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Uncovering the Forgotten Gender Equality in the Medieval *Gui de Warewic*[1]

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Abstract

The general perception in medieval romances is that women are subject to gender discrimination. Women are often suppressed, devalued, and portrayed as passive characters for religious, political, and socio-cultural reasons. Such negative perception is a result of the patriarchal tradition in medieval England. This paper aims to challenge this common sentiment and explore how women are not marginalized, devalued, or ignored in medieval texts. In other words, this paper examines how women appear to be resourceful, influential, respected, and independent in the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman Gui de Warewic.

Keywords: Middle Ages, England, Literature, Romance, Gender Equality, Women.

Introduction

The male-female relationships portrayed in medieval literature often reflect societal norms, with men depicted as dominant and women as secondary. However, there are more subtle complexities hidden beneath these superficial depictions. This paper seeks to explore the medieval romance *Gui de Warewic* to uncover the hidden power of women, specifically focusing on the character Felice. Through an analysis of Felice's role, this study aims to challenge stereotypes and emphasize the significant contributions of women in shaping medieval literature. The examination will focus on female characters' agency, influence, and self-determination, emphasizing their pivotal role in shaping the literary tapestry they inhabit.

Gender discrimination exists in medieval literature, portraying women as passive, inferior, weak, or deprived. In a medieval patriarchal society, women are often considered inferior to men (Butler, 1989). Rakoczy notes that patriarchal institutions are believed to be timeless and have always existed in society (Rakoczy, 2004). Female characters are tended to be portrayed as suppressed and passive in medieval literature due to patriarchal dominance. Contrary to this trend, this paper examines how a woman, namely Felice, constructs the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*. Recent studies explore *Gui de Warewic*, from a range of perspectives. Düzgün examines the impact of Christianity on women's positions, specifically on women healers, by analysing historical and literary works to understand the changes in early Christian beliefs' gender-equal perspectives and contradictory views on women (Düzgün, 2023, 2015). Öztürk explores Saracen-Christian relationships in the Anglo-Norman romances, focusing on *Boeve de Haumtone*, *Gui de Warewic*, and *Roman de Horn*. Drawing on Said's Orientalism theory, Öztürk offers a nuanced understanding of the Saracen-Christian interaction, contrasting oversimplified perceptions of the East-West dichotomy (Öztürk, 2020). Djordjević examines Manuscript A, focusing on the seventy-line list of hero *Gui de Warewic*'s accomplishments by exploring its genesis, manifestation, and purpose, comparing it to other manuscripts, and examining its organization, style, and linguistic elements (Djordjević, 2015). Pearcy examines the author's alteration of a scene in *Gui de Warewic*, highlighting its dramatic irony and literary influences by arguing the traditional elements of the romance are present and notes the possible literary-historical relevance of the source and its relation to other iterations of the Destruction de Rome-Fierabras tradition (Pearcy, 1979). Tuten points out medieval writers tend to conceal what they consider bad or unusual, and these writers are men and women from an elite with limited education (Tuten, 2022).

The male-female relationship is usually reflected as one-sided in medieval tradition. Men are depicted as more active, effective, physically, and mentally stronger than women and considered superior to the latter. Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as suppressed, ineffective, and dependent in the shadow of male dominance. Women are usually considered secondary characters in medieval literary narratives (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). This paper will argue that women are more influential than the stereotypical perception suggests and will explore how and why the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* subverts gender roles. The romance mainly focuses on Gui's heroism, achievements, and rise to fame. However, it fails to acknowledge that Felice is the one who controls Gui and the narrative. The idea of gender roles imposed on the reader is a result of the patriarchal perspective and overlooks the active, influential, and controlling roles that women can take on.

This paper aims to demonstrate how women are typically relegated to the background in medieval romances and are, in fact, the real arbiters of the narrative. Despite their deep attachment to the family, medieval women are severely restricted in their duties. (Quirk, 2001). Women, often suppressed, marginalized, and ignored for various reasons, play a more

significant and influential role in medieval romances than is apparent. *Gui de Warewic* highlights the overlooked position and importance of women. Unlike other romances of the time that marginalise and objectify women, *Gui* challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes by presenting a more nuanced and complex view of gender relations. The narrative acknowledges the agency and power of women in shaping the plot, making it a valuable resource for scholars interested in the study of women in medieval literature. Overall, *Gui* seems to serve as a valuable example that challenges prevailing stereotypes of gender roles and highlights the importance of female characters.

From Passive to Proactive: Reshaping the Image of Women in Medieval Romances

Gui de Warewic is an important example of the development of the medieval romance genre, which emerged in the twelfth century and quickly became popular throughout Europe. (Ailes, 2007). The romance portrays the cultural and political setting of medieval England and France, incorporating elements of both Anglo-Saxon and Norman culture. The narrative makes references to historical figures such as King Athelstan and Richard Duke of Normandy and places great emphasis on the ideals of chivalry and knightly conduct. The romance also highlights the importance of religious piety and devotion. *Gui* embodies the medieval concept of courtly love, where his love for Felice is a central theme throughout the narrative. As Aston notes, the medieval romance tradition generally reflects the socio-cultural, political, and social values of the period in which it is produced (Aston, 2010). Medieval romance texts may reflect social and cultural values in their portrayal of gender relations. Contrary to stereotypes that portray female characters as less valuable and suppressed compared to men, women are in an equally active position.

Whatever the period or genre, literary texts tend to contain traces of the atmosphere in which they are set. Male-female relations also play an important role in social life throughout history. The male-female relationships are usually biased against women for religious, ideological, cultural, or sometimes political reasons (Peretz & Vidmar, 2021). Likewise, Burge suggests that women usually tend to be portrayed as more passive, ineffective, and weak characters, while the narrative focuses more on the heroism and achievements of men (Burge, 2014). Although medieval tradition and social norms often portray men as superior, women seem to play influential and valuable roles. Although medieval tradition and social norms often portray men as superior, women seem to play influential and valuable roles. From managing households to participating in trade and even ruling kingdoms, women in the medieval period were able to exert power and influence in various ways. Despite facing limitations and restrictions, many women found ways to assert themselves and make significant contributions to society.

Although men look wiser, stronger, and more confident than women, Gui challenges this notion by revealing his vulnerabilities to the woman he loves. He seeks her pity and assistance, sharing the struggles he faces as a pitiful man. Unlike other Anglo-Norman heroes, Gui does not belong to the aristocracy. Field suggests that Gui is a modest man who attains great status and wins his lady's heart through hard work and determination. (Field, 2007). At the beginning of the romance, Gui is a pitiful character, weakened by his love for Felice. He is not someone to be admired or emulated. Despite Felice is well-educated and respected, Gui sees himself as pathetic in comparison and pleads with Felice to assist him:

> Noble Felice, I beg you for God's sake to take pity on me, wretched creature that I am, so
> that I don't find you so cruel to me that you don't hear my prayer. From now on, I can no

longer conceal – it is a love that makes me speak – the great pain and misery which I suffer both night and day for you […] (Weiss, 2008, p. 100)

This passage suggests that Gui implores Felice, for the love of God, to have compassion on him, a wretched soul. He asks her not to be so unkind as to ignore his plea. He also mentions that he cannot hide the intense pain and suffering he endures because of his love for her. It's this love that compels him to speak, and torments him day and night. After struggling and suffering for some time due to his deep and excessive love, Gui finally finds the motivation and courage to confess his feelings for Felice and face his fate. Gui's intense love for Felice and inability to think of anything else but her shows that she plays a significant role in his life. Felice impacts Gui's character development, even without deliberately doing anything to him or having any individual influence on his life (Düzgün, 2023). Felices's influence on Gui highlights the idea that female characters are active in narrative to direct hero's actions.

Female characters touch the lives of their male counterparts even when there is no clear indication of their endeavours. Düzgün explains that misogyny is usually the subject matter in medieval literary tradition, but the portrayal of women is more complex than that upheld perception (Düzgün, 2014). The idea of courtly love is the source of Felice's dominance over Gui, her apathetic attitude, and his extreme love sickness, all of which are crucial for inspiring or initiating Gui's journeys (Wiggins, 2000). Gui's revelation demonstrates the intensity of his emotional relationship with Felice and implies that just having her in his life has the power to determine who he is. Felice's subconscious has a powerful influence over him, and Gui confesses his love for her, highlighting the theme of courtly love prevalent in medieval romances. Women are frequently excluded from important and trivial situations due to the perception that they are passive and submissive (Butler, 1989). They are deprived of autonomy and agency and in most cases, their fathers or husbands make decisions on their behalf, which are then unquestionably obeyed. Tuten suggests that women are often portrayed as submissive and accepting of being controlled by their spouses (Tuten, 2022). Such depiction of women's roles is typical in medieval romance tradition. However, *Gui de Warewic*'s Felice challenges gender stereotypes by portraying a female character as free and independent who doesn't have to submit to societal norms. Felice is a well-educated and confident character who knows what she wants. She expresses this clearly when Gui confesses his love for her and asks for her love in return by stating the qualities of an ideal partner: "I don't want to love any young man unless he's a knight – handsome, courteous, and renowned, brave, and bold, prized for his feats of arms. When I have seen you receive weapons, I will grant you my love if you become as I have asked you" (Weiss, 2008, p. 103). Felice clarifies that she wants to express herself more effectively and asks Gui to listen carefully to what she has to say. She explains that her feelings have changed and hopes that he won't be offensive when she shares her thoughts.

Felice insists on marrying a handsome, polite knight for love. She looks for a confident knight who has great achievements in battles. If Gui displays the qualities of a dubbed knight, she will offer her hand. Felice wants to clarify that she doesn't have a negative attitude towards Gui. As an autonomous character, Felice can manage her feelings and has criteria to decide for him. When Felice expresses her expectations from a prospective husband, she resourcefully guides Gui in the romance. She is strong and determined to control her life. She manages her feelings and thoughts and acts as an exemplar to show that women are not passive, silent, or subordinate. Instead, it is Felice who takes an active role in shaping the narrative. *Gui de Warewic*, through the character of Felice, challenges the male-dominated social norms prevalent in medieval romance traditions, which are shaped by a stereotypical patriarchal mindset. Her portrayal is significant because the narrative highlights

the importance of women's autonomy in relationships and emphasizes the value of living according to one's preferences. Overall, Felice's character sets a powerful example for the social role of a woman and her place in society.

Felice discusses the characteristics she seeks in a potential spouse whom she deems worthy of her. Driver notes that a knight's traits should include good looks, kindness, courage, bravery, boldness, and success in battles – the ideals of chivalry, and these are the only conditions necessary for Felice to consider someone as her spouse (Driver, 2007). Felice's requirements highlight the significance of a person's social status and worth. She desires a partner who embodies the qualities of a true knight in medieval romances (Düzgün, 2023). Felice's statements suggest that her love for Gui depends on whether he can fulfil these qualities. She emphasizes that knights must prove their worth to their lovers through heroic deeds. Thus, Gui must demonstrate his love through his chivalric virtues and courage, proving that love is gained through heroic acts. Felice's demands highlight the independent and significant role of women in social relations, which is underestimated in society. By explicitly stating the qualities she seeks in a potential husband and setting conditions for Gui, Felice emphasizes that women have autonomy in their choices regarding their societal spheres and they have the potential to control their destiny. Felice is portrayed as an autonomous character who challenges patriarchal and traditional norms, in contrast to the silenced and oppressed figures in society (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Felice sets criteria for her prospective partner and this suggests that women are not weak characters, as they are often portrayed.

In medieval literature, knights often embark on adventures to win the favour of their lovers and prove themselves. However, women also have a significant role in shaping the narrative by setting their standards and choosing their suitors. The depiction of female agency in *Gui de Warewic* challenges the patriarchal tradition of romance, opening a space for women to control their choices. Through Felice, the narrative emphasizes the importance of consent and mutual respect in relationships, promoting a more harmonious and satisfying marriage. Weiss asserts that some Anglo-Norman romances portray women as more powerful and capable than men (Weiss, 1993). In this respect, *Gui de Warewic* provides significant examples of how women are more important and influential in social relations than they are often assumed to be. Both Gui and Felice challenge traditional gender roles and highlight the importance of gender equality.

Gui undergoes a significant change due to Felice's demands, becoming a different character. He is aware of the updates and improvements he has gained and wants Felice to recognize this change. Gui believes that his transformation is evidence of his commitment to their relationship. He explains the differences in his character due to Felice: "Because of you, I have received weapons, and now I have come to learn your wishes. You are what I most desire" (Weiss, 2008, p. 104). As a result of Felice's influence, Gui is dubbed a knight and seeks to understand her wishes. Gui admits that Felice is his most cherished wish, highlighting the challenges and sacrifices he has endured due to his love for her. Gui hopes that Felice can recognize the extent of his devotion to her and her impact on his personal growth. The romance emphasises that Gui expects Felice to understand her significant influence on his development when he shares his transformation. Gui is determined to fulfil Felice's wishes because he loves her deeply and wants to understand her desires. Felice holds a significant place in Gui's life as she helps him become a knight. Women have considerable influence over their admirers' lives and fates, often by setting conditions or granting rewards in medieval romances. Gui becomes a knight at Felice's request and follows her demands.

Participating in tournaments and gaining a reputation as a skilled knight is a crucial aspect of the medieval tradition of chivalry (Barker, 2008). Knights generally participate in such events to gain recognition and prove their worth to their lords and kings (Barker, 2008). Gui's situation differs from the typical perception of medieval chivalric tradition, as he does not intend to prove himself to any lord or king. Gui expresses his feelings and accepts that he does everything for his love for Felice: "My fair love, I have come; I certainly owe my life to you. Were it not for you, I would be dead and destroyed, my body in a wretched plight. You made me take up arms and then told me what you wished…" (Weiss, 2008, p. 108). After competing in tournaments, Gui goes to Felice and expresses his gratitude towards her. He acknowledges that he owes his life to her, as he would perish, and his body would suffer without her. Felice encourages Gui to take up arms and pursue his dreams. Now that he is on this journey of personal development, and he aims to be worthy of Felice, hoping to win her heart.

Gui intends to express his deep appreciation to his beloved for being the source of his motivation and the reason for his actions. Gui's achievements and personal development are directly linked to her constant love and support. He cherishes every moment they spend together and strengthens his determination to succeed in every aspect of his existence. Felice is the source of influence and inspiration for Gui's heroic deeds (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). The knights go on journeys to prove their glory and chivalry to the king, seek fame, or find their true love. Therefore, women are considered an integral part of a knight's journey towards chivalry and dignity. Gui's devotion to his lover demonstrates the power of love and the ability to transform an ordinary man into a great knight or warrior.

Throughout the romance, Felice plays a vital role in motivating Gui. She urges him to become a knight and fight for glory and honour. Gui's love for Felice drives him to face any challenge and overcome any obstacle that stands on his way. Gui's motivation is not to earn fame and prestige but to prove himself as a worthy partner for Felice. Hence, Felice's role in shaping Gui's destiny holds greater significance than any other factor. Gui may have never found the courage to embark on his journey toward recognition and respect if it weren't for Felice's unwavering faith in him and her constant support. Her presence in his life not only fuels his determination but also serves as a reminder of the importance of perseverance and commitment. Gui handles any challenges that may arise in his efforts to motivate Felice. Whether he is taking up arms, seeking fame, or embarking on adventures, all his actions are to win the heart of his beloved (Djordjević, 2015). Felice is the motivation for Gui to achieve fame and glory. Felice is aware of the change that Guy goes through and even she likes this development. She also knows that this development and progress that Gui has gone through are beneficial and necessary for him. However, when Gui states that he has done everything that Felice has asked of him and now it is Felice's turn to reciprocate, and she mentions that it is too early for this expectation:

> Felice at once replied: "Not so fast, sir Gui! You are not yet so famous that there's no one as good in the kingdom. You are very brave and valiant, bold, and courageous in battle. If I were to love you above else and give you my love, you would become so infatuated that it would make you quite lazy; you would no longer want to bear arms or enhance your reputation. (Weiss, 2008, p. 108).

Gui confesses to Felice that he has taken up arms for her and has won all the tournaments for her sake. He asks Felice to accept his love, but she politely declines by stating that he has not yet achieved a level of fame where there's no one better in the kingdom. In the case of favouring him above all others and offering her love, Gui might become complacent and lose his passion for battle. She believes that if she bestows her love on Gui, he might no longer

wish to improve himself or seek further renown. Felice is cautious in responding to Gui's advances. She acknowledges Gui's bravery in battle, which makes her respect him as a knight. However, she wants to take some time to understand and evaluate her feelings before pursuing a romantic relationship. Felice intends to establish a strong foundation of friendship. If she responds to Gui's desires, his progress and development as a knight will prevent him from reaching the high rank, she wants him to attain. She wants Gui to complete his development in the adventure he has embarked on, and she offers him new conditions to prove himself worthy of her love.

Felice plays a significant role in this exchange by expressing her reluctance to grant her love. She raises concerns about the potential consequences of Gui's infatuation, indicating that her opinions and decisions hold sway in this courtly interaction. In terms of the impact and significance of women in medieval romances, she is dominant in shaping the actions and motivations of the knight, and she worries about Gui's fame and how it might affect their relationship. However, her role is to guide Gui's quest for chivalric honour since he is motivated by his desire for both love and honour. Felice's response highlights the complex dynamics between knights and their beloveds in medieval romance. The text appears to be a statement regarding the importance of women in shaping a narrative or story. Female characters can inspire courage and heroic deeds in men, and their opinions and decisions regarding love and favour are crucial to the plot. The romance highlights Felice's response and significant influence over Gui's motivations. *Gui de Warewic* is an exception and highlights the effects and contributions of women. Although the narrative mainly focuses on Gui's experiences, struggles, and achievements, the influence of Felice is explicitly acknowledged. When Gui returns to Warewic and shares the challenges he faces during his journey, Felice's impact on his character development becomes apparent:

> … And he thought of how he was a man of influence, and renowned in foreign lands, and how he had killed so many men, captured towers and cities by force, and had exerted himself far off in strange realms, for the sake of a woman whom he loved so much and for whom he had borne so much suffering – but never for his Creator who had done him such great honour, nor had he bothered to serve Him … (Weiss, 2008, p. 180)

Gui reflects on his fame and influence in distant lands, contemplating the numerous battles he has fought and the victories he has achieved. He remembers the significant hardships he endures and the tremendous effort he exerts for the love of a woman, Felice – a love that means the world to him. In contrast, he realizes that he has never exerted himself for the sake of his Creator, who has honoured him greatly. These words of Gui indicate that his significant accomplishments and sacrifices are driven by his love for Felice, emphasising the role of women as sources of inspiration and motivation for knights. Gui contemplates his reputation and influence in foreign lands to seek honour and prestige, to impress and win the favour of the beloved woman. Gui's only goal and purpose are to be a suitable partner for Felice, and he is not interested in any other reward. After returning to Warewic from a long and arduous journey to prove his love for Felice, Gui realizes the impact of Felice on his life as a source of motivation and inspiration.

All the tournaments he has participated in, the battles and wars he has won, the cities he has conquered, and the people he has saved are all in pursuit of being a worthy lover for Felice. Felice transforms Gui from an ordinary man into Gui of Warewic. It is considered that the role and position of women in romances have minimal importance as a repercussion of gender roles in society (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). However, the position of women as influencers of knights' quests and actions is evident in the Anglo-Norman literary tradition.

Gui's deeds emphasise that knights fulfil chivalrous ventures through their love for women and embark on heroic journeys.

Conclusion

The portrayal of female characters in medieval romances tends to be shaped according to the patriarchal and stereotypical thinking of the period. Women play diverse and complex roles throughout history, which may not be accurately represented by the societal norms depicted in these works. The progress made towards gender equality can be better comprehended and further advancements can be pursued by acknowledging the limitations that have been attributed to female characters. Felice in *Gui de Warewic* challenges stereotypes of defining female roles and contributes significantly to the narrative and the character development of romance hero. Her role goes beyond the traditional depiction of women in medieval romances. Felice is a resourceful and independent character and plays a crucial role in Gui's life by challenging him to improve himself. Her agency and assertiveness serve as catalysts for Gui's personal growth, and she turns his lover from an ordinary man into a hero named Gui de Warewic.

Felice's presence highlights the interconnectedness of male and female characters in medieval romances. In this way, Felice challenges the patriarchal conventions of her time and emphasizes the essential role that women play in shaping the stories of medieval romances. Through the portrayal of Felice, *Gui de Warewic* subverts the notion of women as mere accessories to the male narrative. Female characters in the medieval romance genre are dynamic and integral contributors to the narrative development. Felice's agency and influence offer a nuanced and inclusive portrayal of female characters in medieval literature, transcending the romance's patriarchal origins, and her impact on narrative highlights that women are much more determinant in medieval romance than they are thought to be.[4]

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Trauma Response in Wole Soyinka's Kongi's *Haarvest*: the Exegesis of Mourning, Grieving, and the Sequelae of Disquieting Events

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Abstract

Many literary texts reflect trauma theory as well as psychoanalytical concepts. Different interpretations have been given to those texts in terms of the features that reflect traumatic situations. There are important aspects we can follow in terms of fragmented encounters to achieve the purpose of a traumatic event. In this framework, one can witness traumatic situations in Wole Soyinka's drama, especially where political power is used to traumatise the populace. There may be temporal-structure trauma, but traumatic experience may put someone in a compelling, disquieting nightmare in terms of political tyranny. In Kongi's Harvest, there is a kind of dark encounter in which Soyinka presents the plight of the people both symbolically and emotionally in the hands of a despot. In this view, the pang of trauma becomes preponderant over the psyches of the populace due to the fact that the political dictator turns himself into a monster who devours the mind and rights of the people. As the people collectively experience a traumatic nightmare, the idea of the pathos with which the political despot has refused to consider the plight of the people is reflected. Kongi, the protagonist of the play, makes himself the messiah of pain and terror; he intrudes into the people's culture without considering the implication of its sacredness. His sacrilegeous behaviour creates enormous pain for the people he claims to rule over. This paper therefore addresses how political power is used to create trauma for the people. Thus, the events of the traumatic encounter unfold from the beginning of the play until the end, when it eventually collapses.

Keywords: Trauma, Afrocentric instances, political power, African despots, Kongi.

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Introduction

Over the years, the definition of trauma has been debated among scholars, and many of these scholars have come up with different definitions that suit their theories. However, understanding the concept of trauma and its effects on people who have been through traumatic experiences requires adequate attention. There are many reasons for traumatization; there are many events that could traumatise the psychology and emotions of people. These events could be war, domestic violence, rape, child abuse, racial discrimination, rejection, and political despotism. People react to traumatic events in different ways; there are people who could get over trauma within a short period of time, while others keep on reminiscing themselves in the event that led them into trauma. For instance, when soldiers fight on the battlefield, they go through a series of events that threaten their psyche, therefore, even after they leave the battlefield, they keep fighting it in their psyche. In this sense, they are vulnerable to any event that is capable of drawing them back to the past. They become aggressive as they continue to experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Trauma has an egregious effect on the psyche of the traumatised. For this reason, trauma is actually experienced as a result of unfavourable and bad events in the past. The concept of trauma has been presented in various ways as a result of different developments of the concept established in time. Over the years, there has been much discussion about the impact of trauma on various individuals in society. For some years, the interpretation of trauma has been constantly narrowed towards the specific incidents that have negative effects on people's emotions, physical bodies, and psyches. This paper investigates the psychological trauma experienced by Wole Soyinka's characters in *Kong's Harvest*. It accentuates the effect of trauma and how it sequentially revolves around the events that take place in the text. The individuals and the events that contribute to the traumatic experiences of certain characters in the text are examined. Also, different features and instances that explain the nature of the trauma that the specific characters go through are brought into focus. In other words, some characters who experience trauma as a result of one or more events are examined.

The Concept of Trauma in Literature

The term "trauma" is derived from the Latin word "trauma," which was discovered from the Greek word "traumatikos," and this can be interpreted as a severe injury in someone's body (Beck et al., 2014, p.8). Trauma is therefore described as an injury inflicted on one's emotions that leads to psychological pain or a situation that makes one go into terrorizing despair and despondency. Looking into the definition of the American Psychological Association, trauma is described as a psychological reaction to a tragic event.

In 1996, Cathy Caruth's book "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Kali Tal's Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma" had a significant part in highlighting the body of knowledge regarding trauma and brought significant attention to the study of trauma in literature. In the last few years, researchers have carried out studies on literary trauma theory in which they have accentuated the concept of trauma as a topic that is not worth representing (Banducci et al., 2014, p.5).Scholars including Caruth, the Pioneer of Psychoanalytic Psychostructural Method, presented a conceptual viewpoint that assumes trauma is a problem with no solution other than the stupefied state that brightens the innate

opposite encounter (Chou et al., 2013, p.11).Thus, this Lacanian method establishes a standpoint of trauma as a condition of truancy that divides understanding of the uttermost encounter, and this negates the lingual merit instead of the referential disposition (Zeidner, 2013, p.5). In literary studies, the inexpressible was presented as the main idea in criticism for conceptualising the effect of trauma. This concept of trauma appeals to a large number of scholars who work at the intersection of poststructuralism as well as the irreversible psychological injury that trauma must have caused (Cowell et al., 2015, p.10).

When considering the concept of trauma, it is critical to remember that it does not have the same impact on everyone. Traumatic encounters happen on a personal basis. For this reason, what is traumatic to one person may not be traumatic to another. Trauma reactions can be caused by a variety of factors, including genetics or a previous traumatic experience. Trauma has been described as a phenomenon in which a person is faced with terrifying experiences that are difficult to overcome as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (Finkelhor et al., 2015, p.15). Trauma has significantly touched every area of life. Its effect is great, and it goes beyond race, personality, status, creed, and level of education. Trauma typically causes a flashback of the traumatic event, which causes emotional and psychiatric damage, and this can progress to mental disorder, psychiatric illness, animosity, unreasonable violence, and worry (Handley et al., 2015, p.10). Trauma can also evolve as a result of neglect or rejection, which can easily degenerate into emotional pain and depression.

Therefore, trauma theory investigates and surveys how traumatic encounters evolve. Trauma theory is established in different disciplines such as literature, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, history, American studies, and anthropological studies (Jung et al., 2014, p.12). In the seventeenth century, literary writers discussed human situations, social criticism, and decadence. However, the concept of trauma in connection with cognition evolved in the 19th century; this concept was established by Jean Charcot, a neuorologist—he was a French medical practitioner who was treating women who had experienced trauma as a result of violence, sexual violation, and rape. He discovered the nexus between hysterical indication and segregative complexity (Sivikis, 2015, p.6).

Sigmund Freud, a neurologist and psychoanalyst, did, however, also establish a major idea of trauma. Charcot's research on hysteria had a significant impact on him. Trauma is the central theme of Freud's work from start to finish. Trauma is a major factor in Levenson's 19th-century research on hysteria (Levenson, 2014, p. 13). There are various forms of trauma, such as natural disasters, sexual assault, childhood trauma, complex trauma, and PTSD (Levenson, 2015, p. 12). Being subjected to numerous horrific and traumatic events can result in complex trauma, which can have a lasting impact on an individual. The consequence of complex is connected to knowing, controlling, and expressing the emotional condition of a person. This type of trauma also has very severe consequences for a person's mental order, personal ideas, learning ability, and subsequent education. Childhood trauma refers to traumatic experiences that occur in a child between the ages of zero and six (Levenson, 2016, p.10). It is assumed that young age makes the children less vulnerable to trauma and its effects. However, there have been several questions in the subsequent studies that challenge whether the children are actually affected by the traumatic experience (Levenson, 2016, p.11). Thus, this type of trauma is serious because of the cognitive impact it has. Children are

supposed to be protected, but their protection can be interfered with loud noises, violent visuals, and aggressive motion.

> Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is connected to psychological injury caused by war and brutal violence, but people of different eras can experience this type of trauma. Hence, according to the statistics, it is said that 3 million children and teenagers are exposed to traumatic experiences in the USA every year. At the age of 16, nearly one in every three of these teenagers is sexually or physically abused (Perera and Digiacoma, 2015,p.8).

Sexual abuse is terribly traumatic for children; there are many traumatic responses from children who have gone through sexual abuse. The reactions include fear, worry, anger, hostility, insomnia, depression, etc. Many sexual abuses are capable of having a long-term traumatic effect on a child, both physically and mentally (Oshri, 2013, p.6). Natural disasters can also leave behind a very traumatic experience. This includes earthquakes, floods, fire accidents, hurricanes, harsh weather conditions, etc. (Tarren-Sweeney, 2013, p.6). The consequence of this disaster can be very traumatising because it makes people experience the loss of loved ones, relatives, properties, and investments; it also brings hardship. As a result of disaster, many go through depression, shock, dependency, worry, and trauma (SAMHSA, 2015, p. 9). Therefore, even as researchers continue to uncover clues regarding the underlying origin of trauma, the subject has been fiercely debated and presented in several areas of knowledge. Since many writers continue to use their art to express themselves and include traumatic events and characters in their texts, trauma has thus gained importance in literary studies. This paper thus provides a critical explanation of the traumatising context in Soyinka's work.

Conceptualising Trauma in Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*

As it has been critically reviewed earlier, trauma has the ability to create long-term damage in one's cognition. The reasons for these traumatic encounters are enormous, and in this section, the main reason for traumatic experiences is observed to be political. Hence in *Kongi's Harvest*, a series of issues come up, and the "play is a satire on the rulers of a fictitious kingdom of Isma, somewhere in Africa, during the preparations for celebrations and aftermath of a New Yam Festival. The ruler of Isma, Kongi, is a repressive, ambitious autocrat who is assisted by a ubiquitous organising secretary. He is advised by a fraternity of largely sycophantic Aweris and enthusiastically supported by a brutal carpenters' Brigade*"* (Kumar, 2013, p.3). . Kongi deliberately trespasses into the hallowed territory of custom. He establishes himself as the Almighty and renders existence miserable for those under his control. The man Kongi, who declares himself to be the people's saviour, takes over the yam festival, which is customarily observed by the guardians of culture. He introduces modernity, which infiltrates the general population's customary ethics and culture with profanity. The intentional sacrilegious attitude is not well received by people in general. However, Kongi captures and holds them all, including their king, when they retaliate. On the day of the festival, Segi, the ex-girlfriend of Kongi, delivers a severe blow to him in public when she gives him the head of her father, who is hanged by Kongi, in a gourd as a gift. The greatest public embarrassment results from this. Kongi meets a horrible end because he believes he

has the ability to do and undo. This therefore marks the end of a despotic era in the land of Isma.

Looking into Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest,* as many existing literary evaluations of this text have always been channelled towards the symbolic features, the fact is that the text also reflects trauma, which many research studies have failed to identify. In this analysis, the events and features of trauma and how certain characters inflict trauma on their subjects are accentuated. In this text, Soyinka tells the story of a military despot whose attributes are those of a tyrant. The main character, Kongi, plays a very significant role in which he represents different pictures in line with negativity. However, as a postcolonial African ruler, President Kongi represents the disparity between modernity and the old order; he subjugates his subjects, intrudes into the sacred order of the land, subjects the traditional ruler Oba Danlola to unspeakable ridicule, and puts him in detention. Kongi decides to change the order of tradition; it pleases him to take charge of all traditional and customary functions of the land, which is against the norm and custom of the land (Isma). Every individual who opposes his opinions, on the other hand, is either imprisoned or executed. Kongi's brutality becomes so unbearable to the extent that the people of the land wail, cry, and gnash their teeth in trauma. There are many instances in which Kongi himself becomes a trauma for the people. There is a yam festival that is strictly traditional; in this festival, the yam will be tasted by the king, Oba Danlola, but this tradition has been hijacked by Kongi, and he decides to eat the yam first. This is against the tradition of the land. By taking over the tradition of the people, it is tantamount to disconnecting them from their source and spiritual roots. The festival is like a ritual that determines their lives and deaths. It is the traditional ruler and his cult members of Ogbo Aweri who are supposed to defend the essence of the tradition. They are the custodians of the tradition who have the right to conduct any ritual at the festival. This plays a very important role in people's lives and cultures. But being a military dictator, Kongi takes over all these traditional functions, and the king is relegated to being a mere criminal in detention.

The new regime depends for its continuance on its own propaganda; the 'government loud speaker' is thus central to its political machinery. In Ismaland, this is a device that pours out propaganda but admits no reply—even if reply were worthwhile: 'My ears are sore/But my mouth is agbayun' (62). This tyranny of words is later given physical shape in the Reformed Aweri Fraternity, which, in its isolated word factory, manufactures the words that go into the talking boxes. The satirical anthem silently comments on the value of such words—the very repetition of 'words' throughout the anthem effectively devalues their worth (Kumar, 2013,p.4). Kongi has not only inflicted trauma on the king but also on the people of the land. The people are concerned about this situation, and they are traumatised. Kongi never cares about the debate, and all that he thinks always takes preeminence. Hence, as it is clearly demonstrated that trauma is connected to different events, disregard for people's traditions and customs could be viewed as a traumatising instrument. Their king is humiliated, the king's aids are arrested, and the people are restricted. This causes trauma in people. This is how Soyinka establishes the reality of trauma caused by a political leader who uses his power to terrorise his subjects.

Features and instances of Trauma in *Kongi's Harvest*

In the text, Soyinka reflects certain features of trauma through certain characters. He makes Kongi apply political repression to his subject, and he subjugates the people to a painful condition. In this sense, he humiliates the king and also asks him to deliver the yam into his hand on the day of the yam festival. This humiliation causes rauma not only for the king but also for the people. In the land, the king is considered the second-in-command to the gods; how then will he be subjected to such ridicule? Not only that, Kongi arrests Segi's father, whom he feels has been one of his antagonists. Segi's character is very important in the play; she is Kongi's girlfriend before falling in love with Daudu, the King's nephew. Segi is a prominent prostitute—an indispensable harlot who also has a clubhouse. When her father becomes antagonistic towards Kongi, he is arrested and put in detention.Upon this , Kongi plans to execute some of his political prisoners, Segi's father escapes but is eventually recaptured and killed. This is an event of trauma not only to Segi but also to the people of the land. Criticising the head of state will always land one in jail or the grave. Political murder and illegal detention are tools of trauma that Kongi employs on the people. Looking at this situation, Soyinka expresses a significant view on how African leaders apply draconian measures to traumatise their own citizens. In this regard, he criticises this style of leadership. The use of force is more common than the rule of law in the African political system. Soyinka also makes it clear that taking pleasure in the people's discomfort as a leader leads to their trauma, and many of them never recover from this trauma. Therefore, creating this understanding establishes a significant discourse in this study. One can as well understand that people go through trauma during the yam festival, during which Daudu, the King's nephew, makes a speech. In Daudu's speech, he reflects on the trauma of the people and how their pain has been caused by Kongi, who claims to be omnipotent and omniscient. He creates his own Aweri as a replica of the Ogbo Aweri, who propounds theories and disputes with him. Members of the new Aweri embark on a long-term fast in order to participate in an exotic exercise in which they speak in riddles and cryptic tunes of Delphic philosophy. Their fasting indulgence can also be considered a traumatic encounter in which they are only fasting under duress at Kongi's command. This is postulated by the Fifth Aweri during his conversation with his fellow Aweris.

> Fifth Aweri: Don't look at me. I've told you I can't think on an empty stomach.
>
> Third Aweri: Can't you lay off your filthy stomach?
>
> Fifth Aweri: I can't. Why the hell couldn't Kongi do his fasting alone? I'll tell you why. He loves companions in misery. (p.25).

From the conversation above, it becomes obvious that even Kongi's philosophers are not satisfied with his leadership style. They complain every time and even quarrel among themselves. Kongi serenades himself with his carpenters-brigades while also using the organising secretary to carry out several cruel orders. Kongi never takes advice, and whatever he thinks and says takes precedence. One can also feel the pang of trauma in the song that the people sing; they sing a dirge to express the agony inflicted on them by the man who has assumed the position of a Messiah. In Daudu's monologue at the festival, he makes it clear that it is the pleasure of the despot to make him suffer. Here, Daudu represents the pain and

the interest of the people. He expresses his traumatic encounter through his speech. Daudu maintains that:

> Daudu:
>
> An impotent man will swear he feels the pangs of labour; when the maniac finally looks over the wall, he finds that there, agony is a raw commodity which he has spent lives to invent. Where I have chosen to return in joy, only fools still insist that my fate must be to suffer. This trip, I have elected to sample the joys of life, not its sorrow; to feast on the pounded yam, not on the rind of yam; to drink the wine myself, not leave it to my ministers for frugal sacraments; to love the women, not merely wash their feet at the well. In pursuit of which, let this yam, upon which I spent a fortune in fertilisers and in experiments with a multitude of strains, be taken out, peeled, cooked, and pounded; let bitter-leaf soup simmer in the women's pots and smoked fish release the goodness of the seas; that the Reformed Aweri Fraternity may belch soundly instead of merely salivating; that we may hereby repudiate all Prophets of Agony, unless it be recognised that pain may be endured only in the pursuit of ending pain and fighting terror (p. 78-79).

However, as the situation evolves, *"*Kongi desires, by using illegal ways and forcing Oba to present him the New Yam in the festival, which is actually, traditionally, to be presented to Oba. This act will show, according to the tradition, to the public that legally Kongi has become the King and the reign of Kongi has started. And again, he does not want that people should blame him as a usurper of Oba's rule" (Londhe and Panade, 2014, p,75). From Daudu's festival monologue quoted above, one could feel and understand the negative emotion expressed by Daudu, establishing the fact that the oppressor finds out that the only thing he has spent his lives inventing is agony. He concludes his speech by saying, "Unless it is recognised that pain may be endured only in the pursuit of ending pain and fighting terror" (p. 78-79).It is a clear reality that the people are subjected to trauma by Kongi, who has decided to rule the people with an iron fist and their rights are forcefully taken. They have no freedom of expression—in this context, no expression of happiness or grief. The people have no reason to rejoice at the same time because if they demonstrate their displeasure towards the cruel system, they will be imprisoned and tortured.

Conclusion

In conjunction with trauma studies and postcolonial literature, one could identify the impact of trauma on *Kong's Harvest* characters and how Soyinka satirically presents the character of Kongi as the inventor of trauma. Looking at this from a socio-political point of view, Kongi becomes a political terror to the people, and through his actions, they go through trauma. Soyinka accentuates the antics of dictatorship in the postcolonial era of Africa and how African leaders inflict trauma on their own fellow citizens. In trying to establish a cogent standard and an accurate nation-state in Africa, African writers like Soyinka have expressed their views about the standard that should be established. In the process, they condemn the act of repression, which has become common practice among African leaders. By taking advantage of the political power at their disposal, African leaders go further and terrorise their subjects beyond human imagination. In this situation, the essence of quality leadership is forfeited, and the people are subjected to severe trauma as a result of bad and despotic

leadership. Soyinka presents a situation that demonstrate the image of Kongi: "These are, the stage direction informs us, "a series of 'Last Supper' poses—iyan (pounded yam) serving variation": "A Leader's Temptation," "Agony on the Mountains," "The loneliness of the Pure," "The Uneasy Head," "The Face of Benevolence," "The Giver of Life," and "A Saint at Twilight"" (Londhe and Panade, 2014, p.75). The character of Kongi is a direct representation of those whose pleasure is in the pain of others. The terror inflicted on the people makes them go through unspoken trauma due to the fact that their rights as humans have been seized. In this regard, the development of socio-political metamorphosis is crucial in the African context. The impact of draconian measures on the people makes them lose their confidence in African nationalism in the contemporary world. Therefore, looking at the socio-cultural and political realities of African society, Soyinka has used *Kongi's Harvest* to address certain issues in postcolonial Africa. In this case, Soyinka, as a literary writer and social critic, has used literature to fulfill a positive gesture in African society. As politics and repression are used as an instrument of trauma in the text, Soyinka therefore points an accusing finger at the African political leaders, saying that most of the trauma that the people go through is caused by their bad and despotic leadership style.

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Forging and Reshaping Identity in Postcolonial Contexts: A Comparative Study of Candice Carty-Williams' *Queenie* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

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Abstract

Identity formation represents a complex and challenging process for immigrants navigating the intricate social landscapes of host communities. In Bernardine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other and Candice Carty-Williams' Queenie, the protagonists negotiate their cultural identities within the context of British societal structures that often marginalize and challenge their sense of belonging. This study explores the nuanced strategies of identity negotiation, resistance, and self-affirmation employed by characters like Amma, Yazz, Carol, and Queenie. Through their narratives, the novels reveal how these women transform systemic challenges into opportunities for profound personal growth, ultimately transcending the restrictive boundaries imposed by dominant social narratives. The characters' journeys demonstrate a powerful process of self-discovery, where personal agency and cultural resilience emerge as transformative forces against societal rejection and marginalization.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Immigrant Suffering, Integrative Crisis, Sexual Abuse, Confirming Identity.

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Introduction

Postcolonial theory emerged as a critical framework to analyze the complex literary and cultural experiences of colonized peoples, exploring the profound impacts of colonial domination. Influential thinkers like Albert Memmi, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha have significantly developed the theory. These scholars critically examined how Western colonial strategies of exploitation, marginalization, and systemic oppression fundamentally reshaped the social, cultural, and psychological landscapes of colonized societies. Homi Bhabha's seminal work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), significantly advanced postcolonial theory by providing a nuanced conceptualization of cultural representation. Bhabha articulates the theory's critical approach, defining postcolonial criticism as a lens that "bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 245). His analysis goes beyond simplistic narratives, revealing the complex strategies of cultural domination and resistance employed by colonial and postcolonial authorities. Bhabha illuminates how colonial power operates through intricate cultural practices, challenging monolithic interpretations of colonial interactions.

Postcolonial theory challenges the historical binary of colonizer and colonized, revealing the complex, multifaceted nature of cultural interactions. As Bhabha articulates, "Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South" (1994, p. 245). The theory illuminates the intricate power dynamics between dominant colonial structures and marginalized communities, exploring how cultural identities are negotiated, contested, and reimagined in both national and transnational contexts. It examines the nuanced ways in which power operates through cultural representation, challenging simplistic narratives of absolute domination and resistance.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) offers a nuanced exploration of black women's experiences in contemporary British society, weaving together the interconnected narratives of multiple characters. The novel begins with Amma, a black actress who has persistently challenged theatrical norms, embodying a lifelong struggle for creative and personal autonomy. Her daughter Yazz represents a younger generation's critical engagement with identity, navigating complex social landscapes and intellectual challenges. Characters like Carole, supported by her Nigerian mother Bummi and mentored by her teacher Shirley King, illustrate the intricate pathways of social mobility and cultural negotiation. Evaristo skillfully portrays the characters' diverse experiences—from Dominique's relationship with Nzinga to Megan's personal struggles—revealing the multifaceted nature of identity formation among black women in Britain. Through these interconnected stories, the novel transcends simple narratives of oppression, instead presenting a complex, nuanced tapestry of individual resilience, cultural negotiation, and personal transformation.

Candice Carty-Williams' *Queenie* (2019) offers a complex portrait of a young Jamaican-British woman navigating intricate personal and social challenges. The novel

explores Queenie's multifaceted experiences of identity, relationships, and racial marginalization through her tumultuous personal journey. Her relationship with Tom exposes the deep-seated racial tensions within British society, as his family's rejection reveals the systemic barriers faced by black women in interracial relationships. Carty-Williams skilfully depicts Queenie's subsequent personal struggles, including her complex sexual relationships and the profound psychological impact of childhood trauma, particularly the abuse she witnessed through her stepfather Roy. The narrative delves into Queenie's process of self-discovery and healing, revealing how she confronts and navigates the intersecting challenges of racial discrimination, personal trauma, and cultural identity.

This study critically examines the complex processes of identity negotiation and social integration experienced by diasporic communities within the British social landscape. Employing a postcolonial theoretical framework, the research investigates the intricate mechanisms of social marginalization and cultural exclusion that shape immigrant experiences. By analyzing Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* and Candice Carty-Williams' *Queenie*, the study explores how systemic racism, and cultural barriers impact individual and collective identity formations. The research seeks to illuminate the nuanced strategies of resistance and self-affirmation employed by immigrants navigating the challenging terrain of cultural belonging. Central to the study is an argument that colonial legacies continue to manifest through subtle yet pervasive mechanisms of social rejection, fundamentally challenging immigrants' abilities to fully integrate and self-determine their identities within British society.

Postcolonialism and the Notion of Identity

Identity emerges as a dynamic, fluid construct that reflects the complex interplay of cultural, historical, and social forces. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) conceptualizes identity as a malleable phenomenon shaped by "economic, political, and cultural forces" that continuously transform human experiences (Appiah, 1992, p. 177). Stuart Hall (1994) further elaborates on this perspective, characterizing identity as an "ongoing process" perpetually negotiated and reconstructed through lived experiences (Hall, 1994, p. 122). The colonial encounter fundamentally disrupted and reimagined cultural identities, imposing systemic marginalization and cultural erasure mechanisms. Western colonial powers systematically employed strategies of cultural domination that extended beyond physical control, targeting the very essence of colonized peoples' self-understanding. This process involved not merely territorial occupation but a comprehensive attempt to reconfigure cultural landscapes, undermining indigenous knowledge systems, social organization, and self-representation.

The African experience epitomizes the profound violence of colonial identity formation. Forced displacement, enslavement, and systemic dehumanization represented calculated strategies of cultural dismemberment. Africans were systematically stripped of their cultural context, reduced to commodified labor, and positioned within a hierarchical system that fundamentally negated their humanity. This process of identity destruction was

not incidental but a deliberate mechanism of colonial control, designed to facilitate economic exploitation and maintain European hegemonic structures.

Amina Mama's critical scholarship illuminates the profound mechanisms of colonial identity production, revealing how European colonial strategies systematically constructed colonized peoples as marginalized subjects (Mama, 1995). By examining the psychological and social architectures of colonial domination, Mama demonstrates how imperial powers deliberately undermined the dignity and self-representation of colonized communities (Mama, 1995). David Buckingham's analysis further explicates this dynamic, conceptualizing identity as a complex terrain of psychological and social negotiations, where marginalized groups continuously contest and resist dominant narratives of self-representation. (Buckingham, 2008). The process of identity formation emerges as a complex dialectic of power, resistance, and strategic self-presentation. Marginalized communities develop sophisticated mechanisms of cultural resilience, challenging attempts to impose externally constructed identities. This ongoing struggle involves not merely passive resistance but active reimagination of self and collective experience, challenging the fundamental presumptions of colonial epistemologies.

Chris Baker's scholarly analysis illuminates the complex emergence of identity as a central problematic in postcolonial and cultural studies. As Baker (2000) articulates, the 1990s witnessed a profound theoretical shift, with "identity" becoming a critical lens through which scholars interrogated the intricate dynamics of cultural representation, political struggle, and linguistic negotiation. This theoretical turn reflects a broader intellectual movement that challenged essentialist understandings of culture, instead conceptualizing identity as a dynamic, contested terrain of meaning-making.The exploration of cultural identity transcends mere descriptive categorization, revealing the complex mechanisms through which communities negotiate, resist, and reimagine their collective experiences. Cultural identities emerge not as fixed essences, but as ongoing processes of negotiation, shaped by historical, political, and social contexts that continuously transform collective self-understanding. (Baker , 2000).

In this context, Bill Ashcroft (2004) explores the concept of hybridity as a lens through which social interactions in postcolonial communities can be understood. He asserts that "Hybridity occurs in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or 'assimilate' to new social patterns" (p. 87). Identity, he argues, is shaped and developed through life on specific lands, where various principles act as influencing factors. Ashcroft further highlights the struggles faced by immigrants living in different communities, noting that "patterns of immigration from the imperial areas of influence continue to produce complex cultural palimpsests within the post-colonized world" (p. 87). As a result, social conflict has emerged as immigrants strive to integrate into host communities, often facing significant challenges in the process.

The act of forging others' identities serves as a deliberate strategy employed by certain groups to attribute negative traits to others. This distortion of cultural and traditional images is a tactic highlighted by Gandhi (1958), who advocated for peaceful resistance against British colonial rule in India. Gandhi proposed non-violent resistance as a means to demonstrate India's unique cultural identity, which values peaceful coexistence. He argued that the violent practices of British colonizers against Indians were deliberately designed to undermine and distort Indian cultural identity. This was achieved through targeted manipulation of language and education, with an emphasis on promoting English as culturally superior to native languages: "The only education we receive is English education" (p. 6).Gandhi emphasized that the colonizer's goal was to erode Indian culture and replace it with British values. He declared, "Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us" (p. 5). Furthermore, Gandhi rejected British claims of Indian inferiority, including assertions that India lacked a rich history or initiative, stating, "But their addresses could not go home to us" (p. 5). The colonizers sought to erase India's cultural identity by perpetuating the idea that Indians had no vision for the future, as Gandhi noted: "The charge against us is, that we have no initiative" (p. 5). In this way, the British deployed numerous strategies to distort and suppress Indian identity.

Giles and Middleton (2008) suggest that human identity is reshaped by the means of human experiences that are determined by representing "the self as possessing a sense of identity and control" (58). Relying   on such suggestions, the colonizer has influenced other nations' identities by the means of preserving his control and power that are used to prove his social superiority and privilege. In other words, living among certain social groups demands the human perspectives of power to confirm the identity that is influenced by others and their way of behaving. This way, human beings can develop their peaceful living and satisfaction by the means of disposing of the perspective's hegemony. Eventually, the attempts to achieve identity in the British community are the main concerns of this study that aims to examine how both Bernardine Evaristo and Candice Carty-Williams depict such suffering in their *Girl, Woman, Other, and Queenie.*

Girl, Woman, Other and Queenie: The Story of the Immigrants Forging and Confirming Identity in the British Community

Integration in the host communities has been a haunting thought for all immigrants who suffer from being in a different community from their original one. Both Evaristo and Carty-Williams have been concerned with this notion in their narratives, which depict the crisis of integration in the British community for non-British people, who are considered immigrants. In her commentary on the crisis of living and integration for immigrants in the host communities, Rasool (2018) argues that immigrants suffer from the demands of integration in the British community since "there is an increased focus on social cohesion and integration that can't be achieved easily in a community, which believes in the superiority of his citizens" (p.73). She adds that minorities who come to live in the UK suffer from a life

experience that is dominated and featured with pressure due to the sociocultural behaviours that the British practice against those ethnic minorities. The ultimate result for those immigrants is to spend time "on self-exploration and negotiating their contested identities" (p.73). Thus, confirming identity resembles a challenge for accomplishing the perspectives of integration in the British community. Being non-British in the British community makes individuals feel shallow due to the cultural perspectives that the British always put as a criterion to achieve integration.

However, Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* tells the story of the black women in the British community. From the very beginning, Evaristo depicts Amma, the black young girl with a fighting tendency to confirm herself against the British reduction that tries to mute her and other women in the community. Thus, with the help of other non-British women, she decides to have her theatre to echo the voice of the demands of the non-British women:

> "Black and Asian women's stories would get out there
> they would create theatre on their own terms
> it became the company's motto
>   On Our Own Terms
> or Not At All". (Evaristo, 2019, p. 2)

Such a beginning for the novel, tells the reader that there are women, who feel marginalized because the British do not show any interest in hearing them. At the same time, a spirit of encountering is seen in the aforementioned lines, where non-British women want to prove to others that they have the materials that belong to them and despite the rejection of the British community, they want to express themselves. Evaristo shows how Amma is a strong woman who can fight for her rights and liberty against those who want to have her under their domination "Amma preferred running solo and mixing with others who didn't try to impose their will on anyone else" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 22). Accordingly, Amma's search to confirm herself has made her feel the perspectives of hegemony that non-British suffer from totally.

Amma lives in a family that has recognized the mistreatment of the colonial power, and her father is one of the activists against racism that the colonizer shows towards others in the British community "I grew up listening to his sermons during our evening meal on the evils of capitalism and colonialism and the merits of socialism" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 17). This has had a deep influence on her to fight to confirm herself in a community that rejects others. However, the perspectives of independence and liberty are seen in the character of Amma, who decides to express her views and beliefs openly regardless of the criticism that she might receive due to that as seen when she declares that "I am a dyke" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 17).Thus, Amma tries to express herself in public as a brave woman who believes in her independence. Moreover, she expresses her opinion about having relations with men as seen in the defence of her virginity despite the large number of sexual relations that she has been involved in "She replied she was practically a virgin compared to male rock stars who boasted conquests of thousands" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 24). Therefore, Amma tries to show that she lives as a liberated woman, who believes in her body's right to have pleasure regardless of the views of others. She is depicted as a self-confident woman who can behave freely.

Amma rejects having a mute voice by others since she considers her mother a suppressed woman and she does not want to live like her. Her father, as a symbol of patriarchal power enjoys having control over his family "he was impressed with her silent acquiescence" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 17). Such a muting voice is what made her father choose Helen, her mother, as a wife. In the same way that her father deals with Helen, Amma deals with her, trying to show that she is more knowledgeable than her mother. Furthermore, she criticizes her mother's style of life as a suppressed woman "Amma saw it as symptomatic and symbolic of her mother's oppression. Mum never found herself, she told friends, she accepted her subservient position in the marriage and rotted from the inside" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 33). Hence, Amma represents herself as a different character who does not believe in what her family has instructed her or tried to impose upon her.

Like Amma, her daughter, Yazz, who is now nineteen years old and studies English Literature to be a journalist, is another black character who seeks integrative standards in the novel. The girl is depicted with certain standards of self-acceptance and satisfaction. For example, the British community's standards of beauty do not mean anything to her. She neglects the expectations of the community. She seems haunted by having "good degrees because without it they're stuffed" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 38). In her early days, she does not care for the things that Amma tries to fill her mind with. Rather, she considers her "mind is her most valuable asset and she's not going to mess with it" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 48). Thus, Yazz has developed her lifestyle according to her views to confirm herself in the British community. Another perspective of accomplishing her identity is seen when Yazz starts attending university. Hence, her views of the domestic role of women have completely changed. She rejects the limited role of woman as a wife and mother in the community "since Yazz went to uni, almost like she realizes she's not been the perfect picket-fence mum" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 48). To some extent, Yazz is depicted with little emotional interest. She rejects to be sensitive like her mother. Rather, she prefers to be a strong woman who can restrict her emotions when she needs them. Such criticism of Amma for being emotional is depicted by Yazz to show the weakness of her mother, who has suffered a lot from being a black woman in the white community.

> What it meant to be a black woman. What it meant to be a feminist when white feminist organizations made them feel unwelcome. How it felt when people called them nigger, or racist thugs beat them up. What it was like when white men opened doors or gave up their seats on public transport for white women (which was sexist), but not for them (which was racist). (Evaristo, 2019, p. 18).

In this sense Amma like other black women in the British community suffers from rejection because of being a black-skinned woman. Amma realizes the white oppression of her that tries to reduce her in the community. Dealing with immigrants according to the colonial notion of superiority is what Fanon (1952) suggests. In particular, black Africans have suffered from white oppression and marginalization due to their skin (Fanon, 1952). Marginalization is the domain in the life of Amma, who suffers from reduction and isolation because the white community rejects her.

The same practices that the whites follow are determined to forge others' identity, relying on the cultural superiority of the British community have affected Carol, the other black girl in the novel. Carol suffers from reduction and exclusion at her school because all the white students ignore her "nobody without saying a word to her; without even noticing her" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 101). The white students try to forge others' identities by the means of reduction and exclusion that result from the harsh feeling of being invisible in the community as seen in both Amma and Yazz. Carol feels that her white surroundings want to mute her to show that black people lack the perspectives of cultural equality that they have as a privilege. For Woodward (1997), the practice of forging identity depends on the colonizer's thoughts of "the marking of difference" (29). Thus, making the immigrants feel inferior in the community is among the practices of the white colonizer that suggests his superior soul in the community.

Moreover, muting the black girls is rejected by Jazz, who sees all her surroundings try to dominate her because of her gender or skin "I mean, how on earth can you be a Professor of Modern Life when your terms of reference are all male, and all-white" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 42). However, the state of rejection and resentment has made the girl a strong character with an independent identity that rejects being the reduced one in the community. Jazz is ready to fight to accomplish her true self which makes her satisfied "I'm not a victim, don't ever treat me like a victim, my mother didn't raise me to be" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 51). Thus, Jazz is a strong character that rejects being treated as a victim of colour or gender. In the same line, her mother Amma rejects the state of reduction of women that the British community follows as a tradition. She talks about when other female students fear having a voice in the community. Thus, Amma rejects the tradition of gender that has haunted the mind of the masculine community that reduces women and ignores them the main protagonist in the novel rebels against the traditional binary understanding of gender "she shouted at the course director while everyone else, including the female students, stayed silent" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 15). In this saying, Amma rejects having a forged identity in the community due to her gender. Supporting against the British community practices is crucial for Carol, who has received it from her mother. Carol's mother wants her daughter to live freely out of the perspectives of reduction that the white community wants to force her to undergo as seen in the following: You must find the people who will want to be your friends even if they are all white people there is someone for everyone in this world you must go back and fight the battles that are your British birthright, Carol, as a true Nigerian. (Evaristo, 2019, p. 103).

The novel represents the political side of domination. For Carol's mother, her daughter should be aware of her identity in this community that rejects other immigrants due to its superior soul. Thus, the mother instructs Carol to defend her rights and call for equality in the British community. Evaristo represents the perspectives of recognition to other immigrants by her black protagonist Amma, who depicts the white community as being not a tolerant one with others "Yes but I'm black, Courts, which makes me more oppressed than anyone who isn't" (Evaristo, 2019, p. 55). In this context, all the efforts of the British community are to forge others' identity by trying to prove that the British are superior to others culturally and traditionally. This thought of racial discrimination is rejected by Amma,

Yazz, and Carol, who succeed in finding themselves using confirming their identical self and believing in their power as important figures with positive roles in the community. Those black women provide a new image of a woman who believes in diversity and seeks to be accepted because she believes in herself and her existence. Thus, *Girl, Woman, Other* depicts how the black African generations still suffer from the white practices that always try to reduce and marginalize them since the British community is not a tolerant one that shows any kind of welcome to immigrants.

In this context, Carty-Williams' *Queenie* depicts the suffering of the non-British in the British community. The protagonist of the novel; Queenie suffers from reduction and sexual abuse due to her relationship with her white boyfriend Tom, who later breaks with her to let her in a hasty search for sexuality in her surroundings. Carty-Williams tries to show how white men believe in exploiting the immigrants' bodies to please and satisfy their sexual demands as clarified by Maggie "When they do finally get the woman, they'll drop her. Drop her like they didn't even know her" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 12). Thus, the Jamaican girl; Queenie has become one of the victims of the exploitation because of her relationship to Tom.

Furthermore, abuse and mocking can be seen when Tom's grandmother knows that Queenie is pregnant. She mocks the expected baby because of his mother's nose "She said that our future baby should have your nice straight nose" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 14). In this meaning, Queenie recognizes her rejection by the white community that does not accept immigrants. Queenie is shocked when she understands that she is not welcome by Tom's family who believes in the superiority of the British to others. Thus, Queenie starts to feel pain psychologically because of the state of rejection. Her happiness about the baby has turned into a kind of agony that aches her She feels like this kind of relationship is terrible because of the rejection of the white British to her and her baby as she clarifies "I wasn't hurting anymore, but in place of the pain was something else, something sitting heavy that I couldn't quite identify. Wanting to kill some time before I got home to reminders of my disintegrating Relationship" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p.24-25). A sexual relationship with Tom has ruined the life of the poor girl who finds her neglected and rejected due to her love and faith.

More terribly is her feeling when Queenie realizes that all the concern of Tom is to enjoy her body without caring for her emotions "Girl like you, man like me? I can guarantee you've never had sex so good. I let it stay there" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 27). Thus, Tom himself is not confident that Queenie is honest, and she has never had a sexual relationship before she meets him. Such accusation has made Queenie suffer psychologically and feel terribly about herself "I'm one whole bad bit" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 54). Queenie, who has believed in Tom, is shocked due to his bad behaviour towards her. Consequently, Queenie becomes an astray girl who has lost herself because of her traumatic shock. All the concerns Queenie has experiencing more sexual affairs with other white men in substitute heroes of Tom. Darcy, who plays the role of the supporter in her life, blames her for that and

urges her to check her sexual health because of the various relations that Queenie has conducted as seen in the following:

> "Darcy, do you care about my sexual health?" I asked her. "I've been having more . . . indoor activity than usual recently, and it occurred to me that I should check that things aren't going to start falling off." (Carty-Williams, 2019, pp. 110-111)

In the same sense, Queenie's mother Kyazike blames her daughter for her sexuality which is bad behaviour, in which her daughter has been involving fucking touch people like they're your property!" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 124). Queenie is depicted by Carty-Williams as a girl of desire and lust that can't be fulfilled or satisfied after her loss of her boyfriend, Tom. Her search for herself is seen only using having more sexuality. Queenie lacks the perspectives of normal life that she considers as "normal is normal. Like being happy and being able to get up and go to work without worrying about everything" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 245). Accordingly, Queenie's life has become a kind of disturbance and chaos that has haunted her mind. All these harsh feelings are the result of her reduction and marginalization in the community as she manifests in the following:

> "I didn't fit, I'll never fit," I said.

> "Roy didn't want me in his house . . . nobody wants me at the fucking Lido . . . Tom didn't want me, my own mum . . . she didn't." (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 255).

However, Queenie's life has become different when she tries to confirm that she is a different character in the community. Queenie confesses her faults "I can honestly say that my surroundings have never been cleaner. Nor my body" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 246). In this saying, Queenie is depicted as a different character who wants to reconcile herself and live positively regardless of her bad suffering in the past. All her concerns now are to recover from alcoholism and the bad effects of her sexual relationships.

Now, Queenie tries to confirm her new identity that the British community has invaded and forged because she was an immigrant. She feels that she can make her recovery "These things happen. It happens a lot in my culture. Us black girls, we're always meant to know our place" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 272). Queenie realizes the reality of the community and decides to forget about her past. She comes to the reality that in life many people deserve love and sharing. For her, those people can be positive agents and supporters because they do not believe in exploitation and body investment "There are one's people think are nice, though: well-spoken, surprisingly intelligent, exotic" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 273). Furthermore, the new identity that Queenie has accomplished has made her feel positive about the place as a tranquil one that deserves to be lived in. All these positive feelings are the consequences of her recovery from her shocks and pain.

Now, she feels satisfied with her social surroundings due to her mental recovery "A safe space is sort of like a mental place you go to cope with things" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 280). Eventually, Queenie becomes a symbol of the successful woman in the community because of her brave features to challenge the suffering and pain that the community has caused her. Furthermore, social recognition is depicted by Diana, who says: "I think that

Queenie is very brave and I'm very proud that she's my cousin" (Carty-Williams 316). Thus, Queenie has become an independent girl with a new identity that shows a kind of human satisfaction about life and its burdens as Queenie concludes the novel "I Accepted" (Carty-Williams, 2019, p. 321). Thus, Queenie accepts herself despite all her suffering.

Conclusion

This study has been concerned with examining the perspectives of confirming identity in the British community as depicted by Bernardine Evaristo and Candice Carty-Williams in their *Girl, Woman, Other*, and *Queenie*. Despite previous studies on the texts, the study seems different since it has deployed the postcolonial lens to examine the perspectives of marginalization and reduction that immigrants encounter in the British community. The findings show that both Evaristo and Carty-Williams use female characters to depict the sexual exploitation of immigrants in the British community. Rather, both novels depict the suffering of women due to British racism that considers others with no cultural heritage or being inferior to them. As for Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, the three main black characters, Amma, Yazz, and Carol, have accomplished their self-search and prevailed in the state of rejection the British community believes in. Rather, the novel rejects dealing with women on terms of gender which reduces them to domestic life only. However, the same situation of rejection is depicted by Carty-Williams, who depicts her protagonist, *Queenie* as a brave girl who can get revenge after her sexual exploitation by white men. Similar to Evaristo's characters, Queenie has become a different girl, who expresses her self-satisfaction due to her confirming the new identity that has enabled her to prevail over huddles of living in the British community.

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A Feminist Stylistic Reading of Naomi Alderman's Novel *The Power*

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Abstract

As there is social, cultural, and political sexism, there is also linguistic sexism. The latter cannot be uncovered by traditional feminist analysis but rather through a feminist linguistic analysis of a text. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how linguistic choices, particularly lexical decisions, contribute to linguistic sexism and the representation of women in female fiction. To achieve this aim, the study applies feminist stylistic analysis to one of the most contemporary English novels, The Power (2016), by the English novelist Naomi Alderman. The study adopts a qualitative method, conducting a close reading to identify biased uses of language at the lexical level and relate these uses to gender meanings. Ultimately, the results show that the text is not free from sexist word choices. Although it was produced during the golden age of feminism, and its main theme revolves around empowering women to control the world, it exhibits some sexist language that implies negative meanings, particularly when used about female characters. The researcher attributes this sexism to social and cultural factors that influence writers' consciousness, leading them to unconsciously choose sexist language.

Keywords: Feminist literary theory, Feminist stylistics, Lexical level, *The Power*

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, the topics of gender bias and the representation of women in both literary and non-literary language have sparked extensive debate among feminist linguists, literary theorists, and critics. Their comprehensive research into language use in literary works demonstrates that women are not only marginalized politically, socially, or economically, but they also face linguistic discrimination. The language of literature tends to privilege male experiences and perspectives over those of women. Nevertheless, this issue has not gone unaddressed. Many female theorists dedicate part of their literary careers to combatting this form of sexism, arguing that it is socially and culturally constructed rather than biological.

One of the most influential feminist critics addressing language bias is Ellen Showalter, an English feminist. In her work *A Literature of Their Own* (1973), she asserts that male writings receive more attention and focus than female writings, even though the English literary canon includes many female authors. This biased emphasis allows male narratives to dominate. Consequently, Showalter urges female writers to take responsibility for empowering female language and bringing it to prominence. To achieve this, she proposes two approaches to reading literature. The first, 'feminist critique,' involves women acting as readers and critics of male-authored texts to analyse how women are represented through male language. The second, 'gynocritic reading,' involves women reading texts by female authors to explore how women are portrayed through female language. In both approaches, the aim is to illuminate female experiences that have been marginalized by male perspectives due to social or cultural factors.

Showalter's theories resonate with subsequent feminist linguists and critics such as Judith Butler, Deborah Cameron, and Sara Mills. They also examine language use in literature and arrive at the same conclusion: linguistic sexism arises not from biological differences but from social and cultural influences. Naturally, men and women possess the same speech organs and share a similar speaking process; however, the social and cultural constraints imposed by certain communities dictate how individuals use language. For instance, in some societies, men are permitted to discuss their sexual and emotional interests, while women are not. It is often acceptable for men to use taboo language, but the same is not expected from women. According to Judith Butler, an English feminist linguist, such linguistic rules reinforce gender differences and influence language users to construct their sexual identities accordingly. She elaborates on this concept in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), introducing what she terms Gender Performativity Theory. Butler asserts that "gender is not something one is; it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (Butler, 1990, p. 25).

Deborah Cameron supports Butler's perspective and challenges the notion that men and women use language differently—where men are seen as assertive and direct while women are viewed as emotional and talkative. In her book, *The Myth of Mars and Venus* (2007), she states, "the assertion that women are naturally more talkative than men, or that men are incapable of understanding emotions, has no scientific basis. These are cultural stereotypes rather than universal truths" (Cameron, 2007, p. 44). Cameron's research extends to the realm of digital communication; in *Language and Gender in the Digital Age* (2020),

she examines how digital platforms, social media, and online interactions reshape language and gender differences.

Sara Mills, on the other hand, asserts that sexism in language is socially and culturally constructed. The dominance of male language in patriarchal societies also influences female language, often leading female writers to unconsciously adopt these patterns in their work. She elaborates on this concept in her book *Feminist Stylistics* (1995), which was re-edited in 2005. Mills argues that even female writings can reflect language sexism, stating that "applying the feminist stylistic model of analysis helps readers and analysts to understand what is happening inside and outside the texts and how certain language choices may serve the interests of some people to the detriment of others" (Mills, 1995, p. 11).

Mills' feminist stylistic model of analysis operates at three levels of language: words, phrases/sentences, and discourse. At the word level, the analysis focuses on the sexist use of generic nouns and pronouns, gender-specific naming, derogatory terms, endearments, and diminutives. The phrase and sentence level examines the sexist use of phrases, metaphors, jokes, and common expressions. At the discourse level, the analysis considers character construction, descriptions, self-descriptions, gender roles of female and male characters, and the fragmentation of their body parts. The current study will analyse the use of language at the lexical level in the contemporary English novel *The Power* (2016).

The Power (2016) is Naomi Alderman's most acclaimed work, which won the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction in 2017. Alderman, a British author, screenwriter, and game designer, is known for her thought-provoking exploration of themes related to power, gender, and technology. Born in 1974 in London and raised in an Orthodox Jewish community, her background has influenced her writing, particularly in her debut novel *Disobedience* (2006). Alderman has also contributed to various media, including video games, notably working on the popular fitness game *Zombies, Run!*, where she merges her storytelling skills with interactive gaming. Her television writing further delves into how technology shapes human relationships and power structures.

Alderman's *The Power* (2016) is a gripping and thought-provoking speculative fiction novel that reimagines the world with a shocking and revolutionary premise: women develop a power within them that allows them to release electric jolts, changing the dynamics of gender and societal norms forever. This compelling narrative explores themes of power, gender, and the consequences of subverting traditional hierarchies. The novel is framed as a historical account set in a not-so-distant future where teenage girls all around the world begin to awaken with the newfound ability to generate electric energy. Initially, the phenomenon is treated with scepticism and disbelief, but as more and more girls manifest this power, the balance of power shifts inexorably in their favour. The narrative follows four central characters: Roxy, the daughter of a London crime lord who becomes one of the first to embrace her power; Tunde, a Nigerian journalist who documents the unfolding global events; Margot, an ambitious and cunning politician who rises to prominence in the U.S.; and Allie, a young girl who escapes from an abusive foster home and transforms herself into a

charismatic and powerful spiritual leader known as "Mother Eve." The novel will undergo a feminist stylistic analysis; however, before delving into the analysis, it is essential to review previous similar studies to help identify the research gap and guide the researcher's work from that point forward. Therefore, the researcher intends to select recent studies published between 2020 and 2023.

Literature Review

The emergence of feminist stylistics has paved the way for feminist linguists to explore linguistic sexism in texts. Numerous studies employ feminist stylistic models to analyse gender representation in literary language. One such study is by Rahimnouri and Ghandehariun (2020), who examined lexico-semantic elements in gendered sentences, narrative structures, and lexical items, including adjectives and metaphors, along with their frequency, syntax, and other features. They discussed the power dynamics in Harriet and David's relationship, using feminist stylistic concepts to illustrate how Harriet's language and portrayal reflect her passivity, obedience, and dependence. Ultimately, the authors concluded that Harriet is depicted as a conventional, archaic, helpless, and subservient woman.

Perveen, Hafeez, and Ghazanfer (2021) studied gender discrimination in the play The Domestic Crusader by Wajahat by applying Sara Mills' model of Feminist Stylistics. The data in this study have been analysed at the three levels of the model, words, sentences, and discourse words, sentences, and discourse, employing a qualitative approach. The research concluded that the author utilized negative language to portray women. This included the use of generic nouns, representing women as marked forms, naming conventions that reflect androcentrism, and the semantic derogation of women at the word level. At the sentence level, the study identified the use of readymade phrases, metaphors, jokes, humour, and presuppositions. At the discourse level, the author contrasted male and female characters, depicting females as sex objects—weak and helpless—while portraying males as pleasure-seekers and extremists.

In 2022, Raslie and Zaidi investigated gender representation in language on social media platforms. They conducted a qualitative analysis of the language used in Malay beauty product advertisements on Instagram, examining 150 ads through a feminist stylistic framework (Mill, 1998). Utilizing Verdonk's (2002) framework, they assessed stylistic elements, focusing on how language represents women and shapes that representation. The findings revealed that stereotypically feminine qualities were prevalent in the stylistic choices of these commercials, highlighting the pervasive sexism, stereotyping, and sexualization of women as marketing strategies. This study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving social media advertising practices, particularly concerning language appropriateness and ethics.

Shakoor, Ajmal, and Ghazanfar (2023) also conducted a feminist stylistic analysis of Ayesha Baqir's book Beyond the Fields, exploring how women are portrayed within the text. They sought to connect the artistic elements and language choices in the narrative to issues of violence and gender inequality. Their analysis revealed that the linguistic choices support

Zara, the main female character, in her struggle against gender-based discrimination. Additionally, they demonstrated how these choices relate to broader feminist and sociocultural discourses, illustrating how feminist stylistics can examine and interconnect various aspects of gender representation. This contributes to the ongoing discourse about the role of language in upholding or challenging gender norms.

In contrast, the current study applies feminist stylistic tools to investigate the representation of women in science fiction. The Power (2016) is a speculative novel known for its imaginative and complex language, where each word is intricately connected to convey overall meaning, keeping readers engaged until the end. Furthermore, this study's approach is novel, as the feminist stylistic model of analysis has only emerged in the field of stylistics since the early 21st century, resulting in relatively limited research in this area.

Methodology

The main object of this paper is to investigate the effect of sexist word choices on the representation of women in English scientific fiction. So, a textual analysis in the form of a qualitative research method is applied. A close reading is conducted to find the words that carry sexism in their use and relate their selection to feminist interpretations. The sample study is Naomi Alderman's novel The Power (2016). This analysis will focus on the use of language at the lexical level through a feminist stylistic lens. Specifically, it will examine generic nouns; for example, when discussing humanity, the terms "mankind" and "man" are often used. The term "woman" is a marked form, while the linguistic forms present men as unmarked. Examples include suffixes like "-ess," "-ette," "-Anne," and "-Trix," as seen in words such as "actress," "authoress," "Bachelorette," "hostess," "poetess," "lioness," and "comedienne." Additionally, there is a semantic derogation of women, where certain terms indicate a lower status and convey negative sexual connotations that are offensive. Examples include "courtier/courtesan" and "master/mistress," as well as "host/hostess," among others. The use of endearments and diminutives is also significant; for instance, when men refer to women as "bird" or "chick" as terms of endearment, "chick" serves as a diminutive that implies women can be likened to small animals. The study employs the feminist stylistic model as its analytical framework. This model typically examines three levels of language, words, phrases/sentences, and discourse, to demonstrate how each level contributes to the production of sexist literary language. However, this paper focuses specifically on the selection of words and the impact of their sexist use on the representation of women in English female fiction. As the focal point of this study is to investigate the effect of using sexist language on the representation of women in English fiction, an attentive search is conducted to identify the lexical choices that contribute to linguistic sexism. This includes examining the use of generic nouns, the marking of women, the semantic derogation of women, endearments and diminutives, as well as euphemisms and taboo language.

Starting with the use of generic nouns, feminists classify nouns as sexist when their male form is used to refer to both men and women, such as 'man' in 'policeman,' 'fireman,' or

'chairman.' Today, these professions are occupied by both men and women, yet they are often expressed in masculine terms. The text reflects this usage. One instance occurs when Roxy observes that the policemen become nervous due to the behaviour of some women nearby. She states, "The policemen with their rifles are nervous. Something could go bad here very easily" (Alderman, 2016, p. 121). Here, it is unclear whether all the policemen are men or if a female officer is present. If there is a female in this group, the term is sexist.

Another example arises when Allie suggests taking a woman to the hospital, stating, "the other policemen are watching the senior officer" (p. 121). Again, the use of 'policemen' is generic in this context, with the phrase 'other policemen' encompassing both men and women. According to feminist stylists, such a selection of generic nouns reflects a male-biased choice. It would be more appropriate to replace it with a gender-neutral term like 'policeperson.' This illustrates the first instance of linguistic sexism at the word level. From a feminist perspective, the social context of these examples and their impact on gendwer roles could be addressed more comprehensively. Each example analysed should be discussed within a broader context.

Referring to women as marked form is another way that creates linguistic sexism in literary language. It is when women are recognized by male forms, as in 'Mrs 'with married women whose names are changed to be known by their husband's name and family, as with the female character, Mrs Montgomery-Tailor, who is mentioned about 36 times in the text as Mrs Montgomery- Tailor. Not in a single reference, she is mentioned by her real name or family. She is throughout the text is known as Mrs Montgomery. The opposite is true with her husband who is directly referred to by his name as Mr Montgomery-Tailor. The same reference is used with another two female characters Mrs Williams, Mrs Cleary, and Mrs Latif. The interesting issue that I observed while searching for an example of this use is that one of the female characters expresses her objection to naming her as 'Mrs' in the text itself. That is when Ryan tells Cleary, "Nice to meet you, Mrs Cleary", and "then a look across his face like he knows he's not supposed to call her Mrs like he's been schooled in it, 'I mean, Mayor Cleary" (Alderman, 2016, p.150). This quotation is that Mrs Cleary expresses her dislike of calling her 'Mrs' Cleary immediately. Cleary's objection here suggests her dissatisfaction with calling her 'Mrs.', which is originally derived from the male form 'Mr'. Immediately, Ryan changes his words and says, "Mayer Cleary". So, referring to women as a marked form gives men priority over women, just like ordering men before women in some situations.

In literary and non-literary texts, when situations require mentioning both sexes, men's names are typically mentioned first. It is common to hear phrases such as "boys and girls," "men and women," or "he and she." In the text, six instances of this pattern can be identified. The first occurs when Margot scolds Jos for not immediately informing her about the fire; when she looks through the window, she finds that "men and women with cameras are already gathering" (Alderman, 2016, p. 30). The second instance is when Tunde observes "some men and women watching" from the upper floor of a mall (p. 64). Additionally, it is noted that "the Holy Mother cares for men and women alike" (p. 148). This pattern is also

evident when Mrs. Montgomery-Taylor states that "children are born so small. It does not matter if they are boys or girls" (p. 306). In these lines and others, when both sexes are mentioned, men's names are placed first. Language users often mention men before women, reflecting the belief that priority is given to men. Feminists interpret this as a biased ordering, which may convey a sense of derogation similar to the semantic derogation associated with certain words. Semantic derogation, as defined by Mills (1995), refers to the choice of lexemes that describe only women and are never applied to men, such as the terms "whore," "bitch," or "cunt." These words, when used concerning women, carry very negative connotations. They represent the negative aspects of women that are often hidden unless socially or economically compelled to be revealed. Women may be labelled as whores or bitches when they face social oppression or economic need. In the text, these three words are employed with their negative meanings. The term "whore" is used twice by Mr Montgomery-Taylor when he is drunk, referring to Allie as a "whore." He says, "I saw you in the graveyard with those boys. Filthy. Little. Whore… he's going to show her what kind of a little whore she is" (Alderman, 2016, p. 40). Describing Allie as a whore diminishes her status as a woman, as the term suggests a promiscuous individual, while Allie does not fit this description in the novel. She endures his insults without protest, despite each word being accompanied by a punch, a slap, or a kick. She remains resilient in the face of these words and does not shrink away.

The term 'bitch' appears multiple times in the text, particularly when the soldier Darrell attempts to approach a group of women. When he gets closer, he observes, "The fucking bitches are just staring at him: their mouths as closed as the earth, their eyes as blank as the sea" (Alderman, 2016, p. 294). In this context, "fucking bitches" refers to the group of women who stare at him in a way that discourages him from following them. Similarly, when Darrell tries to escape from them, he refers to the women as "crazy bitches," stating, "On the road, he'll flag down a car, he'll get away from these crazy bitches" (p. 294).

There is a third usage of the term that does not refer to a specific woman but instead highlights the emptiness associated with the term itself. This occurs when Newland reveals that she works with Bernie, not with Primrose, as Darrell had assumed. She exclaims, "No! No, you know what happened, you fucking bitch, it was your dad. It was never Primrose who paid me, it was Bernie" (p. 200). Here, "fucking bitch" signifies the unreality of the situation, paralleling the hollowness often associated with the term. Darrell is preoccupied with the false belief that Newland works with Primrose, while the reality is that she collaborates with someone else. Words like "whore" and "bitch" carry clear negative connotations when directed at women. Other seemingly neutral terms may also harbor underlying sexist meanings.

Describing women with animal-related adjectives often suggests derogatory connotations. In the text, women are compared to birds in several instances. The first example occurs when their voices are referred to as "murmuring," a term typically associated with the sounds made by a group of birds. A police officer notes, "The sound of them outside is like a crowd of murmuring birds" (Alderman, 2016, p. 121). Here, "them" refers to a group

of women brought to the police station. When they begin to converse among themselves, their speech is likened to the murmuring of birds.

Another comparison appears when Allie "arrived at the home of the Montgomery-Taylors, a jangled child, beady and birdlike and wild" (p. 304). The adjectives "jangled, beady, birdlike, and wild" evoke animal imagery, suggesting a derogatory view of females. A similar implication arises when Roxy, during a fight, is compared to a dog as she shakes her body: "She shakes herself like a dog, and like a dog looks hungry yet" (p. 272). The act of shaking like a dog or barking like a dog conveys a negative sentiment. Furthermore, when "Sister Veronica laughs a dog's bark" (p. 54), it serves as another insult. Even terms that are meant to be endearing or diminutive can be misused in this context.

Endearments and diminutives are expressions often used with women to flatter or endear them, such as calling a woman 'babe,' 'dolly,' or 'catty,' or likening her to a bird by using terms like 'birdlike.' While these words may not seem problematic at first glance, feminists argue that they are insulting because they are rarely used for men. This dynamic diminishes the status of women, portraying them as lesser than men. In the text, the term 'baby girl' is used when Allie asks the voice whether she can own the world. The voice responds, "Oh, baby girl, you can't get there from here" (Alderman, 2016, p. 123). Allie is not a baby; she is an adult and one of the women empowered to control the world. Referring to her as 'baby girl' does not align with her character or her role as a woman. Roxy makes a similar choice, calling Allie 'babe' twice. The first instance occurs when Roxy notes that Allie doesn't trust the women working with them: "I know you don't trust them. It's all right. You don't have to trust them, babe" (p. 115). The second instance arises when Allie asks Roxy to select the right woman, to which Roxy replies, "Yeah, we've talked about this, babe" (p. 123).

Besides all the above-mentioned ways that lead to linguistic sexism in literature, feminists also noticed that some female natural experiences are referred to in writing, indirectly believing that such experiences are a source of shame. For example, the female natural monthly blood flows. This experience is always referred to by using euphemism expressions such as 'period or moisture. Blood flow as a natural experience is referred to by the replaced word 'period' one time in the text. It is when Joe's mental and physical state gets down, and she feels fear of everything around her. People around her have "tried linking it to what she eats, to her sleep, to her periods, to exercise, but they can't find a pattern." (Alderman, 2016, p.149). 'Her period' here means the time of her blood flow, but in terms of euphemism, it is replaced by 'period'.

Results

After conducting a feminist stylistic analysis of the sample, the results indicate that the text contains sexist language. Although it aims to empower women and depict their ability to control men, certain terms are used in ways that undermine female status. Regarding the use of generic nouns, the writer uses them in their biased form, as in 'policemen' instead of 'police officers', in referring to the profession that can occupied by

both men and women. In terms of women's markedness, some female characters are identified by their husbands' names rather than their own, as in using the title 'Mrs' plus the husband's family name. Additionally, the behavior of other female characters is likened to that of birds, with women's conversations compared to the meaningless chirping of birds. This comparison is problematic, as it reduces female speech to a random, insignificant sound, disregarding language's role as a defining characteristic of humanity.

Referring to women using derogatory terms such as "bitches" or "whores" is also negative. Even when female characters are affectionately called diminutives like "babe" or "catty," these terms imply immaturity and perpetuate bias. Moreover, the text consistently lists men's names before women's names, further emphasizing a male-gender bias. Examples of these patterns are provided in the analysis section. From a feminist stylistic perspective, such language portrays women negatively, with no equivalent treatment observed for men. Writers and readers should be aware of these usages to avoid perpetuating sexism. Writers may not intend to employ sexist language; often, they do so unconsciously, influenced by familiar societal norms. Thus, the presence of sexism in writing can be traced back to societal and cultural factors that shape the writing process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that language bias is not exclusive to male writings; women's writings can also exhibit such biases. This paper underscores this idea by demonstrating how a novel by a contemporary female author contains sexist language. As highlighted in the data analysis section, there are numerous instances where biased language is employed. The use of such language concerning female characters negatively impacts their representation. For example, women may remain unrecognized until their names are linked to male figures, or their behaviours may be compared to non-human entities. Feminist scholars classify these choices as biased due to cultural and social influences. It is this cultural and social context that leads female writers to make biased language choices, often unconsciously.

Results help the researcher infer the answer to the main question of this paper that is: do lexical sexist choices contribute to linguistic sexism and the representation of women? The answer is 'yes.' The biased selection of words associated with female characters portrays them as inferior to men and reinforces societal tendencies to treat women and men unequally. This finding aligns with the perspective of feminist stylistics, which posits that language can perpetuate gender inequality. Since language is a cultural and social product, its usage is influenced by societal and cultural factors. Mills' arguments support this assertion; she correctly contends that even female writings can be analysed in terms of gender bias.

Therefore, we recommend that future researchers conduct similar studies to raise awareness among readers and writers about the insights of feminist scholars, which can help eliminate sexism in literary language. Additionally, we encourage researchers to select female literature as a sample for this type of research. Female writings are often not expected to contain sexist language, as there is a belief that women are inherently fighting for equality

in language use. However, as mentioned earlier, sexism in female works may occur unintentionally. Thus, similar studies would be valuable for feminist writers who aim to produce works free of sexist language.

We also suggest that future studies broaden their analysis to include other aspects of language. While this paper focuses solely on lexical choices, future research could expand to examine sentence structure and discourse levels. Although this limitation arises from constraints of time and length, it highlights an important area for further exploration.

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