Medusa, once renowned for her beauty, is similar in this regard. Medusa, known for her evil deeds in history, can be seen as a victim due to her being a woman. The depiction of Medusa transforming into a deadly woman and seeking revenge can be seen as a result of male hegemony. Beauvoir (1949) mentioned this by stating, "By the time humankind reaches the stage of writing its mythology and laws, patriarchy is definitely established: it is males who write the codes." Therefore, these women, who have been victims of the patriarchal world and have gained a negative reputation in mythology for centuries, are bearing the punishment for simply being women.

3. Miller's Retelling through "Ecriture Feminine"

Miller's portrayal of Circe's story begins when she is a young girl. The story unfolds with the meeting of Circe's mother and father, initiated by her grandfather offering his daughter to her father. Her grandfather states that if he wants her, Helios can take her. Thus, the fate of Circe's mother, a naiad, is determined. Even in this world, power and the patriarchal structure have been the most crucial factors for a woman's reproduction and transformation into a wife. However, unlike a woman whose destiny is predetermined, Circe's mother courageously asserts that Helios must marry her to be with her. She knows she could easily fall victim to him. Circe tells him that he can easily get what her father wants. Fortunately, Helios sees the marriage as an innovation and refrains from violating her mother. The beginning of the story proves how even mythical order is inherently patriarchal. After Circe is born, despite living for centuries, she remains indifferent to her abilities. This is because she has a role within the patriarchal order and is aware of it. The patriarchal order that dominates the mythological structure also hinders women from reaching their self-awareness, abilities, and ways of thinking. According to Cixous (1976), "Medusa's condemnation of ugliness is a result of a male-dominated world." Medusa, despite her fame for her beauty, is now a victim of rape, an entity deemed ugly and scorned. Rape is an element of male hegemony that seeks to render women unattractive. On the other hand, Circe incorporates criticisms of her image into her own narrative. Circe's father describes her as having hair

streaked like a wildcat and a disturbing jawline. As a result, her mother believes she won't be able to marry a prince. Circe's two beautiful step-sisters also criticize her appearance with good intentions. Additionally, Circe possesses the ridiculed and scorned characteristic of not having a beautiful voice like a goddess. Therefore, even in mythology, a powerful woman is considered beautiful. However, this does not guarantee that she will have a happy life through a good marriage, as she is always at risk of experiencing the same danger of rape as the once beautiful Medusa.

When viewed as a metaphorical element, Miller's negative references to Circe's voice can be interpreted as a woman's struggle to access her own voice and find or express herself. Circe is suppressed by the disparagement in her voice. Being unheard as a goddess associates her with a weak figure among the gods. Her father is a popular and magnificent god, and her "ugly" voice is attributed to her mother. Indeed, since femininity is defined as weak by the patriarchal system, the girl's flaw must have been passed down from her mother. Clearly, the element of voice here also targets the mother. Circe's mother couldn't give her daughter a beautiful voice because she herself was not a beautiful and upper-class goddess. At this point, Cixous (1976) in "The Laugh of the Medusa" expresses that women should stop listening to the sirens, but she makes a good point about sirens actually being men. In the mythological story as it has been passed down through history, sirens are associated with monstrous women, yet Cixous emphasizes that what actually occurs is the suppression of the female voice. With the permission of patriarchal superiority, men have the power to kill and burn using their strong voices. In this case, Miller refers to the oppressed woman in the patriarchal system in which Circe grew up by expressing negative comments and perspectives about her voice. Furthermore, patriarchal hegemony has determining factors in mythology regarding how women should appear. Cixous (1976) speaks about this situation as follows: "We have been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we have been victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other sex." Thus, it is expected that Miller's Circe should have a golden-haired and goddess-like voice, but her birth is a disappointment. However, Miller's Circe does not seem to have such concerns; she accepts herself as she is and does not let the things said to her leave deep marks on her character development.

Cixous's (1976) objection to Freud's portrayal of women as negative beings represented by men, which he referred to as the "unexplored abyss," has been a useful reference in understanding Miller's Circe. Events such as Circe helping her punished uncle Prometheus, performing powerful magic out of jealousy, and transforming Scylla into a monster highlight her courage. Circe interprets her belief in being a woman as follows: "It is a common saying that women are delicate creatures—flowers, eggs, anything that may be crushed in a moment's carelessness. If I had ever believed it, I no longer do." (Miller, 2018, p. 437) Cixous (1976) expresses that women should be understood when they write: "And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, for you alone; your body is yours; take it." As Miller's

Circe writes her own story, she comes to life and immerses herself in the experience of being a woman, sometimes crushed under male superiority and kingdom, and at other times finding meaning in her existence and gradually finding her voice.

Furthermore, it appears that Miller's Circe's sole desire is to explain herself to herself. She has a longing to question the meaning of her actions, existence, and identity. Circe moves towards a journey of self-awareness, breaking free from the pressures of patriarchal dominance. Eventually, she is exiled and sentenced to rule the island. This becomes Circe's new home and, in a way, a monument to her father's pride. Indeed, her father has played a defining role in Circe's fate. The father is the head of the family, and his decisions are decisive for the destinies of others. Circe continues to seek meaning in her exile through her writings. Literally, Circe is no longer a bird in a cage. "A golden cage is still a cage." (Miller, 2018, p. 198) The cage door is open, and Circe is not foolish enough to fly away. As expressed by Kristeva (1991) in a question, "To be deprived of parents- is that where freedom starts?" For Circe, the answer to this question, just like the question itself, is filled with uncertainties. As a woman, she must now depart from the hegemonic order ruled by her father, exile herself amidst nothingness, and build her own world, sustaining her own hegemony.

Miller's Circe delivers the message to readers that a woman's self-discovery and self-expression become possible through writing. As Circe writes, for generations, she has wandered the world in a sleepy and melancholic manner, freely and comfortably, leaving no trace. Circe, as she writes, discovers and criticizes herself, seemingly relying on an inherent feminine enthusiasm. "Then I learned that I could bend the world to my will, as a bow is bent for an arrow." (Miller, 2018, p. 118) Circe, immediately after her self-discovery as a sorceress, includes her body in this exploration. By choosing to be with Hermes, she satisfies her desire for the male body as well. Cixous (1976), referring to women's sexuality, says, "Women must break free from the trap of silence. They should not be deceived into accepting the role of marginal or harem." Circe's father has many women, and Circe's mother has many children with her sisters. Therefore, the harem mentioned by Cixous is, in a way, the world in which Circe was born. This also offers a perspective on Circe's sexuality. Indeed, Circe is not in love with Hermes, but she is with him because she is an independent woman and can now make her own choices since, after all, she is too ugly to marry a handsome prince.

Circe now begins to listen to the voice of her own passions. Beauvoir (1949) stated, "Capabilities are clearly manifested only when they have been realized." For Circe, this ability is her sorcery, her healing. It is something that requires her to put forth all her efforts and passion; she must cut, shape, mold, and believe. Circe is a testament in the mythological world to how powerful a woman can be when she turns inward and is allowed to freely live her passions. Indeed, her journey of self-discovery begins on the day she steps foot on the island, departing from patriarchal dominance. Circe

grows stronger and begins to reap the fruits of her endeavors. She tends to neglected plants, trees, animals, and many other things in need of care on the island. Then, a group of sailors arrive on the island, and Circe serves them with all her hospitality and goodwill, desiring to be a good host. The questions directed at her revolve around whether her husband will come to the island and when he will arrive. In the absence of men, the island is devoid of irregularities and corruption, whereas when sailors, as men, settle on the island, they will engage in theft for a while, and they could violate Circe. Indeed, after Circe is violated, her father Helios knows about it; he is the god of the sky, powerful and dominant. However, nothing changes, and Circe is left alone. After the violation, she is left alone with her thoughts. This is a lesson she learned from men as a young woman.

While the act of violation targets the body concretely, it also leaves deep marks and traumas on the soul. Cixous (1976) has stated about the body: "If you censor the body, you also censor breath and speech. Write yourself. Your body must be heard." During the violation, Circe's body struggles; she learns that even if she lives alone and rules the island by herself, the inevitable dominance of the male-dominated world exists somewhere. Miller expresses this learning through writing. Precautions need to be taken against them because men govern the world. Men explore the world in this mythological world with their ships and use women not only for their own pleasure but also for what they can possess. Circe, in response, strengthens her sorcery. This emphasis on empowerment represents the self-discovery and development of the mythological goddess as a woman. Circe wants to be ready and alert, just like we all want to be in a male-dominated world. The way Miller's Circe tells her story after the violation can be understood through Kristeva's (1982) words: "Could it be written in another way, in a definite catharsis, if we hadn't been nauseated?" On the other hand, the term "nausea" describes a situation of being excluded from societal and moral norms and rules. In post-structuralism, this term provokes the traditional concepts of identity and culture. The person who is excluded from the moral scale's norms and rules is actually Circe. As a woman, while writing about the tragic moment of violation, Circe may have felt a sense of nausea, and perhaps through writing, she could have been lightly cleansed while sharing this unfortunate event accompanied by nausea. Overwhelmed by disgust and drowning in emotions, as she writes, she leaves behind that malevolent label. Ultimately, she learns lessons from the violation, and from then on, her treatment of every sailor who visits her island will be merciless. Her notoriety will spread after her actions following the violation. Circe now expresses who she has become as follows: "I did not send my animals away anymore when men came. I let them loll where they liked—around the garden, under my tables. It pleased me to see the men walk among them, trembling at their teeth and unnatural tameness. I did not pretend to be a mortal. I showed my lambent, yellow eyes at every turn. None of it made a difference. I was alone and a woman; that was all that mattered." (Miller, 2018, p. 269)

Indeed, Circe becomes a powerful goddess figure. She transforms sailors into various animals, so things change for her. She may not be able to control the male-dominated world beyond her island, but she has her boundaries. The empowerment of a woman—her ability to control her own power and confidence—ensures that she will not be hurt again. Cixous (1976) expresses this situation as follows: "Men have committed the greatest crime against women; they have directed them to hate themselves, to become their own enemies." The truth is that Circe's entire life evolved towards self-discovery after being exiled from the world she lived in. When the surrounding noises silence her, her hidden talent turns within her. Circe has been a goddess for centuries, but she has never had the opportunity to tap into her latent power and train herself. Therefore, a woman's journey of insight and self-discovery becomes what makes life worth living. In other words, the purpose of her existence is revealed. As Circe shares that magic is not an easy feat, she actually speaks to the value of patience and effort in the journey of self-discovery. In reality, Circe has separated herself from the kingdom of patriarchal dominance and discovered herself as an independent woman. Her encounter with Odysseus occurs during these times of personal growth. There is a romantic relationship between Miller's Circe and Odysseus. Did Circe truly fall in love with Odysseus, or did she cling to him out of emotional hunger and loneliness? Circe, as a goddess, is superior to the human Odysseus. Therefore, she does not want to plead with him; she does not want him to realize that she needs him. After he leaves, she must be a mature woman who has learned to cope with all that she has experienced throughout this time, knowing that she will face a new struggle, a new pain, and a new sense of loneliness. In this case, it is understood that Circe is independent and powerful in Miller's portrayal.

Odysseus, as a human, reminds Circe of her unrequited love for Glaucus and Glaucus' relationship with Scylla. Odysseus has a wife, and he needs to return to her. The experience of being a mother is added to the story with Circe giving birth to a son with Odysseus. With Circe becoming a mother, Cixous's term "writing with maternal milk" adds a nice nuance to this narrative. Through Circe's feminine language, the foundation of "écriture féminine" separates from male-centered, word-focused writing and presents the reader with the experiences of motherhood from a female writer's perspective: "Thank the gods, I did not have to sleep. Every minute I must wash, boil, clean, scrub, and put to soak. Yet how could I do that when every minute he also needed something—food, change, and sleep?" (Miller, 2018, p. 334) In this case, concerns and anxieties naturally arise from the close attention a mother gives to her child. Towards the end of the work, it explores how a mother instinctively approaches her son and is willing to do anything for him. As a woman, Circe writes her own story and reveals the reasons and consequences of her actions. Undoubtedly, when the male-centered language is abandoned, it becomes possible to eliminate biases against the female character.

Furthermore, throughout Circe's narrative, Perse's motherhood emerges in a more suppressed manner. Here, Circe's motherhood and her own mother Perse's motherhood can be compared, and the

influence of two different environments on motherhood can be observed. As a mother, Circe is a woman who has control over her son and can make decisions on her own, but details such as her mother telling her that her physical attributes are not good enough and that they should have a better child for her husband indicate that she is a victim of patriarchy. While Circe's role as a mother has made her more anxious, responsible, and controlling, her mother's lack of these qualities can be evaluated from a feminist perspective. Circe's mother is a more passive female character who does not require control and does not raise her voice as a woman. Undoubtedly, the underlying reason for this is Perse's presence in a palace dominated by male hegemony and her unnecessary need to stand out as a woman. On the other hand, Circe, especially as a mother, is a character who has to write her own story; she has to think for her beloved son and is responsible for protecting the island she lives on and her son Telegonus. She must provide the best protection that Telegonus earns by taking Trigon's tail. Additionally, she must protect her son with the help of Athena, the great goddess and daughter of Zeus. After Telegonus kills his own father, Odysseus, he brings Odysseus's wife, Penelope, and their son to the island. After some time, Odysseus's wife, Penelope, manages to befriend Circe on the island. Penelope is also a woman who leaves behind her patriarchal world and finds a new life on the island. Both Circe and Penelope survive and stay safe on the island with their sons by their sides, taking on their responsibilities. While everyone moves forward with their choices, Circe gains complete freedom with her rebellion by being exiled to a single island, threatening her father, a powerful male god figure. Miller's writing about Circe is a response to her infamous reputation. In fact, Circe is a character who is exiled from the patriarchal order where she spent her entire life. The theory of "écriture féminine" by Cixous, frequently mentioned in this writing, is presented to the reader through the basis of the mythological world, showcasing the consequences of gender-based inequality in being a woman. With Miller's Circe, a woman who expresses herself and writes, she can make her voice heard and find a place in society.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Miller's Circe confronts and processes every trauma and adversity she experiences by writing about them. Cixous (1976) draws attention to this by stating, "The only book that is worth writing is the one we don't have the courage or strength to write. The book that hurts us, that makes us tremble, redden, bleed." The reader witnesses a woman's personal development, actualization, and existence. Circe's journey begins when she breaks free from patriarchal hegemony in a way. She faces the consequences of a mistake driven by jealousy, inflicts harm on another woman, and forever changes her own fate. She causes the loss of hundreds of lives and experiences sexual assault on the island she rules as a woman. Through writing, she confronts herself, realizing that she possesses a gender that is perceived as weak and powerless. Thus, she learns to defend herself through the metaphor of magic until she finds strength within. This essay aims to shed light on Circe's story by

closely examining Miller's Circe, drawing on Cixous' feminist theory of "écriture féminine," and giving meaning to her narrative. Circe's story, which gains meaning as she writes and embarks on a journey of self-actualization, shares striking similarities with the concept of "écriture féminine." Evaluating the portrayal of women's writing through the mythological character of Circe allows for a metaphorical self-expression that can transcend biases and infamous reputations imposed on women throughout centuries. By giving Circe a voice and increasing the significance placed on her voice, Miller has revitalized her with meaningful fame. Remembering Circe and her voice in this work serves as a reference to women oppressed under male hegemony. Examining this work through the lens of Cixous' (1976) "The Laugh of the Medusa" suggests that the positioning of women's role even in the realm of fantasy is predetermined and that the inheritance of infamous women is a consequence of male superiority. The reexamination of Medusa's infamous reputation brought forth by Cixous is made possible for Circe through her opportunity to vindicate herself through writing. This fantastical narrative serves as a reminder of women's power. Every attribute accepted as part of being a woman is necessary for her existence. Circe's power, unthinkable for many other powerful goddesses, finds its place in the book. Women will exist as long as they continue to write and make their voices heard. A woman's voice is in need of being heard, and regardless of the world she occupies, she must continue to write.

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Marginality as a Site of Resistance: Disrupting and Challenging the Status Quo in H.M. Naqvi's Home Boy

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Abstract

Considering the sublime notion of emancipation, enlightenment and transformation associated with research, this chapter explores the response of contemporary Pakistani literature in English, i.e. how writers are responding, reacting, and relating to the contemporary reality of terrorism, violence, extremism and suicide bombing. This paper highlights the exclusion and discriminating attitude faced by the Muslim American men and women, specifically Pakistani Americans, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in America. Through the lens of fiction; namely– Home Boy (H. M. Naqvi), I have endeavored to bring into light the terrible experiences the Pakistani Americans underwent, the humiliation and discrimination they endured at the hands of the American government and individuals, the personal and collective impacts of 9/11 on their lives and above all the ways in which Pakistani Americans have adapted to the post-9/11 attitudes and situations. H. M. Naqvi's Home Boy deals with the events of 9/11 in varying degrees and relations and adopts various strategies for representing this devastating event. The paper exposes the margins as a site of resistance as well as representation and aims at giving voice to the earlier unheard marginalized peoples by exploring the writer's humble struggle for decolonizing the future i.e. not only disrupting the status quo, but also challenging and questioning it.

Keywords: *terrorist attacks, post- 9/11 status quo, disrupting, challenging, resistance, marginality*

1. Introduction

The impact of 9/11 and its literary representation by the Muslim authors give an insight into the marginalized and inhuman treatment of Muslim Americans on one hand and exhibit the discriminating psyche of Americans on the other hand. The American and British writers have also represented 9/11 in their literature but these representations tend to demonize Islam, derogate and defame the Islamic faith and its fundamentals. Immediately, one year after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, more than twenty books had been written and published with the central theme of associating menace, terrorism, and destruction with Islam (Watanabe, 2002). Of these, two anti-Islam books became the best-selling titles at amazon.com (Watanabe, 2002). These were, *Militant Islam Reaches America* by Daniel Pipes and *American Jihad: The Terrorists Among Us* by Steven Emerson. In response to such literary output, Muslim authors took a strong stand against terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. *Home Boy* (H. M. Naqvi) is one of the few novels that responded to the negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims. This text brings into light the crucial issues of resistance, extremism, hostility, violence, fear, identity, and an endeavor for an enlightened and emancipated society (Rumi, 2009). The writers through their characters, not only disrupt the status quo, but also challenge and question it. Following comment by bell hooks, a renowned feminist theorist and cultural critic, can be connected to H. M. Naqvi's novel, *Home Boy*, by exploring the themes of intervention, identity, and liberation.

This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we meet in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as a site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators (hooks, 1990, p.343).

Both the comment and the novel can be seen as interventions within their respective contexts. hooks' comment is a call to challenge and disrupt existing power structures and dominant narratives, particularly in relation to race, gender, and class. Similarly, *Home Boy* can be seen as an intervention within the literary landscape, offering a nuanced portrayal of Pakistani immigrant experiences that goes beyond stereotypes and clichés. Furthermore, both bell hooks' comment and *Home Boy* address the notion of identity. hooks emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and embracing multiple identities, particularly those that

challenge traditional norms and expectations. Similarly, *Home Boy* explores the complexities of identity formation for its characters, who are caught between their Pakistani heritage and their experiences in America. The novel highlights the struggles and conflicts faced by these individuals as they negotiate their cultural, religious, and personal identities. Lastly, both the comment and the novel touch upon the theme of liberation. bell hooks' statement suggests that the message emerging from the space between her work offers a path towards liberation from oppressive systems. Likewise, *Home Boy* presents a narrative that seeks liberation for its characters, both individually and collectively. The novel portrays the characters' quest for freedom from societal expectations, cultural constraints, and personal limitations.

Pakistani Americans have endured discriminatory attitudes, verbal harassment, violent threats and coercion, physical assault; also, religious profiling, and employment, education and housing discrimination, especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Pakistani Americans have coped with and responded to the assaults on their faith, personal and national identities in a number of ways. The concepts of identity and representation in the wake of the 9/11 attacks have been analyzed from the lens of fiction. Since post-9/11 discourses have not only focused largely on American identity (especially related to wealth, capitalism and economical and cultural domination) and representation of Islam and especially fundamentalist Islam but have also ignored the perspective of Muslim Americans, curbed their individual, collective, national and religious identity, who in consequence, disrupted the status quo to reclaim their true identity. As Che Guevara, in his speech to the United Nations on December 11, 1964, announces, "The final hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Latin America rise to meet a new life and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination".

Islam as a religion has been misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented in the United States for long and there were lots of suspicions in the Western mind regarding the Muslims. Yet, the response that followed 9/11 was unexpected and a shock for the Muslim community settled in America.

2. Literature Review

9/11 was a catastrophe not merely for the American nation but it was equally painful and had adverse effects on the lives of all those who lived in the United States of America irrespective of color, creed, race and religion. Therefore, Habermas announces it as “the first historic world event” (2003, p.7). Prior to discussing the devastating effects of 9/11 on the lives of the Muslim community of the United States, I would like to give the widely acclaimed definitions of terrorism and terrorist, and would then give an account of this widespread disaster, unfolding its catastrophic effects on the lives of the Muslims worldwide and specifically on Muslim Americans. Grant Andrews (2010) in his Master’s thesis titled *Representation and Identity in the Wake of 9/11: Khaled Hosseini’s The Kite Runner, Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Frédéric Beigbeder’s Windows on the World and Don DeLillo’s Falling Man*, has also highlighted the response of both Western/European and Muslim writers to the tragic attacks of 9/11. Andrews, while discussing the use of the term terrorism by Muslim novelists, elucidates that the novels written by Muslim writers undoubtedly respond to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, yet they rarely use the word “terrorism” themselves, showing an awareness of the emotive, fraught, and contested nature of this concept (2010). I have also used the term “terrorism” in this text with a similar interpretation. Martha Crenshaw deals with the problem of defining terrorism, “The problem of defining terrorism has hindered analysis since the inception of studies of terrorism in the early 1970s. [...] The use of the term is often polemical and rhetorical. It can be a pejorative label, meant to condemn an opponent’s cause as illegitimate rather than describe behavior” (2000, p. 406).

Leach demonstrates some of the tensions around this concept in the context of 9/11 and the war on terror:

Within a postmodern world in which old-fashioned racist values must never be acknowledged, a new racism has evolved — or ‘metaracism’ as Etienne Balibar has described it — in which ethnic or racial factors cannot be ‘named’, and yet in which alternative cultural values cannot be accepted. Hence the convenient slogan of the ‘war on terror’, in which freedom fighters of different ideological persuasions can only be construed as ‘terrorists’ (2003, pp. 85-86).

Leach exposes the true American psyche and its colonial mindset of dehumanizing and discriminating the Orient/ the terrorist other who happen to be the Muslims after 9/11. He states, “ for the United States, Muslim freedom fighters are ‘terrorists,’ and the United States is ‘the land of the free,’ while for Muslim extremists suicide bombers are volunteer

‘martyrs,’ while the United States is tainted for supporting the ‘terrorist’ State of Israel (2003, p. 89).

Keeping this definition of a terrorist in mind, terrorism cannot be defined by the identity, ethnicity or religion of its executors or even by the cause they advocate. Instead terrorism is identified by the nature of the act. Terrorism is the premeditated and intentional assault on innocent civilians. An important point here is that terrorism must be differentiated from lawful acts of war that intended to curb combatants and may well accidentally harm civilians. The terrorists by design murder, mutilate, and threaten civilians. No cause, no accusation, and no excuse can ever validate terrorism. Terrorism against any nation may it be Pakistanis, Americans, British, Israelis, Russians, or anyone else, is all the same; a fraction of the same vice and ought to be treated as such.

3. Methodology

The present research is located within Fairclough’s framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which looks at the underlying ideological structures ingrained within the discursive structure of text i.e. the written discourse. This framework is used as it encompasses characteristics of multi-faceted analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerges from a critical theory of language which observes that the use of language is actually a form of social practice. As all social practices reflect particular historical contexts, hence language as a form of social practice becomes the means to not only produce or contest prevailing social relations but also to serve specific interests.

Norman Fairclough’s framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an all-inclusive approach that takes into account the multifunctional, multidimensional, critical and historical facets of social discourse. The multidimensional aspect of Norman Fairclough’s framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) sees discourse from three interrelated perspectives; discourse as text, the discursive practice of discourse and social practice of discourse. Thus, for Fairclough discourse as a text is viewed as comprising a variety of linguistic elements within its internal structure to communicate certain meaning and produce certain effects on the readers, as recipients of the discourse. Hence discourse becomes a site for communicating meaning by means of manipulating the linguistic elements prevalent in the text.

The analysis will focus on the probable interpretations on the role of the writer as producer of the narrative discourse in carrying on the ideologies revealed within the discursive aspect of the narrative discourse. This is critical as narrative discourse is considered to be a social discourse that serves as a site for the struggle between members of society in relation to the ideological formation exhibited in the narrative discourse. Through this analysis, I endeavor to explain the dialectic relationship between society and discourse; by revealing how the writer has effectively challenged and questioned the Eurocentric values imposed on the Muslims by the whites in previous discourses, by subverting and decolonizing the typical representation of the Muslim Americans in the present narrative discourse.

4. Marginality as a Site of Resistance: Disrupting and Challenging Status Quo in H. N.

Naqvi's *Home Boy*

Often, formerly colonized countries including Pakistan are frequently homogenized under an umbrella term i.e. the Third World countries and the present terrorism and chaos have worsened the situation and raised an urgent need for contemporary Pakistani fiction writers to not only reclaim but also reinterpret their identity. H. M. Naqvi, through his literary endeavors is struggling to reclaim the true Muslim-Pakistani identity by challenging the status quo and questioning the Western hegemony. One of the major problems faced by Pakistan and almost all Third World countries is the crisis of representation, marginalization and the label of being the Other. The present wave of terrorism following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, has further misrepresented and moved the Pakistani Muslims further to the margins. Muslim Americans, specifically those from Pakistani origin, are forced to see themselves through the Western lens, which has occupied the center since long. Pakistani writers have felt the urgent need of giving voice to the earlier unheard and silenced Pakistani community and taken a stand against their misrepresentation. They are not merely concerned with recovering past cultures and histories, but discovering how the world can move beyond colonialism towards a region of mutual esteem and respect. These writers emphasize that the formerly colonized nations would continue to be hybrid with a wretchedly schizophrenic identity if they don't challenge and question the Western hegemony. The center is shifting anew; formerly colonized and silenced voices are entering the discourse.

The lives of the three protagonists in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* also take a turning point after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In *Home Boy*, H.M. Naqvi presents an innovative voice; a novel approach to investigate and comprehend the lives of Muslims in New York City in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11. This is the narrative of three youthful men, Chuck, Jimbo and AC, who live in the present and are least bothered about tomorrow. Simultaneously their carefree attitude conveys that they are indecisive and vague about the rationale of their lives. They are also struggling to tune to the reality that they are actually denizens of two worlds; one is the ever-flourishing and modern world of the United States, while the other is apparently backward but traditional world of Pakistan. The crucial event around which the narrative revolves, the fall of the Twin Towers, occurs when the three are out on a search for an informal acquaintance, Mohammad Shah nicknamed Shaman, and happen to land at his apartment in his absence. They plan to spend the night at Shaman's place. Shaman is assumed to be involved in some mysterious business so the neighbors report to the FBI as this was immediately after the 9/11 attacks. *Home Boy* echoes the tone of the juvenile, hip-hop, and youthful man struggling to mingle into a different and changed world that is completely detached from the world in Karachi. The narrative unwraps immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 with a potent opening sentence, "We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo, and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (Naqvi, 2010, p.1).

Regrettably, this pulse was on the verge of delegating into an immense, unfamiliar arrhythmia that would have drastic effects on the lives of the protagonists, though in diverse ways.

Naqvi compares the speeches of President George W. Bush ["As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world" (Bush, 2001)] with the incidents and sufferings in the lives of these young men who over and over again discover that their skin color and their Muslim names go against them. It is basically the narrative of the maturing of a young immigrant who tries to hang on to all that is imperative in his world.

4.1 No More an American

Muslim Americans' loyalty and patriotism were in no degree less than the Anglo-Americans, they owned her and felt empathy and oneness with the Americans, who were back in their most celebrated guise of the colonizer in the aftermath of 9/11.

This discrimination and marginalization can be traced in the development of Shehzad aka Chuck's relation with America and its varying dynamics. The notion of belongingness to New York City is witnessed in the character of Chuck, the possible hero of H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*. The narrator of the novel Chuck introduces Jimbo as "born and bred in Jersey, Jimbo was a bona fide American"(Naqvi, 2010, p. 3). Chuck, the only expatriate among three friends, goes to the extent of claiming the New York City, "I had arrived in New York from Karachi four years earlier to attend college, which I completed swimmingly in three and though I was the only expatriate among us, liked to believe I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi, 2010, p.3).

The characters of Naqvi dwell in America, not to attain any material goal or out of a sense of gratitude, but merely as personalities who symbolize a blend of New York Metropolitan and Pakistan. As Naqvi narrates;

We surveyed the *Times* and the *Post* and other treatises of mainstream discourse on a daily basis, consulted the *Voice* weekly, and often leafed through other publications with more discriminating audiences such as *Tight* or *Big Butt*.....we had read the Russians, the postcolonial cannon, but had been taken by the brash, boisterous voices of the contemporary American fiction;... we listened to Nusrat and the new generation of native rockers, as well as old-school gangsta rap (Naqvi, 2010, p.1).

Chuck, AC and Jimbo occupy America as buoyant cosmopolitans, as confident men of the world, as people whose compliance banishes remoteness because these three Pakistani cum American heroes of the novel are as much at home in Jack's bar as they would have been at a restaurant in Karachi. At an instance, Naqvi expresses this notion of belongingness to the New York as,

You could as Minie Auntie told me once, spend ten years in Britain and not feel British, but after spending ten months in New York, you were a New Yorker, an original settler and in no time you would be zipping uptown,

downtown, cross town, wherever, strutting, jay walking, dispensing directions to tourists like a mandarin (2010, p.9).

Naqvi's novel infers that the story of the denizens of the Third World steadily progressing in America, or struggling to, has been squeezed dry. Their American dream has turned to nothingness. The three heroes that decide to lead their lives in America in the novel *Home Boy* are by now American as they are already home boys on the forte of their self-belief. But with the fall of the Twin Towers, the scene changes utterly. The American dream of Chuck is turned into nothingness, in the post-9/11 times, when color and racial discrimination was at its peak; every Muslim American was looked upon as a suspected terrorist. These three men fancied themselves to be bona fide New Yorkers, nearly in all aspects, but in the post-9/11 times, they are suspected of being terrorists; the only reason being that they were outside on road in the late hours of the night. Chuck gives a hint to the post-9/11 attitudes in the words, "Who then could have anticipated that it would soon not be possible for three brown men to drive across America in a rented car, even with a blond in tow" (Naqvi, 2010, p.69).

4.2 Muslims become The Other(s): Changing Status quo

The novel exposes the complexities and the issues that arise because of Otherness. The three young men in *Home Boy* are all overpowered by a strong sense of Otherness in their lives which serve as the turning point in the novel. The verbal harassment and the use of abusive language against Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 were clear indications of categorizing them as the Other. From the postcolonial perspective, the term 'the Other' gives a clear indication of the West dominating the world, marginalizing or excluding the non-West and universalizing its thoughts and ideologies. The Other or as Said calls him the Orient and Spivak has termed him the subaltern, suggests a relation of supremacy, power and domination between the East and the West. Said argues that the Western portrayal of the Orient gives an indication of an inferior human race that is backward, illogical, and violent. This gives the West an opportunity to identify themselves as opposed and contrary to these characteristics; as belonging to a world of superiority, a world that is logical, communal and non-violent. The negative traits attributed to the Orientals can be witnessed to date, for example, Muslims especially the Arabs are portrayed as uncultured people and Islam is

regarded as a violent religion. Naqvi expresses this derogatory attitude of Americans towards Islam and Muslims in his novel quite often, at one instance he goes on to say:

Bawler No.1 hissed, ‘A-rabs’

Repeating the word in my head, I realized it was the first time I’d heard it spoken that way, like *a dagger thrust and turned, the first time anything like this had happened to us at all* (2010, pp.23- 24).

The term Muslim had become an abuse, as Naqvi states, “‘Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever,’ Bawler No.2 snapped” (2010, p.24).

Although Chuck, AC and Jimbo were regular visitors at the Jakes bar yet they experience humiliation and discrimination in the aftermath of 9/11. Post-9/11 attitudes were a shock for them. Post-9/11 situation and circumstances fortified the hatred and resentment that Americans had in their hearts for the Muslim Americans. Chuck, AC and Jimbo were kicked out of Jake’s bar and as in the words of Naqvi, “things were changing” (2010, p.25). The awareness of the disruption in the status quo; the identity blow; the first and foremost moment of realization of the shifting grounds in the novels evoke a quest to disrupt and challenge the status quo for Chuck as in the words of bell hooks make “marginality as the site of resistance” (1990, p.343). Naqvi in the very beginning of the novel most remarkably, expresses the shifting of grounds and the disruption in the status quo as Chuck, AC and Jimbo realize the prejudiced attitude they faced in the aftermath of 9/11. They call themselves bona fide Americans but this claim is turned into nothing more than a swank as post-9/11 attitudes give them a severe identity blow. Their American dream is turned into ashes, as they encounter intolerance, discrimination, abuse and verbal harassment. As in their own words; “We’d become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren’t before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were self-invented and self-made and certain that we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic” (Naqvi, 2010, p.1). The reference made by Naqvi to the attitude of the Americans with the Japs, suggests the domination and supremacy that America has been exercising over the rest of the world and has pushed the colonized nations towards the margins.

4.3 Breaking the Silence: Muslims Challenging and Questioning the Status

Quo

H. M. Naqvi, in his novel *Home Boy*, blames America for its unnecessary interference in the affairs of the world. Through the character of Chuck, Naqvi openly calls America's attitude toward the Third World countries and previously colonized nations to be inhuman. Chuck has the guts to bring the American mindset into light and pull apart the veil of hegemony and domination. Chuck symbolizes the deviant and probing Muslim mind; who is ready to challenge the American discrimination and domination and create for Muslims a space of resistance within the margins, hence making the margins the center and breaking the eerie silence. Chuck tears off the veil of national security under whose guise America actually interferes in the affairs of the rest of the nations and then launches military raids and attacks on them. As in the words of Chuck,

'The point is how do you go about it? In the name of national security, states commit crimes-'

'What crimes?'

'You threw a thousand Japanese into camps, whole families-women, children, old people- because they posed a security threat. That's not right. That's wrong and now it's us. It's me.' Fueled by adrenaline, I continued, 'I was starved (Naqvi, 2010, p. 136).

The plight of the Muslim Americans after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is very much similar to the sufferings of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The post-9/11 discriminatory attitude can be further traced in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* where Chuck is fired from his job without any obvious reason. The VP at Chuck's office confesses his helplessness in this regard and admits that he is being fired irrationally and unfairly.

A year later, however, just after Independence Day, at the beginning of the end of the Great Bull, I was fired. It was quick and efficient, and the pink slip was

unexpectedly yellow. After I had cleared my cubicle into a shoe box, my VP was good enough to invite me into his office. -----Although he must have spoken for ten minutes I only caught his concluding remarks: ‘My hands were tied. You’ll do okay, sport. You’re a team player. You’re taking one for the team’ (Naqvi, 2010, p.30).

Pre-9/11 attitudes also exhibit Muslim Americans challenging the status quo, just on the basis of racial discrimination and suspicions regarding them. The accusation of being the so called extremists had already brought an upheaval and disruption in the mindsets of Muslim Americans. Similar is the case with Chuck, who had been a diligent, loyal and hardworking employee but still he was fired. This firing of Muslims from the jobs was most common in the post-9/11 times when America was ready to go to any extent to satisfy her avenging nature. Firing off innocent Muslims from jobs was one tactic to harass and torture the Muslim community in America.

H. M. Naqvi also hints at the ill-treatment of blacks at various instances in *Home Boy*. Once at the Tja Bar, Chuck’s encounter with his sommelier friend Roger opens him to the plight of Blacks in America. Roger’s comment that a “black man has to adhere to a tacit code ‘right here, right here, right now, today, in the twenty-first century US of A” (Naqvi, 2010, p.120). Further, he goes on to say that,

‘My presence threatens people. When a big white guy moves quickly, people laugh, but when a big black guy moves quickly, they take cover: mothers fear for their children, I’ve seen cops reach for their batons. And I work chi-chi restaurant. I dress well; speak English in grammatically defensible sentences---. And I look into the eyes of these people, and I know they’re thinking, you got no business telling me about no Lestonnac family and no Pavillion Rouge! Know what I’m sayin’ (Naqvi, 2010, p.120).

The accusation of being from a suspect race and an outcast in American society has been the fate of Black Americans since long but post-9/11 attitudes showed that it was now the turn of Muslim Americans to face the music. The ill-treatment and discrimination faced by Roger, a Black man, was similar to the post-9/11 treatment of Muslim Americans. Although majority of the Muslims living in America owned her, they had been born and

bred in America, never once visited their parents' homeland, their parents had immigrated to America even before their birth and didn't return even once. Racial discrimination and harassment in America is an open secret and can be traced back to the initiation of the institution of slavery. Slavery has known to become one of the most ruthless racial discrimination in America's history, and in the world's history. Slavery is a curse and represents one of the worst atrocities that man has afflicted on his race. This curse of slavery was initially introduced in 1619 in the colonies of Great Britain, although, slavery had been known already since long before it came to present-day America (Boles 1984, p.3). Slavery was eradicated from America in 1865 with the announcement of the 13th Amendment in the American Constitution but still, African Americans face discrimination and prejudice and are treated to be inferior to the White Americans (Boles 1984, p.73). The struggle to gain equal rights for African American citizens in America has been a dreadful and long process, and is still ongoing.

4.4 Post-9/11 America: Nets Cast Everywhere to Ensnare Muslims

The suspect race psyche was most prominent in the post-9/11 years when there was ongoing gush of high-profile trials against Muslims on terrorism charges, and in the majority of the cases, at the end the allegations usually turned out to be false and bogus, but still such false allegation and unjust trials continue to keep the Muslim Americans afraid. Many innocent Muslims had to suffer ill-treatment and worst abuses in prisons after being accused of involvement in terrorist activities. No particular type of prejudice or racism defines the discrimination and the ill-treatment experienced by a lot of Muslims since 9/11 in American prisons at the hands of American law enforcement officials. Similarly, the humiliation and abuse of Islamic faith at the hands of Western media cannot be justified. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a large population of Muslims was captured and imprisoned and they were detained without charge and even access to attorneys was denied to them; and a number of Muslims reported that during their detainment in American prisons they were psychologically tortured and physically abused (Ghazali, 2021) The Justice Department confesses that a number of unidentified Muslim Americans had been imprisoned and held in captivity without bond and access to the attorney was also denied to them, although such unjust acts clearly violate the American Constitution (Ghazali, 2021) The arrest of AC, Jimbo and Chuck, in *Home Boy*, is an indication of this suspect race psyche, where these characters are trapped in

a fake and bogus case and accused of charges of terrorism on bogus grounds without much substantial and relevant evidence. The ill-treatment and physical and mental tortures AC, Jimbo and Chuck were subjected to, were really harsh and cruel. As Naqvi describes; “----- but we would later learn that the worst abuses in the American prison system after 9/11 took place at MDC, the Metropolitan Detention Center. According to later, possibly hyperbolic headlines, MDC was ‘America’s’ Own Abu Gharaib” (Naqvi, 2010, p.105).

Muslim prisoners were ill-treated and tortured brutally. It was the height of cruelty and animosity. The American hostility reached its climax when human beings were treated worse than animals. According to a report published in September 2005 by the Human Rights Watch Committee, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the investigation officers at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC), New York, treated the detainees- especially Arab and Muslim Americans in an inhuman and abusing manner, immediately following their arrest (“Human Rights Watch”). The report reveals that the correctional officers banged the detainees against the walls of the prison which caused pain and injuries. According to the report, these officers even twisted painfully the wrists and fingers of the detainees, pulled their restraints brutally to cause bodily harm and pain to their arms and legs or even tripped them so that they might fall down on the floor. The arrestees subjected to this ill-treatment were not at all resistant and non-cooperative with the correctional officers. While a number of investigations were carried out, the Department of Justice concluded that the evidence was not sufficient enough to continue with prosecutions. Human Rights Watch has acknowledged and advocated against American government’s decision to subject almost 752 non citizens to long and mostly arbitrary imprisonment immediately after 9/11. These detainees were imprisoned merely for routine immigration violations but they were illogically involved in 9/11 investigations merely on assumptions and suppositions that these detainees might have links with the terrorist organizations. It is a common misapprehension that a number of non-citizens were detained due to the USA Patriot Act, which was announced law on 26 October 2001 (Ghazali, 2012). Actually, the American government overlooked routine protections for the immigration detainees and detained them till they were cleared off links to terrorists and terrorism.

In H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy*, Chuck too had to face a terrible and manipulated interrogation. Chuck, AC and Jimbo were arrested because of their suspicious presence in the

house of Mohammad Shah and AC's ridiculous and silly behavior with the officers. Apart from this, they had committed no other crime. Officer Rooney, who was given the charge of interrogating and investigating Chuck's case, admits that Chuck is in big trouble now. It is preplanned and Rooney admits that they will entrap him in a fake terrorism case and link it with the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Logically, Chuck, AC and Jimbo should be charged with the accusation of breaking and entering Muhammad Shaw's house and should be detained and interrogated on this offence but instead Rooney starts the interrogation with a question which is totally out of context and he asks Chuck what he feels about what happened on 9/11. The question has no relevance with the real offense for which interrogation is being carried out, i.e. breaking into someone's home in his absence. These irrelevant questions regarding 9/11 are evidence of the avenging and discriminating nature of an American investigation officer who considers the Muslims to be extremists and involved in nearly all the terrorist activities and atrocities against America. Rooney is least bothered about Chuck and his friends breaking into Muhammad Shaw's house; he doesn't pay heed to the real offense instead his discriminating and avenging psyche is pleased that he has caught and trapped three young Muslims who were once bona fide Americans with all their loyalties and patriotism. Rooney is free to manipulate the charges against them and trap them in a false and bogus terrorist case and become an American hero by playing his role in taking revenge for the 9/11 attacks from the Muslims. This clearly indicates the shifting grounds and the changing of the status quo after 9/11. The very first question in the interrogation is irrelevant and shocking for Chuck, his senses cease to work at this unexpected question;

'Lemme ask you something: How d'you feel about what happened on September eleventh?'

'What-'

'Did it make you happy?'

'This is ridiculous. I want to make my phone call. I know my rights.'

'You aren't American!' he fired back. 'You got no fucking rights' (Naqvi, 2010, p. 107).

This interrogation is an open expression of the ill-treatment faced by the Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. It clearly represents the hegemonic and sick American mindset in the form of officer Rooney who relates the whole situation with 9/11 although in reality their offence has no link with 9/11 terrorist attacks. He clearly admits the American discriminating psyche by announcing that Chuck is not an American so he does not have any rights. This is really ironical as Chuck, although an immigrant, had a strong sense of belongingness with America and especially New York. Chuck, the only expatriate among the three, goes to the extent of claiming New York City. "I had arrived in New York from Karachi four years earlier to attend college, which I completed swimmingly in three and though I was the only expatriate among us, liked to believe I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi, 2010, p.3). Chuck's notion of belongingness, his patriotism is turned into ashes when Officer Rooney says that Chuck isn't American, so he doesn't have any right to make a phone call, i.e. he doesn't have any access to justice. Rooney is denying Chuck his basic right i.e. to appeal for trial. In accordance with the California Penal Code, section 851.5, instantly upon being arrested and, with the exception of a place where it is physically impossible, within the first three hours after being arrested, the arrested person has every right to make at least three complete telephone calls. He can make these calls free of charge if the calls are being made to telephone numbers that fall within the range of the local calling area. The arrested person may make the calls at his expense if the calls to be made fall outside the range of the local calling area. This law further elucidates that at any police station or any other place where the arrested person is being held, a sign or notice holding the above-mentioned information in bold block type shall be displayed in a conspicuous and noticeable place. Firstly, the arrested person has the right to make a complete call to an attorney of his or her choice. If the arrested person has no funds, he can make a call to the public defender or any other attorney appointed by the court to help indigents, whose telephone number shall also be posted. This telephone call shall not be eavesdropped upon, monitored or recorded. Secondly, an arrested person has the right to make a complete call to a bail bondsman. Thirdly, an arrested person also has the right to make a complete telephone call to a friend or a relative. The law further illustrates that any employee or a public officer who deliberately deprives an arrestee of any right allowed by the above section will be considered guilty of an infringement. The treatment which Chuck receives at the hands of Rooney is not only a total contrast but also a direct violation of this state law. It is a question

mark to America's claim to be one of the major supporters of human rights. Rooney's remark challenges and questions the fake slogan of equality claimed by American human rights associations. H. M. Naqvi shows a contrast to Rooney's comment in the presidential address of the American President George W. Bush and later on exposes the hypocrisy in the presidential address. The president admits that the teachings of Islam are peaceful and good and the Muslims are not the enemies of America, yet the government functionaries trapped innocent Muslims in fake terrorist charges just because of their Islamic faith. Later in the interrogation Rooney exposes his evil designs by offering Chuck a deal that if he admits that his friends were involved in terrorist activities, Chuck will be spared and will face an easy and lenient trial. As Rooney continues;

'Listen,' Rooney said conspiratorially. 'You admit that your pals were involved in terrorist activities, and we'll go easy on you. We'll plead for leniency. Don't protect your friends, because they aren't gonna protect you. All right, all right?'

'Terrorist activities?'

'What were you guys planning at Shaw's? Don't bullshit me because we've already busted into your pal Aly's apartment over in the city. We found books, books in Arabic, and bomb-making manuals. So do yourself a favor and cooperate' (Naqvi, 2010, p.108).

It was later found that the books announced as evil Arabic literature and the bomb-making manual were actually *Ibne Khaldun's Muqaddimah* and *The Anarchist Cookbook*. The issue that arises here is how could the investigating officers and officials responsible for the fate of a young Muslim prisoner carry out the investigation so casually and carelessly that they regard a classic book of Arabic literature as bomb-making manual without even taking an Arabic language expert's opinion on its content.

[...] Although the terrorism charges against AC were dismissed---- the bomb-making manual and the sinister Arabic literature turned out to be *The Anarchist Cookbook* and *Ibne Khaldun's Muqaddimah*, respectively----the authorities found four and a half grams of cocaine on his person. 'The penalty for

possession in New York is the same for second-degree murder (Naqvi, 2010, p. 193).

H. M. Naqvi further exposes the inhuman treatment and the abuses that the Muslim prisoners suffered in the American prisons after 9/11. As Chuck narrates;

In another room, I was uncuffed by the guards, then commanded to strip. They must have watched as I reached around my waist, unbuttoned my shirt, kicked off my lizard-skins one by one, and then unraveled my belt and stripped off my jeans like a pantomime getting into a tub of hot water. ‘Take off everything, sand nigger,’ they instructed. I repeated slur in my mind as I stood before them in sagging black polyester-blend socks, my limp head dangling between my thighs. ‘He’s cut, he’s cut,’ they cried, clapping or slapping fives’ (2010, p. 108).

It was a really inhuman attitude that a prisoner is asked to strip off and made naked. This has nothing to do with the allegations that he is charged with. The stripping off of the Muslim prisoners’ pants to confirm circumcision, and hence their Islamic faith, was a procedure to confirm the innocent Muslims as extremists and terrorists. For a country like America, it is really ironic that their trials of innocent Muslims are dependent on such unreliable, illogical, and ridiculous investigations i.e. on confirming their Islamic faith after physical examination, they will be charged with terrorist allegations. Circumcision is a religious obligation for Muslims, a compulsion in Islam as well as in Judaism, which is being humiliated by the guards, symbolizing the American nation in general. Moreover, the use of the word *nigger* is insulting and derogatory. Nigger is an abusive word used for Black and a symbol of discrimination and humiliation. With the increase in hegemonic racism during colonialism (from the 19th to the first half of the 20th centuries) a number of terms, expressions and names were employed to portray and signify minority groups dwelling within Europe itself and in the colonies (Hubinette, 2012, p. 44). According to Hubinette:

Categories like “Negro”, “Redskin”, “Oriental”, “Eskimo”, “Lapp”, “Semite” and “Gypsy” were used within the scientific world as well as by the state apparatus, by the media, in the cultural sphere and, above all, in daily life, The word “Negro” and its even more denigrating version “Nigger” is

nowadays in an Anglo-American and English language context usually known as the N-word, several American baseball teams which were previously called “Redskins” have changed their names, and in 2002 the American congress decided to replace the term Oriental with the word Asian in statistical and official documents (2012, p.48).

Chuck further narrates the terrible abuses of the prison in the words;

As I lapsed in and out of consciousness, reconciling where I had been and where I was—two worlds separated, as it were, by light-years—the door banged open. Two guards entered. -----Swatting the back of my head, the white guy cried, ‘You pissed yourself, pencil-dick! I’m gonna make you pay for my kickers!’ It seemed routine, the invective, the casual violence, the way things are going to be: doors would open, doors would close, and I would be smacked around, molested, hauled back and forth between cells and interrogation sessions (Naqvi, 2010, p. 112).

The second interrogation session was even worst, as Chuck recounts;

‘Sit your ass down,’ the goateed guard instructed (and grabbing a handful of hair, reminded me that he’d see me soon). As per his instructions, I sat glued to the seat, braced for the worst: hamstringing, kneecapping, garroting, shock therapy, Chinese water torture. In a changed America, it seemed anything could happen (Naqvi, 2010, p.112).

Chuck is in the initial stage of interrogation, he hasn’t been proved guilty and still he is an accused, that too of fake terrorist allegations, but the ill-treatment and worst abuses he is subjected to; do not coincide with the procedure that should legally be adopted for a prisoner. The term “changed America” (Naqvi, 2010, p.112) is critical. The term encompasses a wider and deeper meaning. It indicates the changing status quo and the disruption in American society resulting in the disruption in the mindset of Muslim Americans. The term refers to the call for challenging and questioning the sick and discriminating American psyche. Chuck, AC and Jimbo who had once fancied themselves, “boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men”, had now been converted and demoted to the status of “Japs, Jews, Niggers” (Naqvi, 2010, p.1). The ill-treatment in the MDC makes them realize the bitterest reality of 21st

century, i.e. Muslim Americans should now reinterpret their identity as America no longer owns them. Post-9/11 insult and discrimination resulted in retaliation and hatred among the Muslim population in the United States of America and henceforth resulted in disruption of the status quo. The Muslims stood against this tyranny and discrimination and openly challenged American hegemony and her occupation of the center and focal position, and pushing the previously colonized and now the Third World countries to the margins. The center is shifting anew, the Third World countries and the suppressed ethnic groups within America are raising their voices and making the margins a site of resistance and creating opportunities for enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation hence leading to decolonization which should be and is the ultimate and logical consequence of this disruption and challenging of American status quo by the Muslim Americans.

4.5 The Other Looks Back: Muslims Disillusioned with America

H. M. Naqvi expresses the America's distrust and hatred for the Muslims in the post-9/11 scenario and their retaliation most beautifully and effectively. As Chuck narrates;

In prison, I finally got it. I understood that just like three black men were gangsters and three Jews were a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell. And later, much later the pendulum would swing back, and everybody would celebrate progress, the storied tradition of accommodation, on TV talk shows and posters in middle schools. There would be ceremonies, apologies, cardboard displays. In the interim, however I threatened order, threatened civilization. In the interim, I too had to adhere to an unwritten code (2010, p.121).

Chuck, symbolizing Muslim Americans in general, arrives at a clear and deeper understanding of the changing the status quo in the post-9/11 America and declares himself ready to disrupt and challenge it by questioning American hegemony and discrimination of the Muslim community residing in America. His comparison of the Jews and Blacks with the Muslims is worth considering. As discussed earlier, the Blacks had been victims of White Americans' hatred and discrimination since long. The Jews have also been an outcast in American society and been subjected to humiliation and discrimination. Similar was the plight of Muslim Americans in the post-9/11 America. H. M. Naqvi, peeps into history and

sheds light on America's strange attitude, firstly ill treating the previously colonized Third World countries and inflicting worst atrocities upon these nations and then after avenging and satisfying its hegemony and discriminating nature, America regards its ill-treatment as a response headed towards the betterment of these nations. The term "unwritten code" (Naqvi, 2010, p.121) is ironic and symbolizes hypocrisy and America's dual standards of justice which states that all Muslims are terrorists and meant to be subjected to ill-treatment and discrimination. In most of the trials and terrorist allegations against Muslims there is no reliable and authentic proof; just on the basis of unreliable and illogical information and self-invented proofs, these innocent Muslims are put behind the bars and subjected to worst abuses. The "unwritten code" (Naqvi, 2010, p. 121) symbolizes the taken for grantedness of America and its discriminating psyche; it's not a written code, yet every Muslim after 9/11 understood that they are meant to be ill-treated and subjected to humiliation, and discrimination. Moreover, the term unwritten code is also an indication of the American discriminating psyche although there was no law or any allegation against the Muslims in black and white; yet, in America, every Muslim after 9/11 understood that the Muslim community has become the major target of American hatred and discrimination and has replaced the Japanese Americans, Native Americans and Blacks and would have to confront the consequences.

Chuck, at another instance in the novel, while talking to his mother on phone, openly expresses the changed life in America, the disrupted status quo, the feeling of being in a strange and foreign land, where you never belonged and will never belong in future,

"What do you want me to tell you Ma? That life's changed? The city's changed? That there's sadness around every corner? There are cops every where? You know there was a time when a police presence was reassuring, like at a parade or late at night, at a street, in the subway, but now I am afraid of them. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, may be it will pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe, I dint know, history will keep repeating itself....." (Naqvi , 2010, p.206).

5. Conclusion

The ill-treatment of Muslim Americans in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 clearly points out that America has launched a campaign that has harshly destabilized and threatened the social and legal rights of the Muslim population in America which happens to be a big minority. The abhorrence, grudge and distrust of the Americans are aimed at the Muslim Americans. Together with the imprisonment of the Muslim Americans immediately after 9/11 which was an accepted and acknowledged fact, now they are subjected to hostility and mental torture; the imprisonment of the Muslim Americans is now virtual symbolized by frequent home raids, interrogations, unlawful arrests, closed court rooms, secret evidence, special registrations, deportation and discrimination and harassment at workplaces and educational institutions that the Muslim Americans have faced since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. These virtual detention camps are sustained by hate, fear, racism, intolerance and religious bias.

Most Americans believe that taking away other people's freedom and liberty in their name of American security and stability is acceptable and fine. We should pay heed to the quote by one of the Americans' founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, who once said, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety" (1955, p.21). A sustainable and workable democracy needs an educated and active citizenry. Indifference and passivity will one day become one of the worst enemies for America even more than terrorism or any terrorist group. America's lack of care and engagement with her neighboring countries makes it much easier for America to make policies and legislate laws that will make her lesser accommodating, not only for the humiliated and shunned minority groups; the Muslim Americans but its repercussions will also be felt by the entire American nation.

At present, one rarely finds a place or residence in America where there are no Muslims residing and working. The Muslim community in America constitutes an important portion of the population of America. The Muslim community signifies many identities and movements. Muslim population is gradually increasing owing to conversion, migration and inter-faith marriages. The increase in the numbers of Muslims in America has led to the development of a number of institutions that cater to the needs of the Muslim community. But the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were a hard blow for the Muslim community in America. Regardless of President George W. Bush's assurances, Muslims in America have to face all types of

problems. The Western media is mostly responsible for the biases and prejudices against Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11. American Muslims are disrupting the status quo and challenging America's views of Islam as an alien faith and of Muslims as furious fundamentalists or bomb-dropping terrorists. Doing away with this negative image remains one of the toughest challenges for Muslims in America. Muslims are not only challenging these stereotypes; they are questioning and challenging the status quo which clearly shows that the Muslims are resolute to disrupt the status quo. *Home Boy* by H. M. Naqvi challenges and disrupts the post-9/11 status quo by humanizing Muslim characters, counteracting cultural stereotypes, critiquing surveillance and racial profiling, exploring interfaith relationships, and rethinking the immigrant experience. *Home Boy* presents a diverse range of Muslim characters, challenging the stereotypical portrayals prevalent in the post-9/11 narratives. Naqvi offers a nuanced portrayal of his characters, highlighting their individuality, aspirations, and struggles. By humanizing Muslim characters, Naqvi challenges the simplistic and often negative representations of Muslims in the mainstream media. The novel subverts cultural stereotypes by showcasing the complex identities and diverse interests of its characters. Naqvi challenges the notion that all Pakistani immigrants are solely defined by their religion or cultural background. Instead, he explores their multifaceted lives, including their pursuit of artistic endeavors, personal relationships, and dreams beyond the expectations placed upon them. Shehzad, Ali, and Jimbo are Pakistani immigrants living in New York City, and Naqvi delves into their personal stories, struggles, and aspirations, humanizing them beyond their cultural or religious backgrounds. By doing so, Naqvi challenges the monolithic portrayal of Muslims or immigrants as seen in the post-9/11 narratives. Through the characters of Shehzad, Ali, and Jimbo, Naqvi offers alternative perspectives on the post-9/11 world. Shehzad aka Chuck, a banker turned graffiti artist, expresses his frustration with the corporate world and channels his creativity into a form of resistance. Ali, an aspiring writer, seeks to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam through his literary endeavors. Jimbo, a free-spirited musician, embraces his identity as a Pakistani-American and refuses to conform to societal expectations. Naqvi addresses the heightened surveillance and racial profiling experienced by Muslims in the post-9/11 era. He underscores the impact of such policies on individuals' daily lives, creating a sense of unease and injustice. Through his characters, Naqvi sheds light on the psychological toll and erosion of civil liberties caused by these practices. The ill-treatment of Chuck and AC at MDC highlights America's

discrimination and racism against the Muslims. *Home Boy* challenges religious divides by exploring interfaith relationships. The novel depicts romantic relationships and friendships that bridge the gap between different faiths, emphasizing the shared humanity and connections that can exist beyond religious boundaries. By portraying these relationships, Naqvi challenges the narrative of a monolithic clash of civilizations.

America was believed to be a land of immigrants, a melting pot for all ethnic identities and races. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the immigrant Muslims along with the Muslim Americans continue to confront a number of challenges as citizens of America. Amongst these, the major issues include the up keeping of an Islamic code of life in a secular country like America and mostly the influence of the American society on Muslim children, devastating negative images which hinder the capabilities of the Muslims to make their needs heard and also Muslims being heard on matters of foreign policy in which the Muslim community has strong sentiments.

Muslim Americans seem to be moving into an altogether new stage of identity in which concerns like acculturation, occupation, dress, and relationship among diverse ethnic and racial Muslim groups along with relationship with Americans are being met and resolved in creative and new ways. Rising Muslim-American political awareness might be the surest and the most definite sign of assimilation. The present generation understands that to safeguard its rights as Muslims and Americans it has to raise its voice. It has to disrupt, question and challenge the status quo in order to change the status quo and consequently achieve their ultimate goal i.e. decolonizing the future.

I strongly believe that Muslim Americans relate to the American ideals of human rights, democracy, pluralism, and justice not merely through their American citizenship but also through their religious identity as Muslims. They strongly argue that the Islamic faith promotes all these ideals and values and hence Muslim Americans are at home with the political system of America. Nonetheless, they are over and over again disappointed and disillusioned with what they see as an incongruity and discrepancy in American values and ideals and American international and domestic policies. Muslim Americans continue to search around for a King or a Kennedy in the modern America. The need for a better and more empathetic understanding between America and Islam is grander, greater and more urgent than ever before.

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In Pursuit of the Divine Spark: An Analysis of Tolkien's The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings Series through a Gnostic Framework

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Abstract

Dating back to ancient times, Gnosticism stands as an esoteric sect of belief that envisages the common human as the battleground between two forces namely the light and the dark. The dispute results from an archetypal divergence that takes place between two divinities. While the transcendental god holds the holy wisdom under his dominion that manifests itself as the holy spark, a lesser deity named 'Demiurge' labours darkness into a material prison for the purpose of captivating and strangling the holy light. The radical dual division in the human condition delineates each pole with definitive terms, yet these highly discrepant antipodes are convoluted closely together by birth so that each person stands a mystery box in which crafted darkness forges the materialized body that encapsulates a spark of holy light. According to the belief system, every person is destined to grant the ultimate and total victory for either force over the other with corresponding outcomes. If a soul proves his merit by letting the holy spark shine and wash away the darkness, he reaches a divine state of blessed salvation that is called gnosis, however those who surrender to darkness are forced to undergo life and death cycles until they achieve their pure spiritual rebirth. To achieve the holy salvation, total asceticism and relinquishing from the earthly appeals are stated as the indispensable requisites. In light of the ancient esoteric teaching, Tolkien's notoriously famous Ring promises much compatibility with the gnostic assumption of the diabolic matter, the destruction of which enables the hero to sail for an allegoric expedition in which both the destination and the rebirth of the hero pieces together the complete the divine godhead.

Keywords: John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, The Silmarillion, The Lord of the Rings, Gnosticism

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the theme of 'hero's resistance to the powerful and relentless villain', still persists in finding a place in the epic genre as an indispensable tenet, a salient change has been detected in the methodology of a few literary works that have reached high popularity and are presented to even a wider spectrum of audiences through adaptations such as movies and computer games. To put it succinctly, the hero's muscular strength tends to give way to the hero's willpower. The enemy's strength and the hero's weakness are attributed to the presence of a malevolent magical object. The Deathly Hallows and the Horcruxes we know from the *Harry Potter* story, the wand belonging to the White Queen-Jadis of *Narnia Chronicles*, and

finally Frodo's notorious ring give us clear-cut concrete examples in this regard. In the face of all these evil and powerful objects, the heroes of the stories are equipped with natures such as love, understanding, tolerance, courage, and sacrifice which can be attributed to the virtues of a dignified, peaceful man. But above all, the most important duty of the hero is to turn away and relinquish from these evil objects that inherently have high appeal. At the end of the day, even the destruction of the monstrous villains proves dependent on the annihilation of these objects.

No matter how inconspicuous the change in the mode of thought permeates, the striking triumph of the heroes kindles an unquenchable urge to look deeper into the narrations. Harry Potter is a young adult who can defeat one of the most powerful wizards of all times, in the same fashion Queen Jadis is defeated by a band of children and despite being a hobbit, a group of folks who are marked for their short height and childish physics, Frodo achieves to kill an evil spirit who has managed to claim thousands of lives that once belonged to more powerful fighters. In such a context, the defeat of the physical power based on matter against the willpower that can be reached through the steps of the spiritual ascension pushes the entire framework beyond the current norms, and circumstances make necessary the mediation of teachings that cannot be met by the conventions of the known world. In accordance with the circumstances in question, Gnosticism, as a series of teachings from ancient times, can provide a satisfactory stance to the answer sought. In this context, this study aims to exhibit changing patterns of thought in literary conveyances rather than trying to advertise an esoteric idea. In other words, the stories are rehandled by unveiling the face narration so that newly exposed allegoric tones can be given meaning by means of a novel context that enables cryptic bonds with the ancient esoteric teachings. To do so, it focuses on Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of The Rings* stories together, as detached volumes of one grand narrative. In this scientific labour, Gnosticism is utilized as in the form of a literary theory and the foretold narrations are examined in light of the sect's teachings.

It is a demanding job to give a precise definition of Gnosticism due to the various ways the branch has been interpreted. For one thing, it is a religion that has achieved to complete itself by gathering all the components that transform a belief into a religion. For another, it is a radical philosophical thinking as to the gist of human life (Williams, 1999). Even so, the varying points of view converge on certain grounds to denote the belief as a syncretized whole by bringing various sects of belief together namely: Buddhism, Manichaeism, Kabala, Ancient Egypt Mysteries, Zoroastrianism and Platonic Philosophy (Pagels, 1989).

Because of its multifaceted nature, even professionals in the esoteric field find it difficult to define Gnosticism in comprehensive terms. However, the true resolution of the teaching may lie in its very name "gnosis," which means "knowledge-understanding" or "insight," and all accordingly, the sect emphasizes the reviving of the divine spark through acquiring 'insight into true wisdom' which has been overshadowed by the material world. According to Gnostic theology, this revival is the sole way to true salvation (Gündüz, 1997).

To emphasize the state under consideration, Gnostics praise "a man" for holding gnosis, that makes him "a redeemed man," a fully awake body among thousands of sleeping ones (Rudolph, 1984, p.56). Gnosticism, to this aim, openly encourages personal experimental knowledge while pushing intellectual impulses to the sidelines (Hoeller, 1992). When questioned about the true nature of the gnosis, the only answer given is a suggesting puzzle, "know yourself." At this moment, gnosis publicly declares its actual character as a difficult-to-achieve awareness rather than a mere acculturation of divine theologies.

Despite the overt emphasis on the acquisition of divine truths, the precise description of the gnosis mainly relies on codices discovered in the Nag Hammadi region of Upper Egypt in 1945. The interesting narrative of two farmer brothers leads to the remarkable discovery of long-buried manuscripts. The Library of Gnosticism is, thereof, appropriately named after these collections of handwritten codices, and the essential narrative of theology appears to have sprung from the same source that inscribed the genesis of the texts under consideration (Burns, 2016). Despite the fact that personal revelation of divine truths is required in order to achieve gnosis, the essential principles are presented in such a way that initiates are required to take action in order to break through the fake realities (Piwowarczyk, 2021).

In the broadest sense, the cult educates practitioners of a dualistic divinity system. The theology begins with the mention of an unknowable-transcendent God from whom emerges Sophia (knowledge) in the form of a self-thought. This release occurs as a downward movement and degeneration because it is also a distancing act from the perfect being. Sophia directs her attention to the darkness thus the distancing from the holy light gapes even further. There, she (Sophia) gives birth to a second deity in the form of a dragon with the head of a lion and ember eyes. This deity is eventually known as Ialdabaoth, which means "the blind god," because he was born in the dark and has never met the unknown God. Upon declaring his being the sole divinity, he forms matter in the darkness and continues to build until he reaches what is now known as the materialistic universe. He labours with renewed zeal for the creation of humanity in order to have subjects for his self-worship. The avarice of worship leads to the creation of Adam and Eve, who are both lifeless sculpted bodies at the time. To resurrect the corpses, the Demiurge (Ialdabaoth) needs help from Sophia who infuses a spirit into each, by implanting wisdom in these first individuals on Earth. The acquisition of wisdom results in a more spiritual trait in Adam and Eve's corrupt nature and directs them toward real wisdom and salvation. The condition also alluded to the path to the virtuous transcendent god connected with light (Gündüz, 1997; Robinson, 1977).

The following events, according to the Gnostic teachings, culminate in a conflict and struggle between light and darkness. Ialdabaoth enlists the assistance of other supreme entities to detour freshly born humanity from the light. The entities known as Archons serve their master in order to strangle and bury the light, causing Adam and Eve to become unduly entwined with the material world while disregarding the means of holy awareness. While admiring the beauty of Eden and being uninformed of the true nature of a malevolent god, Adam and Eve come across the forbidden tree of knowledge. The tree, which the Demiurge forbids because it has been planted by the forces of light and its fruits contain true wisdom, nevertheless attracts these people because an eagle—not a serpent, as it has been described in Abrahamic sacred texts—tells them the truth about the tree's true nature and begs them to eat its fruit. After Adam and Eve eat the fruit and remember the heavenly truths, the Demiurge drives them out of paradise since they no longer worship him (Brakke, 2011; Floramo, 2005; Smoley, 2007).

Henceforward, Ialdabaoth rapes Eve and becomes the father of Abel and Cain, in order to bury the holy light once more in darkness. Therefore, Cain and Abel emerge as predisposed bodies to rule over the material elements as well as the corporeal bodies of future humans because their father is a tyrannical diabolic entity rather than a human. Eve, on the other hand, bears another son by Adam, Seth, who is to be the epitome of ideal mankind as they make their path towards the light. Once a dichotomy is established for the rest of mankind, fates are predetermined for them as well, namely: men of evil under the authority of the Demiurge, Ialdabaoth, and men of light to be saved upon obtaining the gnosis. (Roof, 1993; Rudolph, 1987).

The falling metaphor can be used to summarise Gnosticism's theology in a nutshell. The first fall occurs as a self-thought of the transcendental god, paving the path for the emergence of Sophia (knowledge). Though this birth appears to be a positive emerging at first, it is a type of degeneration since it is a process of distancing from the whole-perfect being. The second motif of the fall depicts Ialdabaoth's birth, almost as if it were a miscarriage. Once he has fallen into the pits of darkness, he announces himself to be the only deity and labours to mould and dominate the materialized world. Another fall motif depicts the genesis of humanity and the arrival of the light-bearing messengers (Gündüz, 1997).

The theology regards the human body as a cage made of matter in which the divine spark is imprisoned. Meanwhile, it is a battlefield for the forces of light versus the forces of darkness. The evil forces are constantly fighting to suppress the divine light inherent in the human body by keeping people preoccupied with mere materiality. In doing so Ialdabaoth and his archons anticipate silencing and annihilating this celestial spark. On the other hand, the forces of light attempt to awaken humanity and steer it towards the true wisdom, gnosis. By the same token, Gnostics refer to Jesus as a virtuous messenger of heavenly light. According to them, he is the logos of the transcendent god, and his campaign is to promote gnosis to those who have long been duped by the materialized traps of the false god (Kwiatkowski, 1998; Tecimer, 2004).

Another aspect of how the materialized cosmos is given meaning through the Gnostic framework is the naming of Ialdabaoth-the Demiurge. As the word denotes half side of creation or half-maker in the fullest sense, the name relates directly to the defect or weakness. In gnostic scriptures, the Demiurge is mentioned as imperfect, a flaw that shows itself through his flawed creation. The group interprets the chaos, corruption, and suffrages that are occurring on Earth as defective byproducts of a deficient creation process. Because the human body is undeniably a piece of material carnation, it is prone to faults such as being forgetful and haughty, lusty, cruel, and vulgar, all of which are attributed to Demiurge's traits (Pagels, 1989).

The flesh is mentioned in Gnostics as an impediment for the divine spark to acquire the ultimate wisdom. True gnosis will remain unattainable till the earthbound cravings of the body are eliminated. Gnostics divide persons into three categories based on this: "pneumatics, psychics, and hylics (earthly)." People in the first category are said to be ready for redemption through the acquisition of the real gnosis. The second category includes those who are misled into believing that the Demiurge is the true-righteous deity. Hylics, however, are the least favourable of the three since they are earthbound and materialistic, making them blind to light (Rudolph, 1984. P.92).

Once the compelling characteristics and associated fates are assigned to each group of people, Gnosticism offers the pneumatics and psychics the opportunity for salvation through a set of requirements. To be emanated from the dark, an individual must recognize the dualistic nature of his creation, which owes traits derived from two divine entities. Gnostics use the phrase "know yourself" to emphasize this critical phase. Despite the fact that the slogan appears to refer to the self-control of hedonist urges through a Buddhistic façade, it originally deals with the bifurcate dissolution of a human; one belonging to the transcendent divinity in the shape of a divine spark to guide the person to true wisdom, and the other belonging to the Demiurge, which is basically what is known as matter as a crafted form of the darkness. It should be noted at this point that in the Gnostic worldview, darkness has been interpreted and referred to as a lower being because it has been uninformed of the divine unknowable god since the beginning of time. In other words, it is not an unjustified assumption to state that the cosmogony in Gnosticism begins with the presence/creation of two archetypal beings: Light and Dark. Even

after many aeons, ages, and the creation of uncountable species of life, the two archetypal conceptions appear to be essentially the same (Nock, 1964; Robinson, 1977).

The initiate is required to embark on a spiritual journey with the ultimate goal of finding salvation through light once he is aware of the ancient polarisation guiding his own creation. The absolute realization of truths and the achievement of appropriate norms are what bind this voyage. The initiate is informed of the dualism that governs existence as well as the futility and, at best, inadequacy of current religions. The truth is a gift that can only be attained via spiritual and psychical development, not a question of acculturation (Rudolph, 1984; Jonas, 1958).

The condition of the divine consciousness can only be attained to via asceticism. The initiate is demanded to turn away from the earthly, materialistic world after drawing a line between spiritual and materialistic conceptions of life. This type of continuous abstention stems from the fact that the Demiurge uses debaucherous techniques to satisfy not just the body's desires but also the ways by which they can be sated. He utilizes them as a toy rattle to distract people from the holy wisdom and keep them focused on the physical world. The complete absence of materialized pleasures makes it possible for the initiate to be prepared for receiving gnosis. Once the person has attained true salvation and has cleansed his soul of the Demiurge's taint, he becomes a capable adept to whom true gnosis can be revealed, reaching divine enlightenment. He returns to his genuine, divine roots as a result. The same idea predicts the end of the world in the gnostic narrative when the fight between light and darkness becomes passive following the earlier victory and ushers in eternal peace (Gündüz, 1997; Rudolph, 1984).

2. The Analysis of Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* Series through a Gnostic Framework

This study sets out to show how Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* stories can be reassessed through an esoteric approach by deriving incentives from the previous resolution. Another depth of meaning is thought to be emerging for readers when the texts' apparent meaning is substituted with a peripheral one. In other words, the outward narration and its allegoric footnotes work together for the critical eye to explore the edges of what is already known and what is yet to be.

As has been mentioned earlier, the succinct definition of the gnostic frame is brought about by gnostic groups' preference for spiritual purity as the only path to humanity's advancement and ultimate salvation (gnosis per se), which they imply requires complete asceticism from worldly pleasures. It is believed that "materiality" is the cause of the "downfall and corruption of man" while manifesting small variances in how the sect approaches the cosmos and chaos. (Demir, 2011, p. 21; Kılıç, 2017, p.148). According to W. Nicholas (2009), "In the cosmos, space and time have a malevolent character and may be personified as demonic beings separating man from God." (16) Furthermore, by promoting it as "Within each natural man is an 'inner man,' a fallen spark of the divine substance," the sects demand the necessary insight into the holy spark in the body. Thereby, the collective mantra speaks through itself as man has the chance to emerge from his stupor since this heavenly core is inherent in every human being. After all, attaining the divine godhead is typically considered as requiring the revival of the divine spark. (Demir, 2011, p.19).

At this juncture, the best justification for the choice of *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* as the study's main materials can be provided by the narrations' notably similar

tendencies to handle the nature of the darkness and, malice. Despite sharing a common Gnostic mindset, *The Lord of the Rings* deals with evil from a more materialized perspective by associating it with matter, giving the narration a more obvious and palpable disposition. This tendency remains in line with *The Silmarillion*, which exhibits a primary orientation to locate the origins of evil through a narration that shares a similar worldview with the Gnostic cosmogony.

Gnostic ideology explains the emergence of evil with the advent of a second deity known as the Demiurge, as it has been discussed in depth before. This deity governs the dark, a place symbolic of being removed from the god and devoid of the divine light. There, he unjustifiably asserts that he is the only divinity, and because he is unable to recognize the transcendental god, he is described as being foolish, haughty, selfish, and incorrect (Tecimer, 2004).

Tolkien adheres to the myth of a secondary deity who is responsible for the evil. In his fiction, the author demonstrates this fashion, following a somewhat similar genealogy with Gnostic teachings. To be precise, Tolkien's genesis commences with a celestial song that has been augured by the transcendental god Eru and is accompanied by the lesser-secondary gods who are also named as Valar. However, the harmony provided by the holy song is broken by the interruption of Melkor who tries to execute a divergent melody. The emerging disharmony manifests itself as a bitter sort of distortion in creation for the fact that until the moment Melkor spoils the melody, the ongoing music generates a universe full of beauties and prodigies. At this point, the remarkable similarity between Tolkien's universe and the Gnostic genesis becomes ever more salient. Melkor, of the fiction, stands in the same league with the gnostic Demiurge for being the source of the evil, who, also, has the power to affect the creation contrary to the scriptural depictions of Satan that is responsible for the evil but has no ability to create. By doing this, Tolkien creates a new, alternate path for the evil to be handled. Thus, Tolkien presents the reader with the fictionalized deity of the *The Silmarillion* who not only tempts evil but also generates it. Considering the foregoing tendency, it may be inferred that Tolkien accepts a dualistic nature while discussing the subject of good and evil. Though this is a minor addition to the vile traits of the villain, the subsequent dissolution it brings about results in a radical alteration in the way the evil has been interpreted and commented on. Instead of being administrated by a diabolic agent, evil owes its emergence to a diabolical entity and reaches primordial times. With this in mind, the fiction presents evil in a subtly novel context by which it stands as an arche-force that is also associated with a divergent divinity. In the traditional Abrahamic sense, no matter how far exiled may it be from the godhead, evil is tolerated by God as an agent in the examination of humanity. Yet the newly emerging context breaks the adopted conventions and yields a chasm to separate the poles by which evil is monopolized by a diabolical astral being.

The tale of the Silmarils and the trees of Telperion lends another Gnostic allusion to the degradation that Melkor's chaos initially sparked. Because of the fact that they can fill the world with the holy light and make it a welcoming environment for life, the trees known as Telperion are special creations. Melkor is troubled by their existence for two reasons. Initially, despite his unmerited disposition, Melkor wants to have exclusive possession of the ancient holy light, which is in Eru's monopoly. In fiction, the force of creation is represented by this light. Melkor desires to be the only one, thus he seeks ways to possess the holy light as the sole owner. When he is unable to accomplish this, he changes his attitude towards the light and adopts a more brutal strategy: He kills the trees by giving their light to a gigantic monster spider incarnate of darkness, putting an end to all the divine light on earth. He, however, is not satisfied with this destruction and sets out to find a way to obtain Silmarils. These gems are praised as special

items because they carry the holy light inside, and this tempts the evil deity to commit sinful deeds to obtain them at all costs.

The ambition to be the sole god to cherish omnipotence brings the Demiurge of Gnostic Theology and Melkor in Tolkien's fiction closely together, making them two similar reflections of one common mentality. Tolkien's evil god is primarily interested in ways to dethrone the transcendental god and has little to do with real-world people. A similar quality can be seen in Demiurge's actions as well. The blind deity claims to be "the only one" during his generation of darkness, but there are many light agents who interfere with his claim. It is highly intriguing that Melkor can't touch the Silmarils without burning his fingertips when he snatches them. Tolkien radicalizes the incompatibilities between dark and light by having Melkor experience pain from the gems, and he also highlights this evil deity's undeserved inability to control the holy light. As a result of his unmerited claim, Melkor is bound by a reign in darkness, a state of total bereavement from the light. Then on, the existence of light always serves as a deterrent to evil beings, and Melkor leaves his insignia on history by remaining a captive of the night forever. It should be noted here that when the Demiurge creates the first man out of darkness, he is unable to give him life. The spirit is infused into man's moulded body by Sophia (knowledge), giving it motion and life. Therefore, the common man possesses will and power to confront the Demiurge and restore his soul to its former divine position by using this spirit, which emanates from the transcendental god in the shape of a holy spark. Gnostics believe that when numerous souls begin to shine in holy light and completely remove the darkness, the Demiurge will be completely vanquished (Gündüz, 1997).

Tolkien's Melkor stands in for the Gnostic deity Demiurge for a variety of reasons. By fathering evil, the fictionalized notorious deity sullies the divine nature. He wishes to dethrone the transcendental god and assert his sole rule. To accomplish so, he searches for the holy light, which turns out to be an agent in his utter loss. 'Melkor' changes his disposition as a diabolic being to the primal source of diabolicity as a discrepant deity. This metamorphosis takes place after some incidents in which darkness is conquered by holy light. Once Melkor's defeat in the face of holy light reaches a definitive end, the vile deity enmeshes with darkness ever more and reigns in it. He dares confront the other Valar (secondary benign deities) in pursuit of spoiling the holy creation. In his campaign, he appeals to the divine and powerful agents of light. He lures them to join his band and fight. Once these entities change their fraction, they undergo a similar metamorphosis into a beastly, vile and diabolic creation. Based on this premise, the fearsome 'Sauron' figure from the *The Lord of the Rings* series can be identified as a great demon, Satan, or, more specifically, an archon, who are wicked assistants of the Demiurge.

The word 'Arkhn' is translated from Greek to English as 'ruler' due to having authority over the material world. In the Gnostic belief system, archons appear as evil astral agents who are primarily concerned with intervening in the ideas, feelings, and acts of humans in order to change them from spiritual elevation. They are cited as "beings among the furthest away from God" and held "accountable for bad temptations" (Denzey, 2012, p.135). When Melkor's desire to be the only deity is combined with Sauron's ring to dominate all folks of Middle Earth, this villain can be compared to a wicked archon assisting the Demiurge. Tolkien demonstrates this allegory by giving Sauron a different generation than Melkor. While Melkor is a Vala, a subsidiary deity after Eru in the hierarchy, Sauron is an obscure primal spirit known as Maia in the service of Valar.

Tolkien's Sauron is a notably evil character who is not afraid to commit heinous crimes. He is famous for his cunning and wicked deceits to gain sovereignty over other beings. Nonetheless,

what identifies him as an evil being is his goal to rule over elves, dwarves, and humans through a brotherhood of rings. He uses the web of rings he had woven to control the emotions, thoughts, and actions of others. Once within a person's mind, he seduces him into doing evil. When examined in depth, all of these activities reveal his demonic plan to spread his reign as the sole monarch. At this point, the villain's trait has enormous potential to reveal an esoteric side of the story, allowing him to achieve his goal. Sauron engraves a prophecy on the ring: "One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, one ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them; In the Land of Mordor, where the shadows lie." (Tolkien, 2019, p.254) In this setting, darkness serves as the villain's most compelling principal agent in his campaign. Tolkien explicitly mentions dark and shadow as the crowning of the wicked labour if it is successfully performed. His exquisite concern for the dark to associate evil with posits much credibility to be re-evaluated as an organic relationship linking the narration to Gnostic theology. While evil is traditionally accounted for the emergence of dread, violence, devastation, and death; the author clearly alludes to the dark itself as responsible for the generation, expansion, and eternal confinement of the evil, all of which bear striking similarities with Gnostic teachings.

According to the theology, man is in a paradoxical situation in which two conflicting energies combine within the body for lifetime. However, the equilibrium created by birth does not last forever, and one force eventually triumphs over the other. The opposing forces in question are acknowledged to be holy light and degrading dark. These arche components do, in fact, represent something other than corporeality, a subtle essence with ancient resolves per se. To put it simply, while darkness gives rise to concrete materialism, it is also the embodied form of ignorance. The trademark stems from the Demiurge's claim to be the sole god who has made a mistake by being unaware of the transcendental god (Barnstone and Meyer, 2003). In this division, light is a symbol of spirituality that represents divine wisdom, or gnosis. When a soul attains gnosis, he attains spiritual maturity and reclaims his real divine roots. As a result, his life cycles come to an end.

To defeat the dark ultimately, Tolkien follows a Gnostic route map for the ultimate gnosis. While the initial step is defined as the initiate's mental and spiritual preparation for enlightenment through a series of challenges in which vile traits of materiality are exchanged for the holy virtues, the latter processes refer to the ultimate destination for a purified soul in the god-head, which takes in the form of spiritual knowledge beyond the five senses, acquisition of which is a direct referent to the true divine-human nature. Hoeller (1992) states the following about this fact:

Man does not attain the knowledge that awakens him from these dreams by cognition but through revelatory experience, and this knowledge is not information but a modification of the sensate being... Before the awakening, men undergo troubled dreams.(62)

In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Frodo performs a pretty simplistic rendition of himself. Notwithstanding his advanced age, the way he feels and behaves reminds the reader of a child's naivety, so the hero's mental and spiritual transformations are easy to see and observe. Tolkien, on the other hand, employs his literary genius by placing mysterious artifacts in the hands of the hero. That is, Frodo's inexperienced simplicity is contrasted with the concealed magnitude of the relics entrusted to him. He is an ordinary Hobbit, yet an unusual one for bearing both the Ring and the Phial. The ring represents material attachment and has the ability to "bind" the people of Middle Earth "in darkness" (Tolkien, 2019, p.50). The Phial, on the other hand, is a holy vessel filled with water that seized the light of Earendil's star. The star is not a typical one

because of the fact that it has been kindled by a Silmaril. And, going back in time, Silmarils appear as gemstones that have absorbed the pure holy light emanating from the holy god Eru. In a nutshell, the hero is portrayed as a sly explorer whose long-cherished, idyllic simplicity is disturbed by a paradoxical conundrum. This is an arcane esoteric circumstance that reminds the reader, who is as oblivious as the hero, of the ancient secrets he has been hitherto living with. Obviously, the ring and the phial represent the material and spiritual sides of a common man, respectively.

Frodo is put to the test by each object along the way. He resists the ring's allure and turns to the phial for support when the circumstances are tough. After the ring is eternally destroyed at the end of the story, the hero departs on one last journey to the Undying Lands where the benign gods on the side of holy light dwell. Even on this last journey, Frodo is shown holding the phial. That indicates the eventual destination as a location where the holy light can be accommodated naturally by which the veiled language of allegory confines a rather persuading gnostic triumph between the lines. Thus, the entire narrative displays a simple examination of the human will. The adventure's vivid details allow the hero to reveal a spiritual secret. This is a simple matrix with only a few elements: the ring on one side, the phial on the other, and the hero in between is nothing but a self-reflected image of the common man in esoteric- gnostic esteem.

If the face meaning of the narration is stripped for a deeper, allegoric one in light of the preceding premises, Tolkien's motive to take his hero on a spiritual journey in which sufferings prepare him for the divine understanding gains a deeper dimension. The key requisites of the path are separation from the desired and ultimate and absolute asceticism from material blessings. In exchange, a virtue by God rewards each successful manoeuvre of the hero. When obtained as all, the powers under discussion serve as a Jacobian ladder for the soul's rise towards the light. As a result of the bestowment of gnosis, the hero is transformed from earthbound to divine. Frodo's peaceful entrance to the Undying Lands marks the culmination of his cloaked esoteric battle. When the face meaning is removed away in favour of a deeper one, the narration's deconstructed finale bestows onto its hero a new nature: veteran but respectable, pure from worldliness and armed with virtues thus exalted to the genuine divine place.

3. Conclusion

In light of the preceding analyses, Tolkien's narration possesses elements that might be coined esoteric since spiritual dignity is held in higher regard than the material perspective. The stories that have been named above offer a lot of potential for connecting evil and corruption with earthly aspirations. Through symbols, the author highlights this truth. Sauron's ring can now be reinterpreted as signified materiality. Despite offering great potential, the object only ever leads to its owners' ruin. Surprisingly, this item also plays a crucial part in the hero's slow but steady spiritual ascent following a set of rigorous tests. According to the esoteric framework of the research, these individuals reach salvation by renouncing the relics permanently and refusing the object's great allure. As a result, Frodo's desire to destroy the ring can be read as an act of asceticism, which is believed to be essential to gain salvation and spiritual rebirth. Given the foregoing, it is possible to interpret Frodo's perilous journey to Mount Doom esoterically in accordance with the discovery of the divine spark that has been hidden in the material darkness of the body.

The aforementioned discovery demands unconventional mining, in which the traditional tools of dig and shovel are swapped out for mind and will. The stories use Gnostic attitudes to help

the hero undergo a mental transformation towards something that is more moral, spiritual, and divine. From a larger viewpoint, the writer can be commended for giving the mental means that are necessary for the same modification of the reader's mind while the hero goes through a transitional process. In this way, the reader and the main character are two sides of the same coin, and the adventure the protagonist has undertaken promises a similar kind of change that can be sparked inside the reader's head. In light of this, it can be said that what initially appears to be the hero's journey eventually transforms into a gnostic transmutation of both the hero and the reader. Along the way, vile traits such as greed, anger, cruelty, idleness, selfishness and ignorance are gradually swapped with the merited virtues of a divine man. Not only the hero but also the reader is encouraged to experience similar motives to cling to sacrifice, patience, clemency, perseverance and wisdom in the face of numerous manifestations of the corruption.

Through the newly emerging novel facet, stories denounce materialism for defiling the soul and elevate living a moral and virtuous life as the only requirement for ultimate salvation. The narrative patterns strive diligently to pave the way for the praised state of gnosis to erase the material corruption. This pursuit is manifested by means of an intriguingly spiritual ending. To do this, the narrator emphasizes the need to use 'willpower' effectively. "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." explains the esoteric labour Tolkien has undertaken to his protagonist succinctly. To sum up, the author's creation of fantastical realms gives readers a chance to investigate ancient teachings about life. The matter and being earthbound is directly related to evil and darkness, while divine spirituality is associated with goodness and light. The preceding lecture not only summarizes the esoteric conveyances of Tolkien's grand narrative but also can be envisioned as a succinct explanation of Gnosticism, and accordingly, the person or the hero is given a single assignment in this division. He needs to relinquish from the earthliness while clinging to the heavenly light. The fundamental strategy for achieving this goal is described as the constant control of the will against the corrupting worldly allures.

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