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# **POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES**



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# **IDEA – Interdisciplinary Discourses, Education and Analysis**

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## INTRODUCTION

Gabriele Biotti

*IDEA*'s issue n. 5, titled "Postcolonial Perspectives", proposes seven articles developing scientific readings in the scholarly context of Postcolonial Studies.

The articles share a common interest in approaching and analysing the effects and legacy of colonialism, as it can be described and scrutinized historically, socially, thematically, and in art works. In "Violence and Non-violence for the Colonial Development" Sujoy Barman approaches some of striking aspects of the post-colonial legacy. The author analyses how the European development is the result of the human rights' violence through the inhuman slave trade and refers for example to how European development stands on the underdevelopment of Africa. Barman attempts to explain the roles of violence and non-violence in colonial development; by following a historical perspective, the author highlights how there have been basically two types of developments: a development of European colonial countries, and a development in colonies. Historically, European countries faced two distinct opponents at the time of colonial development: the first is that another European colonial country intended to spread its colonial wings, and the second is that native rulers prevented the European colonial country to colonise them.

As it is accepted that colonialism was one of the main economic sources of Europe, so the colonial countries applied both violence and non-violence to grab the colonies. Likewise, for the development in favour of natives and indigenous people, both violence and non-violence were effective. The author's focus is on the possibility to provide an explanation of the effective roles of violence and non-violence for colonial development with some explicit references, and both of these binary energies are identified as the developmental forces. Barman shows how colonies bring economic development in favour of Europe, and at the same time how European colonialism brings political awareness, economic modifications, and socio-cultural transformation in colonies. The author's paper is an attempt to show how and where violence and non-violence perform the roles of development in favour of European colonial countries and colonies.

Shenghao Hu analyses Malaysian Chinese writer Tash Aw's novel *We, The Survivors* (2019). The author's article, "A Stranger at Home: Homemaking, Dilemma of Representation and Ethics of

Memory in *We, The Survivors*”, investigates a concept such as homemaking and a cultural practice like memory writing based on this novel, telling the story of Lee Hock Lye, nicknamed Ah Hock, a third-generation Malaysian Chinese hailing from a poor fishing village in Malaysia. Ah Hock, who has been convicted and released from prison for murdering a Bangladeshi migrant worker, agrees to be interviewed by Tan Su-Min, a PhD candidate in sociology. This novel primarily consists of Ah Hock’s monologue, interspersed with dialogues between Ah Hock and Su-Min. Structured in four chronological parts titled “October”, “November”, “December” and “January”, Aw’s novel presents Ah Hock’s oral narrative and Su-Min’s textual representation of his story. Hu’s research examines Ah Hock’s complex homemaking process and Su-Min’s act of bearing witness to Ah Hock’s memory. Hu also provides a reading beyond the novel to explore Aw’s ethics of memory, by highlighting how it is necessary to define the concept of “home”. In the scholarly context of diasporic studies, a number of theorists conceptualise home as an imagined or remembered space, in particular the homeland that migrants have left behind but yearn to return to. An author like Jonathan Rutherford, for example, posits that “home” embodies a sense of “not belonging”, which signifies the deprivation of “those spatial and temporal co-ordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective and personal past” (Rutherford, 1990: 24). Hu notes that while there is a connection between the notion of home and memories of the homeland, this conception risks to collapse into an essentialist view of home. This, because it confines the notion of home to a specific location and overlooks the fluid and dynamic sense of home developed by diasporic subjects who often navigate multiple identities. Consequently, the author’s article refuses to perceive home as the place of origin and positions this concept at the intersection of the past and the present. As Alison Blunt and Ann Varley claim, “geographies of home” are situated “on thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears” (Blunt and Varley, 2004: 3). This perspective situates the notion of home on a temporal continuum and allows for a comprehensive understanding of how diasporic subjects can cultivate a sense of belonging.

In “Religious mobilization and social boundaries: A case study of Hassan Shehata Assassination by Sunni facets”, Marian Ramadan reflects upon religion; she stresses how, similarly to Frederik Barth, Max Weber’s idea of social closure is “Culturally Empty”. He construed the process of social closure, where materials and opportunities are monopolized, as independent of culture. Terms such as religion, violence and conflict are then separated from his focus compared to other themes. Ramadan notes how Weber scrutinized religion in its particular sense, and not the more generalizing sense. In other words, he focused on understanding the specific context of religion and how it is structured. However, she notes that he contradicted himself by considering social closure as “culturally empty” which is common with Frederick Barth’s idea of boundaries instead of culture

(Barth 1969: 15). According to Ramadan, the puzzle arises from the idea of considering religion in its generalizing sense of having equivalent functional bases as identity and mobilization, which triggered the local's attack against Hassan Shehata in 2013; in her interpretation, instead of Barth's recommendation of concentrating on the categorical differences of pattern of social interaction where he dismissed what he regretted and called it later "cultural stuff", it could be better analysed by involving religion similarities and distinction between Sunni and Shia as a way to examine the root causes of that incident. Ramadan proposes that, instead of isolating "ethnic consciousness" from "religion", it is better to engage religion to it so that we can understand clearly how political Salafi leaders used religion to mobilise locals to murder Shia groups. Instead of reducing ethnic boundaries to its single dimension, Ramadan shows that it is more adequate to connect it to primordial identities which contributed to the shape of ethnic identities and the mobilisation in society (Brubaker 2015: 2–4).

Héctor Uclés analyses how the colonial discourse can be found within the internal narrative of a Nation, creating hostility towards the traditional or regional, seeing in it a kind of monstrosity that must be eradicated. In his article "The Role of the Native Informant in the Modernization Period of Honduras Within the Narrative of Froylán Turcios", he explores how this complicity between the traditional and the colonial can be unraveled in the short story "La mejor limosna" by Froylán Turcios. A Honduran litterateur and politician of the early twentieth century, and a supporter of modernization, today Turcios is a sort of euphemism for self-submissive colonization; in his work we find parallels between the feeling of farewell to the regional and the desire for the colonial within modernity, generating a colonial subject, the native informant. Following a deconstructive-postcolonial discourse, mainly influenced by Gayatri Spivak's academic research in the use of the catachresis, which exposes coloniality and its epistemic implications, diverse works of his literary canon are used by Uclés to reflect on the history of modernization in Honduras. With the purpose to offer the possibility of generating an inclusive discourse, literature and history are used by Uclés to reflect the rupture that even well-intentioned "modernizers" were inclined to execute on the premise that the "foreign" was a sign of progress and the "native" a sign of decadence.

Karin-Ullrike Nennstiel's article "Völkerschau" and "Human Zoo" in Colonialism and Postcolonialism examines "Völkerschau" and "Human Zoos", whereby Europeans exhibited people from "other" continents across Western countries. The article outlines the history of the practice, its origins in colonialism and imperialism, and its current and problematic postcolonial iteration in the contemporary context. Nennstiel highlights how his interest for 'otherness' was not limited to those travelling themselves, like adventurers, merchants, or missionaries. The author stresses how many of these travellers liked to write letters and postcards with exciting news from far lands and enjoyed

telling impressive stories once they had returned to Europe after having witnessed life far from Western civilization. As long as “Völkerschau” and “human zoo” existed, ‘otherness’ was their constitutive element. As it has frequently been emphasised in the literature, this ‘otherness’ entailed specific power relations, difference and a fundamental asymmetry between the parts involved, including distance and the establishment of clear boundaries. With regard to ethnic tourism, Nennstiel’s analysis asks whether “Völkerschau” and “human zoo” can be considered as problems belonging only to the past, for the fact that concrete form of human exhibitions in ethnic tourism, including ethnographic shows or ‘negro villages’, clearly reaffirm specific power relations for indigenous persons often forced to participate in the capitalist market, including those who would prefer to continuously live in their indigenous communities a more sustainable way of life.

Geoff Keating introduces the concept of “Protective Colonialism” to describe the form of British rule in Papua between 1906 and 1940. In his article “Protective Colonialism – Challenging Colonialist Preconceptions”, he introduces the concept of “Protective Colonialism” to describe the form of British rule in Papua between 1906 and 1940 and argues that Papua does not fit neatly into existing models of colonialism, such as settler or mercantilist colonialism. Under the leadership of Sir Hubert Murray, the territory was administered with a focus on protecting Indigenous land, culture, and autonomy; land alienation was tightly controlled, and settler expansion was actively discouraged. The colonial government promoted gradual, non-disruptive development, with limited economic ambition. Papuans were involved in local governance, and efforts were made to avoid the widespread use of forced labour. Educational and health services were introduced cautiously, within a paternalistic but restrained framework. Murray’s approach followed the foundations laid by earlier administrator William MacGregor. The article suggests that this model of “Protective Colonialism” complicates our understanding of imperial rule. While not free from inequality or control, Papua’s administration prioritised preservation over exploitation.

Oumeima Mouelhi’s paper, “The Marginalized Speaks Out Loud”, presents a postcolonial critique of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, centering on Caliban as a symbol of the colonized, subaltern subject. Through an analysis of power, race, and language, Mouelhi reveals how Prospero’s colonial authority mirrors European imperial practices, using domination and cultural superiority to justify subjugation. Caliban, initially voiceless and marginalized, gradually transforms into a figure of resistance, reclaiming agency through language—the very tool of his oppression. Mouelhi highlights the paradox of “civilizing missions” and critiques Eurocentric narratives that reduce the “other” to bestiality. Her research focuses on subaltern studies, postcolonial theory, and the politics of representation, showing how the silenced can, indeed, speak back.

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# Violence and Non-violence for the Colonial Development

Sujoy Barman

## Introduction

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels propagated that the history of the existing society is the history of class struggle. The chronology of the society, for example, moved from communalism to feudalism, and then to capitalism, and in every phase there is a panorama of development through class struggle, such as in the feudal society between patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, in the capitalist society between rich and poor, and likewise in the colonised society between colonised and coloniser, and settlers and natives. In the twenty first century, the development of formerly European colonial countries and colonised countries is directly dependent on the colonial phase in the history of the world, and if probed, this development has been performed through violence and non-violence. The European development stands on the under-development of Africa and other colonised countries. The Berlin Conference in 1884 is a peaceful historical moment for European development, where Africa has been distributed as a birthday cake, and every part of Africa is like a piece of cake enjoyed by European countries. The Berlin Conference is a peaceful colonial step for European development, but it also sets a platform for violence and conflict for the African countries, and in the post-independent period, the African countries struggle for development under the unethical distribution of Africa in the 1884's Berlin Conference. According to Amartya Sen, the development is standing for overcoming problems like poverty, unfulfilled elementary needs, famines, hunger, political restrictions, and neglecting woman's interests and ecosystem. However, in the Berlin Conference, Europe has created some problems for Africa which are impossible for Africa to overcome. Sen suggests that political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security are the basic needs for development, and in a colonised society, these five instruments for development, and their functions both in violence and non-violence in favour of natives and settlers, are topics of observation. In the history of the class struggle in the colonised society, it is found that the development of Europe and its settlers in colonies depends on the underdeveloped conditions of the colonies. On the other hand, Europe and its settlers are responsible for the underdeveloped position of natives and as well as for some scopes of development in colonies. Generally, the term 'development' is a positive term and implies an improvement in living conditions, good facilities and an increase in internal and external qualities on an individual or community level. However, if violence is considered a destructive force, then how



violence is identified as a creative force for development and betterment for the society? After a close observation of world history, it is found that the society moved towards a better position through violated movements. For example, the French Revolution helped to establish democratic zeal not only in France but also in Europe after the abolishment of feudalism. It pushed European civilisation towards a better position but this progress came after the bloodshed with the guillotine. As mentioned, development means betterment but the development of one society impacts that of other societies. One is developing with the cooperation of the other, either by uplifting an under-developed society to a developing position or putting a developed society into an under-developing position. The parameter of development for every society across the world or every class in a particular society is not same. Discriminations and differences are the common factors for development, and equality in the history of development is very rare. The formerly developed areas take more facilities than the developing or under-developed areas. It differentiates according to the class structure in the society and the geographical diversity. Likewise, the development and progress in the colonised society act with discrimination, according to the class structure from the postcolonial points of views. Basically, a colonised society is divided into two zones: the settler's zone and the indigenous zone. It is the settler's zone that enjoys the facilities and advantages of the indigenous zone. But the parameter of development in that zone differs because it is also sub-divided into an elite and ruling settler class including white traders, merchant and administrative personals, and poor settlers who were migrated through the white slave trade from Europe to colonies, or a European may live in the colony of other Europeans, such as Italians in the French colony of Tunisia. According to Albert Memmi, in the colonies the left wing coloniser is less developed than the right wing coloniser. The parameter of development in the indigenous zone is not same because it is also sub-divided into different sections. These sections are native rulers, elites, lower, and outcasts; mulattoes stand between settlers and natives as they contain blood from both sides in their veins. The native rulers and elites were the middlemen between the colonial masters and the subjects, as they are very near to the master and stand above over the subjects; they avail of middle class advantages and facilities for development. However, for the lower and outcast indigenous people, the development is far away and beyond their capacity. Development with discrimination is a common factor in the colonised society. In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney shows the discriminatory development in East Africa where Europeans, Indians, and Africans are living together. The Europeans grab all kinds of facilities and advantages; the Indians possess less advantages and facilities but much more than the Africans. The Africans in their homeland face scarcity of facilities and advantages for development. The development in East Africa has come with postcolonial background. After Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon pointed to the same parameter for development in a colonised society which has been

identified as the Manichaeon society, divided into the settler's compartment and indigenous compartment. In Frantz Fanon's view, a settler's compartment is well constructed, strongly built, made of stone and steel, a well fed zone, and an easy going town. It indicates the development in the colonised society is marginalised in the settler's compartment. By contrast, the indigenous compartment is the native's town which is known for huts being built on top of each other, hunger, and a lack of bread, meat, shoes, coal, light. This is the underdeveloped compartment in the colonised society. In South Africa, the discrimination is evident between the white minority and the black majority. The white minority controls and avails of political rights, and excludes the black majority. This is known as the apartheid and the parameters of development differ between the white minority and the black majority in South Africa. This discrimination for development is the result of a class struggle. Regardless of what Amartya Sen advocated for development through the five instruments of freedom, it is very difficult to find these freedoms for development in the colonised society, especially for the colonised zone. Before discussing the topic of colonial development through violence or non-violence, it is necessary to explain the patterns of violence and non-violence.

### **Violence and Non-violence as the Developmental Forces**

Hurting one physically, mentally, and spiritually stands for violence, and it causes a deep wound that never be cured, and becomes a trauma. In short, the violence is a destructive force while development is a positive movement. The question is how is violence as a destructive force responsible for the positive movement in the history of human development in society. To explain this situation, the Hindu mythology and its philosophy regarding the function of time that is identified as the Kal Chakra must be discussed. Kal Chakra, or time, is identified as the destroyer and creator. It destroys the old and creates the new on the ashes of the old. The new is the symbol of development and that development is based on the destruction of the old. In the history of human civilisation, it is evident that the Kal Chakra plays this role, such as how communalism was replaced with the feudalism, and feudalism was replaced with capitalism. Through this journey, it becomes clear that development in society has performed according to the recycling method of creation and destruction of time, creation after destruction, and destruction after creation. In the study of violence, it is either individual or collective. The individual violence refers to the situation where an individual becomes violent against other individuals or society. The motif behind this kind of violence is either personal or impersonal. Collective violence is a situation when a certain collective group of people accepts a violent approach for either collective or non-collective issues. It is one kind of communitive violence. However, according to this approach to violence, it is either direct or indirect. Direct violence is when two opposite interests face each other openly and the effects are prominent and immediate. War,

bloodshed, killing, and genocide are examples of direct violence. Indirect violence is also known as institutional or structural violence. It is a systematic way of violence where institutions or structures of society are used as means of hurting a particular individual or community. If the violence is studied according to the perspective of motifs and intentions, it is either positive or negative. The negative violence refers to a situation where an individual or a community accepts violence for development after denying or neglecting the demands of others. It is a kind of selfish violence. The positive violence refers to the situation where a suppressed and dominated group of people accepts violence to escape domination and subjugation, and for the development of a sustainable life. This is positive violence because this violence never denies rights of others. In the history of postcolonialism, the violence implemented by the Europeans in the colonies for colonial interests is an example of the negative violence, whereas at the time of a decolonised movement, natives accepting violence for liberty is an example of positive violence. In the first category, the European violently denies the rights of indigenous people in colonies and it is a Eurocentric violence, whereas in the second category, the violence is positive because it is for the right of subjugated people. The European negative colonial violence breeds the anti-colonial positive violence in the history of postcolonialism.

In the history of colonised society from the developmental perspectives, violence contributes a significant role. However, the activists cum philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi advocate for non-violence for the development of colonised societies, in favour of the indigenous people. He accepted non-violence and peace as the major weapons against the colonial violence imposed by the settlers. He has talked about negative non-violence and positive non-violence, and he supports positive non-violence. He started the Ahimsha movement in India for the development of Indians. Like violence, it is effective for the development of colonies. It demands a strong patience and intolerable confidence on truth and self. However, development via peace and non-violence is more acceptable and effective in the egalitarian society, and in the colonised society the development either for settlers or indigenous people has come through violence. However, while non-violence plays a significant role, violence is more effective in some cases. For example, while Gandhi and the non-violence political movement against the British rule played a crucial role, the violent anti-colonial movements led by Netaji Subhash Ch. Bose was another thread of Britishers in colonised India. A European country for its development through colonialism had to face two binary forces for colonising and sustaining colonial authority. It has to face another European country which has the same interest to colonise, and there are colonial wars between European countries. They involve war to spread their markets and to gain natural resources for industries. Secondly, the indigenous rulers prevent the European outsiders to enter and settle in the native land. Thus, for colonial development in favour of the European settlers and mother countries, the violence is essential, and likewise for liberty and other

developments in favour of indigenous people, violence and non-violence are essential for development in favour of the colonised people. Both violence and non-violence are creative forces for development in this perspective, and it is the circumstances that decide whether violence, non-violence or both is required for the progress and development in society. As colonised society is a society of domination, exploitation and extortion, the violence is more effective for development than non-violence.

### **Colonialism and the Development for Colonisers**

There are two types of developments from the coloniser's perspective, or the colonisers take benefits and advantages in two ways at the primitive level. The first one is for the settlers who settled in colonies and became the masters in the colonies. The second is the European mother countries, which means the settler's imported surplus that it produces to their mother countries. In short, New Worlds like New Zealand and Australia became second preferred places for permanent residents for the whites, which is the first benefit, and the exportation of surplus produce from Africa and Caribbean islands built the European economy stronger than before, which is the second benefit. Adam Smith, one of the European canonical thinkers in *The Wealth of Nation*, has explained the systematic development in Europe and its countries from the fifteenth century to eighteenth century for the European colonisation in America, in short, the New World speed up the development in Europe. The treasures of gold, silver, cotton and sugar were the major commodities for European development imported from the New World to Europe. For possession and colonisation in America, there were colonial wars between the white countries. Spaniards claimed America as their own as they discovered this New World, but their claiming was challenged by other European countries; they couldn't hinder the great naval power of Portuguese to settle in Brazil. However, while France attempted to colonise Florida, Spaniards murdered French army. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Spain and the Portuguese were the two major colonial powers in Europe. However, later in the seventeenth century, England, France, the Dutch and the Swedes were other European colonial powers, so there were wars and political conflicts between white colonial countries regarding the possession and ruling in the New World. The history of colonialism started with violence and bloodshed. Adam Smith has argued basic reasons behind this violence: the fertile land for the cultivation of cotton, tobacco, and sugar; liberty to manage the colonialist's affairs according to their ways; cheap labour; and the treasures of gold and silver. These were the major interests of the European countries from the New World. In short, the economic interest was the primary reason behind the establishment of colonies in America by European countries. For example, the gold of St. Domingo was the wealth to the crown and Kingdom of Spain. According to Adam Smith, violence

between European countries regarding the ownership over the New World, violence between Europeans and inhabitants of the New World, and violence between European merchants and the ecosystem of the New World, were the major issues for European capitalist development. European economic development depends on the exploitation of the New World. Smith considers the discovery of the New World and the Cape route to India the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of humankind. These are the seeds for the upcoming world trade. Colonialism is a link between European technology and natural resources in colonies for the development of the world economy. In *The Wealth of Nation*, Smith presented a diagram of advantages of the discovery of New World by the European countries. It is divided primitively into two categories: general and particular. The general category of advantage is also sub-divided into enjoyment and industrialisation. The natural resources in the colonies have been used as the raw materials for European industrialisation and capitalist development, and this capitalist development gives enjoyment to the colonisers. This is the general advantage of colonialism. The particular advantage is also sub-divided into common particular advantage and peculiar particular advantage. The common particular advantage refers to those benefits which have been enjoyed by all European countries and common to all colonial masters. An example of a common particular advantage is how the settlers' collection of tax and revenue helped them run a colonial civil government in the colonies. The peculiar particular advantage is availed by a particular colonial country over a particular colony. It means that no other colonial countries can interfere with that colony. The exclusive trade belongs to this category. It is a system where one particular European country has the exclusive right to trade with a particular colony and with its alliance countries. For example, England has this exclusive trade with English colonies and the products from these colonies are traded with the English alliance countries. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels also consider the discovery of America and its colonisation, and the East India and Chinese markets, as the main resources for the development of European bourgeoisie society.

In addition to Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* affirmed that the plentiful good lands for cultivation in the colonies were one of the major reasons for European development. He also considers the slave trade the most important reason behind the origin of European capitalism, especially in England. From the history of slavery, it is found that this trade was the basis of Greek economy and built the Roman Empire. Likewise, this trade provided sugar for tea, the coffee cups of the western world, cotton for the textile industry and also established American South and Caribbean islands. The inhuman slave trade was behind the development of Europe and New World. The slave trade was profitable and contributed to European capitalist development. Slavery started with the Indians in the New World, but later it transformed for the whites and then Negroes. The poor whites, prisoners and convicts were imported from

England to the colonies as slaves or indentured labours. As it was a profitable, kidnapping and human trafficking increased in the cities like London and Bristol. Violating human rights through the slave trade was the major basis for capitalist development in Europe, especially in England. Besides this, the commercial warfare was a common factor between European countries for the privilege of looting in India, Africa and Caribbean islands over the certain vital and strategic commodities like Negroes, sugar, tobacco, fish, cotton, furs and naval stores. Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* has pointed out the active roles of the English monarchy and royal society in the slave trade during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sir John Howkins was inspired by the contemporary English Queen Elizabeth for slave trade. The benefits from inhuman slave trade and European colonisation established the world trade and banking system; they introduced insurance companies and built of heavy industry, especially mining. In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney justified European development depending on the underdeveloped situation of Africa. Europe is moving forward and pushing Africa backward. Walter Rodney has pointed out some issues for European development. The slave trade is one of them. For this trade both in America and Europe, the traders and merchants overcome the labour crisis and Negro is a profitable labour for farming and mining in favour of Europe. Besides this, the slaves also created a market for the European industrial products. The second issue behind the development of Europe is technology. Europe was not advanced in technology in the early fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from Africa or India, but its gun and naval technology dominated all. Later, European countries became the hub of technological inventions. It was the policy of Europe not to share technology with Africa and this non-cooperation was another reason for the development of Europe and under-development of Africa. The third important issue for the development was destroying the manufactures in Africa and India. The quality of clothes produced in Europe was not better than the African and Indian clothes. However, it was in the interest of Europe to destroy these clothes manufacturers and become the only producer of clothes. These are the major reasons behind the developed and underdeveloped conditions between Europe and Africa. The settler Europeans in colonies enjoyed much more facilities. They received much more wages from the natives labours and this discrimination is highly criticised by Walter Rodney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Europe creates a class of middlemen who are representatives of their authority to their colonial subjects. This class includes local rulers and elites. In short, for colonialism the colonised society is responsible for the development of Europe. Besides this, Europe received significant profit through investments in Africa. The mines in South Africa, the loans to the North African government, and the construction of Suez Canal were the major areas for European investments to receive significant profits. European investment in colonies brought development for the coloniser and the colonised. However, while the coloniser enjoyed the profit of the negative

development and the natives received nothing in this regard, the natives benefited indirectly. Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* has identified a colony as the perfect place for the individual development in favour of the Europeans. In a colony, a European earns more and spends less, it is a place of guaranteed job with a high wage, and the career is more rapid and the business is highly profitable. On the other hand, Europe is a place for slow progress and development for the Europeans. In short, a colony according to Albert Memmi is a place for individual development for the colonisers and that is why the Europeans do not like to return to Europe. He has divided the Europeans in a colony into rich and poor categories and it is the rich Europeans who exploit the poor Europeans. Memmi also categorises left wing and right wing colonisers. The left wing colonisers have sympathy for the natives and they have humanitarian conducts with them. At the same time, they also participate in the movement against the brutality performed by their fellow colonisers against the natives. In this regard, they are traitors to their fellows. The right wing colonisers have no sympathy for the natives, they deal with them violently, suppress them, and destroy their harmony. From this categorisation, it is clear that the development of the coloniser in colonies depends on violence. The level of violence decides the level of development. The left wing colonisers show sympathy for the colonised and consider the progress and qualified life for the colonised, whereas the right wing colonisers are cruel and violent towards the colonised, so the right wing colonisers are more developed and progressed than the left wing colonisers in the colonised society. Albert Memmi also talks about the master colonisers and the small colonisers who are exploited by the master colonisers. The position of the master colonisers is much more privileged and developed than that of the small colonisers. The master colonisers include white merchants, traders and administrative personals whereas the small colonisers include the white slaves, indenture labours, convicts and prisoners who were exported from Europe to colonies by white traders. It also includes those whites who live in the colonies of the other whites, such as Italians in the French colony of Tunisia. The non-violence method for development in favour of the coloniser is evident in socio-cultural backgrounds, such as the natives' adaptation of the European culture and lifestyle and their conversion. Johan Galtung in his culture-centred level development theory claims that there are many cultures in the world including major and micro cultures. It is the tendency of the major culture to unfold itself in pursuit of the cosmopolitan culture. The result is that the micro cultures face existential crisis and become micro to mini-micro cultures. In the colonised society, with the intention of super culture, the colonial culture unfolds itself and it gradually becomes a major culture in colonies. The European cultural development is performed through the hegemony to the colonised culture.

### **Colonialism and Indigenous Development: Economic Development**

When Aime Cesaire defines the concept of civilisation in *Discourse on Colonialism*, he argues that colonialism never brings civilisation in colonies. However, some postcolonial scholars believe that colonialism brings civilisation in colonies. According to Cesaire, the European civilisation de-civilised as it has introduced covetousness, violence, racism, hatred and moral relativism. He also points out that there is forced labour, intimidation, pressure and police between the coloniser and colonised. With European colonisation, then, there is no development in favour of the natives and indigenous people. In addition, he highlights the issue that when the colonised people want to develop, they demand for school, roads, ports and other requirements for development have been overlooked by the coloniser. Like Walter Rodney, he also argues that the non-cooperation of the coloniser is the major reason for the underdeveloped condition of the colonised people. The coloniser invested in those places from where he could get super profit. In short, whatever he has done in colonies is only for his benefit and not for that of the natives.

It is true that colonialism brought excessive development in favour of Europe and Europeans, and has done excessive destruction in the colonies as the European development and progress stand on the exploitation and domination of colonies. This is the drawback of colonialism for colonies. However, when closely observed, some developments in the colonies are evident. For example, in the pre-colonial period, most of the colonial societies were communal, especially in Africa, and the economic structure centred in agriculture. In this phase, every family had sufficient land to fulfil the requirements of the family, and each house was enabled to fill the requirements by making its own clothes, pots, mats and others. The major economic sources were agriculture, livestock, handicraft and leather manufacturers, and horses and other animals were used for transportation. The trade system was dumb barter or silent trade. This pre-colonial economic structure has been modified in the colonised period with the conduct of coloniser. Colonialism was one of the major reasons for pushing the colonies towards feudalism from communalism. Through colonialism, primitive colonised society was introduced with the modern European technological society. Iron was introduced and it replaced agricultural tools made from wood and stone. In the pre-colonial period, the barter system was used for business but it was the Europeans who introduced the coined money exchange system in the market. For example the Spaniards replaced the barter system in Peru and Mexico with the coined money exchange system, and the introduction of iron tools in agriculture symbolised development in the fields of agriculture and market in colonies. These are the developments in under-developed colonies. Portugal contributed to African development by importing plants like pineapple, sweet potatoes, peanuts, sweet corn, oranges, limes and various breeds of cattle and fowls from Brazil. The European investment was essential for economic development in colonies. For example, according to T. Walter Wallbank in *Contemporary Africa:*



*Continent in Transition*, Africa South of Sahara was developed with the investment of the European countries. In 1885, this region had no roads, mines, factories or railways, while the hard nature was a hindrance for development. However, when later colonial investments occurred and European settlements advanced this region, mining took place in the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia and billions were invested in transportation, especially in railways. Besides this, the results of the European settlement and investment were that the native farmers in the British West Africa produced a high quality and large quantity of cocoa and palm oil. Through colonial exploitation, Europe became capitalist zone, but at the same time through colonial settlement and investment, the economic development in the colonies was on its way as it introduced modern technology with traditional agriculture. Through colonialism, the world trade peaked. Aime Cesaire and Walter Rodney criticise Europe for their non-cooperation with the colonised society regarding technology in favour of the native's development and this criticism is justified. However, at the same time, it should be remembered that the coloniser also cooperated for development in colonies. They invested and assisted those places or regions from where they could earn profits; without profit, they didn't show any interest for development in the colonised society. The development in the colonised society has been performed with the interest of the coloniser and not with the colonised, and the primary profit of such type of development is availed by the coloniser and the secondary and remaining profit belongs to natives.

### **Socio-cultural Development**

The socio-cultural developments in the colonised society in favour of natives were not same for every colonised society. It varies according to the leaders and indigenous background. Generally, it is considered that the natives modified themselves through the adaptation of European culture and lifestyle, but some nationalist's heroes have adverse views in this regard. For example, Mahatma Gandhi stresses the indigenouness and Indianness as the major element of Indian socio-cultural developments. In thirteenth chapter of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi makes a comparative study between European and Indian civilisations. Europe is a civilised society but this civilisation has no originality. It took its ingredients from Rome and Greece, and transformed into something new. Contradictorily the Indian civilisation which is considered uncivilised from the Eurocentric perspective is actually civilised as it has its own indigenous education system and follows the ancestor's path of living. Gandhi believed that one became slave through the adaptation of the colonial culture and lifestyle, and an enslaved man never has liberty. Holding and sustaining the indigenouness in the colonised society is the primitive development for the natives in the colonised society according to Gandhi. His Swadeshi Movement stresses on the Indianness and indigenouness for the development in favour of

colonised Indians. Besides this, Gandhi considers non-violence or Ahimsa as the major force of independence and development. According to Gandhi, liberty should be brought through sacrifice rather than assassination, and an intoxicated man can think of liberty as violence and assassination rather than sacrifice. Gandhi suggests that something gained through fear is retained only while the fear is last. The Europeans gain the possession in the colonies through violence and fear, and this possession lasts until the colonised people become fearless and take weapons for liberty. Gandhi advocated non-violence or Ahimsa and indigenusness as the major and only mediums for development and liberty. On the other hand, thinkers like Frantz Fanon consider violence and adopting the colonial culture as the mediums for development and liberty. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon advocates violence for uprooting the colonial rule. Colonialism is a process of violence, and as violence breeds violence, the anti-colonial counter-violence must be adopted by the natives for liberty and to defend against the colonial violence. Besides violence, Fanon also suggests that the natives can modify the social position through the adaptation of white culture. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argues that the natives can escape from the humiliation and subservient position through the acceptance of the colonial culture. For the colour background, they are not considered human beings, and through hiding the skin's colour with the white masks, they can escape from the socio-cultural humiliation. The white culture and its lifestyle are the white masks to cover the colour of skin. From this comparative study, it becomes clear that Frantz Fanon considers violence and adaptation to the colonial culture as white masks for the development and liberty of African and Caribbean backgrounds, but for the Indian background, Mahatma Gandhi considers non-violence or Ahimsa and the indigenusness for the development and liberty of the Indians from the British colonial rule.

It is noticed that inhuman slave trade was one of the major reasons behind the European capitalist development. However, this slavery became a political issue in Europe and this inhuman trade was prohibited. The movement against slavery was active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In 1787, the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in England and the eminent figures of this campaign were William Clarkson and William Wilberforce. In 1807 in England, the slave trade was abolished and later the other European countries abolished this trade. The abolishment of the slave trade was a sign of humanitarianism at international level where the Negroes were given officially dignity of human being. The anti-slavery was a political movement against the slavery by the white people as well as by the black people. It is accepted that every society has some drawbacks regarding caste and class systems, and every society develops with the assistant and correlation with the other society. For the colonised people in the colonised society, this had some drawbacks and these drawbacks were overcome through the assimilation with the

colonial society. It is noticed that in the indigenous class structure, there are outcasts and lower class people who are facing discrimination by the elite and higher class people. In indigenous social structure, they will never be uplifted and they have to live like others with their own people. As the colonialism modifies the social structure in a colony and the settlers become masters and the indigenous elites and rulers lose their position, the indigenous outcasts system is not important for the settlers. At the same time, the new religion that is Christianity accepts all. In this situation, the outcasts and lower class people find that they can easily be accepted in the new master society through conversion and thus they can escape the long-run inhuman practices based on caste and class. Christianity is a symbol of development for the lower class and outcast people. In the *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents this development in favour of the Asu community in the Igbo society. Asu is the outcast community and they are not the main part of the Igbo society. For them, Christianity and conversion are the escapist ways from a long-run system of casticism. Such development is also noticed in India in favour of the outcasts and untouchable people in the Hindu community. Homi K. Bhabha in his essay "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817" presents a visiting story of Anund Messh, an Indian catechist to Meerut, Delhi, and his encounter with almost five hundred Indians including men, women, and children. He notices that they hold the holy Bible and involve it in conversation. Through this conversation, it becomes clear that they want to escape the inhuman practice of casticism. Through Christianity and conversion, they can feel like human beings. Thus, it becomes clear that Christianity and conversion are the mediums for the social development of the lower class and outcast people. Besides this, the European modern technology also helps outcastes to escape inhuman jobs like cleaning toilets. In *Untouchable*, Mulk Raj Anand showed the modern technology of the toilet as a mean of escaping the inhuman practice of cleaning toilets by hand. Bhakha is the hero of this novel and when he comes to know about the modern toilet he feels happy that in the future he will be released from cleaning the toilet with hands. For colonialism, the modern technology is introduced in the colonies, and this technology modifies from higher to lower indigenous people.

### **Political Developments**

It has previously been mentioned that the coloniser invested in the colonies for roads, hospitals and, school, and the basic intention of colonial investment was profit. The investment was done in places where the coloniser could get excessive profits. They industrialised and established factories and mills; though it is true that Europe didn't share their technology with Africa, they used their technology in colonies from where they could earn extensive profit. The industrialisation created the bourgeoisie class and the working class, and it pushed society towards the capitalist phase. It is

common factor that mill workers are extorted by the mill owners. In turn, the trade union is formed and it advocated for the rights of workers, especially limited hours of work and proper wages. The trade union and its leaders bring awareness of political consciousness among the colonised workers in the colonised countries. The leaders have been influenced by the western political thought. Thus, the colonialism introduced the western political ideas to the leaders and then to the masses in the colonised society. In the novel *Coolie*, Mulk Raj Anand explains the impact of the trade union on the common Indians in the colonised India, where Hari and Mannu are the representatives of the common Indians. Through them, how the Western political thoughts influenced the colonised Indians through the role of trade unions is explained. The major political development is nationalism. Before the national movement, the colonised people revolted against the coloniser for minor demands like limited hours of work and sufficient wages. However, when it is discovered that the coloniser is responsible for all these problems, all natives from different groups assemble and organise a nation-wide anti-colonial movement, and later, that movement is identified as the national movement. It is colonialism that initially brings political consciousness among the natives, and later it is the colonialism that brings unity for the natives and moulds the spirit of nationalism for the natives. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* explains how colonialism created a national movement in the colonies. According to Fanon, the national movement is a united form of different, minor movements against the colonial authority. The political awareness among the colonised women is another political development in the colonised country. It is noted that the women actively participated in the decolonised movement. In India, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, the woman's society very actively participated in the decolonised movement, and Sarojini Naidu was an eminent figure in the history of Indian decolonised movement. The colonialism creates a new, politically conscious society in the colonies. In short, the trade union, formation of political party, nationalism and political awareness are the major political developments in the colonies stemming from European colonialism.

Therefore, conflicts are common in development because the society is primarily divided into master and slave zones, and every primary zone is also subdivided into several zones. Whenever a zone attempts to develop, they will face hindrances, and without overcoming these hindrances, development is not possible. Likewise, it is evident in the history of postcolonialism that when the one master European country develops, it will struggle with other master European countries and the indigenous rulers who prevented outsiders to enter. In the same way, development in favour of the colonised country will struggle with the colonial master countries.

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# **A Stranger at Home: Homemaking, Dilemma of Representation and Ethics of Memory in *We, The Survivors***

**Shenghao Hu**

This study will investigate homemaking and memory writing in *We, the Survivors* (2019), a novel written by Malaysian Chinese writer Tash Aw. This novel deals with the story of Lee Hock Lye, nicknamed Ah Hock, a third-generation Malaysian Chinese hailing from a poor fishing village in Malaysia. Ah Hock, who has been convicted and released from prison for murdering a Bangladeshi migrant worker, agrees to be interviewed by Tan Su-Min, a PhD candidate in sociology. This novel primarily consists of Ah Hock's monologue, interspersed with dialogues between Ah Hock and Su-Min. Structured in four chronological parts titled "October", "November", "December" and "January", this novel presents Ah Hock's oral narrative and Su-Min's textual representation of his story. This research will examine Ah Hock's complex homemaking process and Su-Min's act of bearing witness to Ah Hock's memory. Lastly, I will read beyond this novel and explore Aw's ethics of memory.

Firstly, it is necessary to define the concept of "home". In the realm of diasporic studies, a number of theorists conceptualise home as an imagined or remembered space, in particular the homeland that migrants have left behind but yearn to return to. Jonathan Rutherford, for example, posits that home embodies a sense of "not belonging", which signifies the deprivation of "those spatial and temporal co-ordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective and personal past" (Rutherford, 1990: 24). While there is a connection between the notion of home and memories of the homeland, this conception may collapse into an essentialist view of home. This is because it confines the notion of home to a specific location and overlooks the fluid and dynamic sense of home developed by diasporic subjects who often navigate multiple identities. Therefore, this study refuses to perceive home as the place of origin and positions the concept of home at the intersection of the past and the present. As Alison Blunt and Ann Varley claim, "geographies of home" are situated "on thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears" (Blunt and Varley, 2004: 3). This perspective situates the notion of home on a temporal continuum and allows for a comprehensive understanding of how diasporic subjects cultivate a sense of belonging.

## **Ah Hock's Homemaking Efforts and Illusion of Home**

Admittedly, as a third-generation Malaysian Chinese, Ah Hock views Malaysia as his home, where his ancestors migrated from China and established roots. Ah Hock's recollections of his family's migratory history play a crucial role in cultivating his sense of belonging to this country. Ah Hock recounts his ancestors' migration journey and their subsequent settlement in Malaysia during his interview with Su-Min. As Ah Hock recounts about his grandmother, "She'd spent a few years there when she first got to the country, and thought of it as a sort of home" (Aw, 2019: 26), and he comes to realise that "for her, our village was a place of comfort" (Ibid., 27). Ah Hock's purpose of recollecting his grandmother's migration and settlement is to claim his identification with Malaysia, to which his ancestors have adapted themselves. Ah Hock draws on the past to make sense of the present, and therefore he thinks that "[t]hat is not Kuala Selangor, that's my village" when other people mistake his village for another place (Ibid., 22).

Ah Hock's conceptualisation of home, however, reveals a fluid nature and seems intertwined with his pursuit of well-being. This fluidity is metaphorically captured in his mother's comparison of fish to migrants, as she asserts that "they're like us. [...] They can survive anywhere" (Ibid., 193). While this analogy underscores the migrants' adaptability, it reveals a poignant condition of rootlessness that propels their constant quest for home. Ah Hock's flexible notion of home coexists with a deep-seated desire to establish roots. This tension is noticeable in his memory of an autonomous and rather comfortable life on a farm he and his mother maintained near their village. His recollection that "[t]he farm gave us three years of stability. [...] For once we had a sense of our place in the world" illustrates his aspiration to cultivate his desire for rootedness (Ibid., 196). This active pursuit of homemaking extends to his experience as a migrant worker in Kuala Lumpur. His migratory lifestyle, characterised by frequent job changes, reflects not instability but his agency in looking for better employment opportunities and improving his living conditions. Through the depiction of Ah Hock's struggle for survival, this novel illuminates the hardships confronting the lower class in Malaysia and justifies their aspirations for a better life in their homeland.

This novel discloses the socioeconomic factors that undermine the underprivileged groups' homemaking efforts and cause Ah Hock's alienation in his homeland. Firstly, racial discrimination in Malaysia compromises his sense of belonging to his country. Following Malaysia's independence from British colonial rule in 1957, "the cleavages between Malay, Chinese and Indian communities fostered by British colonial policies were further reinforced by provisions in the new constitutions that guaranteed special privileges to Malays" (Carstens, 2005: 64). This leads to systematic inequalities that disadvantage ethnic minority communities, including Malaysians Chinese like Ah



Hock's family. The ethnic discrimination becomes apparent in the aftermath of the natural disaster that destroys his farm and house, when Ah Hock realises the impossibility of turning to the government for help and views himself as a marginalised citizen in his homeland, as evidenced by his bitter acknowledgement that "[w]e were the wrong race, the wrong religion" (Aw, 2019: 202).

Secondly, pervasive economic inequality further compromises Ah Hock's sense of belonging to his homeland. The novel portrays the economic stagnancy of his village, as indicated by Ah Hock's observation that "[t]hese people haven't made a decent living for twenty years. They're seventy-five, eighty years old. Still alive, but their business is being taken over by a tree" (Ibid., 4). As Ah Hock intrinsically associates his conception of home with material well-being and aspires to "be some place better than where we found ourselves" (Ibid., 30), the persistent poverty of the village impedes Ah Hock's homemaking efforts and drives him to seek better career opportunities in Kuala Lumpur. Ironically, it is due to the impact of a global economic crisis that Ah Hock encounters financial difficulties in Kuala Lumpur and returns to his impoverished village. The portrayal of financial issues that result in Ah Hock's exclusion and resignation serves as a critique of the harshness and inequality faced by the lower class inherent in the social landscape.

Remarkably, a key plot of this novel - Ah Hock's murder of a Bangladeshi labourer named Ashadul - offers critical insights into the systematic inequalities on a global scale. This novel highlights the impact of foreign labour on the local job market, as evidenced in the Malaysian economy's heavy reliance on workers from less developed countries, to the extent that "take these workers away and the entire country would crumble" (Ibid., 249). The influx of foreign workers, due to their lower labour costs, intensifies competition in the job market, thus reducing employment opportunities for local residents. As Ah Hock's friend Keong claims, "what employer would give us the work? They can get two Bangladeshis for the price of one local" (Ibid., 211). Paradoxically, this competition does not translate into better prospects or basic rights for the foreign workers. Instead, it often causes a lower quality of life, to the point where "[the boss] didn't want to think of them as real people" (Ibid., 38). Moreover, the growing presence of foreign workers reinforces harsh conflicts between them and the local job seekers. In the context of globalisation characterised by outsourcing and workers' transnational migration, "[a]s global competition between employees becomes a reality, resentment against the 'other' in the affluent regions is on the increase. Hostility towards the foreigners is spreading" (Beck, 2012: 308). This vicious cycle of competition and hostility culminates in Ah Hock's murder. As Ah Hock recalls, "I'm not strong enough to hurt him, he's going to kill me. I'll hit him, but not hard enough to knock him out, and then he'll kill me" (Aw, 2019: 320). Although Ah Hock suggests that the murder was an act of self-defence, the strong desire for survival that

permeates his narrative implies the cruel logic of “to-kill-or-to-be-killed” that underlies the fierce competition within Malaysia’s socioeconomic system. The bitter irony lies in the outcome of the murder: Ah Hock’s imprisonment, which marks his descent to the bottom of the social hierarchy and destroys a sense of belonging he has struggled to maintain. A telling example is that “[Su-Min], the police, the lawyers, the judge, the jury - no one knew, and no one asked” the name of the murdered worker, while Ah Hock remembers it because “we’re pretty similar after all” (Ibid., 131). Ah Hock’s realisation of his resemblance to a foreign worker confirms his retrospective awareness of his outsidership.

Despite the obstacles, Ah Hock maintains an illusory sense of home. The selective nature of memory enables him to observe the positive aspects of his homemaking efforts in retrospect and maintain an optimistic outlook. This inclination towards happy memories acts as Ah Hock’s way of finding comfort and making sense of his lived experiences. Although, as Ah Hock asserts at the outset of the novel, “[y]ou want me to talk about life, but all I’ve talked about is failure” (Ibid., 3), his memory narrative is not tinged merely with despair. In contrast, Ah Hock’s narrative indicates an optimistic attitude towards the past, despite the challenges to his homemaking attempts. A case in point is his memory of the period when he and his mother worked on the farm. Although his home was destroyed by rising sea levels, he does not dwell on the memory of the disaster itself. Instead, he asserts that “what I remember is our days working on the farm - my silly, happy fantasies of being a martial-arts hero” (Ibid., 203). It is these happy memories that infuse Ah Hock’s narrative with a tone of optimism and nostalgia. The stark contrast between the past and the present underscores his yearning for a lost, better period and implies his desire to recover his sense of home. However, his nostalgia for an idealised home also features a pathological attachment to the past that risks hindering the process of healing from trauma.

In addition, hopeful thinking in Ah Hock’s memory narrative perpetuates his sense of illusion. According to hope theory, “[t]he motivational component in hope theory is agency - the perceived capacity to use one’s pathways so as to reach desired goals” (Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2002: 258). Despite the uncontrollable factors that impact his career, Ah Hock’s confidence in his capacity to improve his conditions enables him to remain persistent in this illusion. The word “illusion” used in this paper highlights the tension between Ah Hock’s sense of agency and the futility of his homemaking efforts. A telling example is that despite his optimism, the hardships that Ah Hock encounters in Kuala Lumpur due to the global economic crisis ultimately force him to return to his village. Notably, Ah Hock claims that “I wasn’t defeated by KL, I got bored of it - I wanted something better” (Aw, 2019: 101). In this retrospective assessment of his career, which resembles a sort of self-

consolation, Ah Hock attempts to mask the futility of his homemaking efforts in the metropolis and instead highlights his agency in making deliberate job shifts, portraying his choice not as his failure but as a proactive decision for better opportunities. Through self-deception, Ah Hock justifies his past choices and intends to reconcile with the past. David Lodge correctly argues that “[t]he point of using an unreliable narrator is indeed to reveal in an interesting way the gap between appearance and reality” (Lodge, 1992: 155). The unreliability of Ah Hock’s memory thus discloses the discrepancy between his idealised vision of home and the harsh reality of social exclusion and thus reinforces the tragic and illusory nature of the protagonist’s homemaking efforts. Through the depiction of Ah Hock’s shift from hope to despair, this novel illuminates how a fragile sense of home, propped up by nostalgic memories of a seemingly better past, transforms into disillusionment.

*We, the Survivors* is set in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, a period marked by Asia’s rapid economic development, during which Ah Hock pursues a better life in his country. The novel challenges the grand narrative of economic progress and redirects the readership’s attention to the harsh realities faced by ordinary people like Ah Hock. As the author Tash Aw aptly claims, “It used to be that Asia was poor. ‘Asians are rich’ is the new cliché” (Aw and Allardice, 2019). Therefore, Ah Hock’s oral narrative serves as a counter-narrative that discloses the experiences of underprivileged groups often neglected in the grand narrative centred on prosperity and wealth.

### **Witness, Transmission of Memory, and Dilemma of Representation**

This novel is generally made up of Ah Hock’s monologue-like memory narrative, but it is necessary to consider the listener, Tan Su-Min, and her role in the novel. As Aw observes in an interview, “Su-Min and Ah Hock represent two parts of society - I think, in some ways, they are two parts of myself” (Aw and Chin, 2019). Therefore, the novel can be viewed as an internal conversation of the author and a dialogue between two social classes.

Indeed, the identity of Su-Min as a middle-class intellectual seems to raise doubts about her ability to faithfully represent Ah Hock’s narrative. On the one hand, it is questionable whether Su-Min can understand Ah Hock’s perspective on reality. A case in point is the discrepancy between their attitudes towards corruption. Su-Min is portrayed as an idealist intellectual, actively involved in campaigns against the corrupt system. When the city hall officers tow away her car and demand a bribe, Su-Min firmly objects to corruption, but Ah Hock simply pays the fine to retrieve her car. In terms of Ah Hock’s pragmatic approach, Su-Min comments that “it’s because of people like you that they dare to ask for bribes” (Aw, 2019: 281). Ah Hock’s intention seems not so much to perpetuate

the unjust system as to find a practical solution, and Su-Min fails to comprehend his good intentions. On the other hand, the extent to which Su-Min's book accurately recounts Ah Hock's story remains a subject of debate. For example, Angelia Poon remarks on "the tension between Ah Hock's 'story' and Su Min's 'book'" and argues that Su-Min's book is essentially "a physical commodity that can be sold and circulated" (Poon, 2021: 617). This raises ethical concerns about Su-Min's approach to writing.

This paper will examine Su-Min's role from an alternative perspective. Su-Min's role extends beyond merely mediating between different social classes. Instead, she bears witness to and even transmits the lower class's traumatic memory. Firstly, as a marginalised member in Malaysia, Su-Min shows empathy with Ah Hock and takes an interest in his story. As Dalal asserts, "in spite of the inevitable chasms and fractures between Ah Hock and Su-Min, they too belong to the same society" (Dalal, 2022: 76). While Su-Min's middle-class background and education afford her greater cultural and economic capital, both Su-Min and Ah Hock occupy subordinate positions in face of systematic injustice and inequality. For instance, corruption undermines her agency, as evidenced by the dismissive and arrogant treatment she encounters when attempting to retrieve her car. As Ah Hock observes, "it's as if we'd never entered the office, never ever existed" (Aw, 2019: 281). In this light, Su-Min and Ah Hock share the experience of being ignored and subjugated by the institution. Su-Min's identity as a lesbian discloses another aspect of her marginalisation in Malaysia. According to World Report 2023 published by Human Rights Watch, "[Malaysian] authorities frequently use hateful rhetoric against refugees and migrants, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people to paint these populations as threats to the country's security and identity" (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Her recognition of the similarity between her circumstances and Ah Hock's is partly manifested by her humorous statement that "I could marry you if you want. A militant queer girl and a depressed felon - a perfect match" (Aw, 2019: 326). The novel suggests that despite their apparent differences, Su-Min and Ah Hock, as the author claims in an interview, "establish a closeness, an understanding" (Aw and Wei, 2019).

Su-Min serves as a non-intrusive listener of Ah Hock's memory narrative and a witness to his traumatic memory. What makes her position particularly complex is Ah Hock's dual identity as both a perpetrator and a victim of institutional injustice. While the function of bearing witness is generally "to undergo a personal experience and then to testify to that experience to an audience" (Anderson, 2016: 412), Su-Min's engagement involves not only passive listening, but an active process of interpretation. As claimed by Ah Hock, "I wanted her to be a part of that pain" (Aw, 2019: 306). By taking notes and recording Ah Hock's oral narrative on her mobile phone, Su-Min attempts to

comprehend his life experiences and integrates the narrative into her own memory framework, and these methods serve to do justice to Ah Hock's testimony. Despite her initial difficulty in digesting Ah Hock's traumatic accounts about migrant workers' experiences, Su-Min admits that Ah Hock's narrative expands her worldview and reveals the darker aspects of the global economic system. This interaction prompts Su-Min to confront and even reassess her understanding of a reality different from her own. Her role as a listener cultivates a sense of empathy, which "involves imagining and seeking to understand the perspective of another person" (Saxena, 2022: 162). Therefore, I argue that Su-Min develops a profound understanding of Ah Hock's experiences.

Though potentially problematic in nature, Su-Min's publication contributes to the dissemination of Ah Hock's memory narrative and creates the possibility of its transformation into collective memory and incorporation into the official narrative. As Su-Min tells Ah Hock, "Everyone is fascinated by your story" (Aw, 2019: 325), although Ah Hock asserts that it is Su-Min's book that captivates readers. While acknowledging the complex relationship between memory narratives and their representations, I argue that Su-Min's book effectively propagates Ah Hock's memory narrative, albeit with certain limitations. As Aw states in an interview, people struggling for survival "are never given any visibility in literature, which, even more than most art forms, I think, is dominated by the educated middle-class" (Aw and Chin, 2019). This insight explains Aw's deliberate choice of Ah Hock as the novel's primary narrator. Su-Min's decision to centre her book on Ah Hock's story helps give voice to silenced groups and challenge their literary invisibility.

Moreover, Su-Min assists Ah Hock in recovering his sense of home to some extent. Through her commitment to helping disadvantaged groups, Su-Min fulfils her social responsibility. As Sarah E. Anderson claims, the moral dimension of bearing witness, in the context of criminal justice, is "to turn towards them, to seek to understand their perspective and, most importantly, to acknowledge their humanity" (Anderson, 2016: 416). Accordingly, the responsibility of bearing witness requires not only listening to the offenders' oral narratives but also understanding their living conditions and the complex factors behind their actions, ultimately facilitating their rehabilitation and societal reintegration. Following his three-year imprisonment, Ah Hock experiences profound social alienation, poignantly expressed in his observation that "the only other time I felt properly rooted in somewhere was when I was in jail" (Aw, 2019: 196). Remarkably, Su-Min, upon learning of Ah Hock's illness, brings him chicken soup and visits him for three consecutive days until his recovery. Ah Hock's emotional response - bursting into tears while eating the soup - reveals the tension between his experienced lack of care and Su-Min's demonstrated kindness, and this spontaneous outburst of emotion suggests the possibility of Ah Hock's reclaiming his sense of home. Although Ah Hock

possesses a modest house and relies on the support of charities and churches for existence, these elements alone do not constitute the essence of home for Ah Hock. Instead, it is Su-Min's display of care and kindness that facilitates Ah Hock's reconnection with society. Su-Min's empathy, transcending mere material support, underscores the importance of interpersonal communication and emotional bonds in cultivating an authentic sense of belonging.

While Poon and Dahal identify the tension between Su-Min's book and Ah Hock's story as a problematic aspect of this novel (Poon, 2021: 617; Dalal, 72-73), this tension exemplifies the dilemma of representation. Stuart Hall aptly argues that "the meaning we take, as viewers, readers or audiences, is never exactly the meaning which has been given by the speaker or writer or by other viewers" (Hall, 1997: 32-33). Hall's theoretical insight illuminates both the structure of Su-Min's book and the novel itself and discloses the fundamental limitation of representation. The complex intertwining of perspectives, between an educated writer and an impoverished commoner, generates an inherent tension within both texts. Although she claims that her book and Ah Hock's story are the "same thing" (Aw, 2019: 325), Su-Min grapples with the ethical dilemma between her desire to circulate Ah Hock's story and the necessity of faithful representation, as revealed by her uncertainty-laden words, "Something between biography and journalism. Narrative non-fiction, I guess. That's what I'd call it. Or maybe true crime, only, well, different. Better. I don't know. Publishers have so many strange ways of marketing books these days" (Ibid., 218).

Su-Min's ambivalence about the book's genre and her emphasis on publishers' ways of marketing seem to undermine her agency in representing and spreading Ah Hock's memory narrative. For all Su-Min's good intentions, this novel's conclusion, which depicts Ah Hock's sense of isolation at Su-Min's book party, highlights the potential limitations of literature in representing the underprivileged groups' memory narratives. When situated within a broader context, this dilemma emerges as a recurrent theme throughout Aw's literary career. In an interview, Aw reflects on his trajectory from the working-class origin to what he terms "the privileged class" and underscores the impact of class mobility on his outlook, claiming that "I feel two distinct parts of me tugging in different directions in an almost physical way" (Aw and Chin, 2019). This tug-of-war inherent in Aw's identity formation highlights the challenge of reconciling different social classes. This novel thus calls into question the intrinsic weakness of representation and ultimately underscores the deep-seated inequalities within Malaysian society. Through the depiction of Su-Min's dilemma, this novel offers an ethical insight into the complexities and limitations of articulating the memories of the lower class. I will explore the ethical implications of Aw's writing in the next section.

## **Between Forgetting and Remembering: Towards an Ethics of Memory**

Through the portrayal of Su-Min's ethical dilemma, Aw's novel explores the intricate relationship between memory and ethics. *We, the Survivors* thus invites readers to explore the inherent limitations of memory narratives. Viewed in a broader context, Aw's writing engages with the tension between remembering and forgetting in modern Asia. In his works, Aw illuminates modern Asia's inclination towards forgetting, which serves a dual purpose: it offers release from traumatic memories and enables protagonists to embrace the future. This theme manifests prominently in his treatment of diasporic history, particularly through first-generation Chinese migrants who often deliberately choose to forget their past. As portrayed by Aw, these characters undertake migration merely out of necessity, whether to secure their livelihood or to escape political disturbances in their homeland, and migration constitutes a traumatic memory for these diasporic subjects. For instance, in *We, the Survivors*, the traumatic nature of migration is exemplified through Ah Hock's grandmother, who refuses to recount her experiences in the Second World War and seeks to erase her history because wartime memories lead her to believe that "everyone with a Chinese name would be rounded up and put in camps, just as they were during the war" (Aw, 2019: 26). For such migrants, the act of forgetting functions as a psychological method to repress trauma into the unconscious.

Secondly, forgetting manifests as a symptom of modernity, particularly in the Asian context. As Aw writes in his autobiography, "this is what it means to be modern in Asia today: you are required to detach yourself from the past and only live in the present" (Aw, 2021: 65). In Aw's opinion, the rapid ongoing development in Asia leads to a diminished sense of historicity among its people. This erosion of historicity stems partly from modernity's tendency to "synchronize the multiplicity of times into a unitary historical process" (Simon and Tamm, 2023: 46), and a hierarchical distinction emerges between societies who take the lead in development and those perceived as backward. Consequently, in modern times, Asia, which is deemed a "backward" region, faces pressure to catch up with the developed West. In this pursuit of progress, history is frequently viewed as an impediment to development and has to make space for the present. The tension between history and economic development is exemplified in Aw's 2013 novel *Five Star Billionaire*. The impoverished protagonist Phoebe disguises herself as a middle-class lady in her quest of social mobility, and Phoebe's fabricated persona enables her to sever ties with her past self, as manifested in her diary entry, "Forget who you were, forget who you are. Become someone else" (Aw, 2013: 85). This self-imposed erasure of the past metaphorically reflects her aspiration to eliminate her connection with the past and to align herself with a higher social class. This novel portrays Phoebe as an allegorical figure for modern Asia, which intends to erase memories of poverty and backwardness and embraces a future marked by

economic development. Therefore, the traumatic stories of the marginalised members, like Ah Hock, are consigned to oblivion and give way to the grand narrative of evolution and progress.

In response to a pervasive tendency towards amnesia in modern Asia, Aw's novels articulate a firm ethical opposition to forgetting. As Aw explains in an interview, "I'm not naturally nostalgic for a cosy, bygone era. [...] But a lot of my work is concerned with what we give up in the march forwards" (Aw and Jaggi, 2013). This statement reveals that Aw's purpose of writing extends beyond mere nostalgia. Rather, he seeks to recover what has been forgotten in Asia's rush towards development. Through his opposition to forgetting, Aw demonstrates a profound concern for the other in his novels. As Avishai Margalit correctly claims, "memory, then, blends into morality through its internal relation with caring" (Margalit, 2002: 30). Specifically, the interplay between memory and caring constitutes an integral element of ethics that both reinforces a sense of belonging to a community and enhances the well-being of its members. Aw is strongly aware of the lack of care in the official narrative of Malaysia, which is "one of racial harmony" in contrast with the reality in which "there is a lot of tension between racial and ethnic groups, and a clear hierarchy of power" (Aw and Anam, 2016). In his novels, Aw integrates an obligation of care into memory writing and underscores the centrality of care in his ethics of memory.

Aw's works penetrate the facade of the nationalist narrative marked by universal harmony and bring to light its disconnect from reality. While representation has its limitations, Su-Min's textual representation of Ah Hock's story serves to preserve his memory and alerts readers to Malaysia's internal divisions. More significantly, Aw's ethics of memory proposes the possibility of mutual understanding across social strata. The narrative structure of *We, the Survivors* depicts social groups who approach each other and attempt to bridge the gap within society, as illustrated by the progression of the interview process, in which Ah Hock's relationship with Su-Min transforms from initial distrust to mutual understanding. While the chasm between the two protagonists remains evident throughout the novel, they seem to share similarities in some respects. A case in point is that while Su-Min uses vulgar words in her complaint about corruption, Ah Hock says, "You're sounding like me" (Aw, 2019: 278). This detail sheds light on shared humanity transcending social boundaries. The concord between the protagonists is also implied in the pronoun "we" used in the novel's title. While some scholars argue that this word intends to dismantle the dichotomy in the logic of social stratification (Poon, 2021: 618; Dahal, 2022: 71), I think that this pronoun constructs a sense of connection despite differences. As Aw remarks in an interview, "the novel's structure is a conversation between people who have found themselves on opposing sides of the chasm that has emerged in modern Asian society, and yet find themselves tangled in the same story" (Aw and Chin, 2019). Accordingly, the



conversation between Ah Hock and Su-Min integrates them into a shared narrative and creates a sense of community. In a word, the ethical implication of Aw's novel consists in a compromise between social classes through communication and a compensation for society's internal divisions.

Aw's ethics of memory not only directs its focus towards writers but also extends its reach to the broader readership. As Dalal observes in her reading of *We, the Survivors*, this novel intends to "create a network of implicated subjects, where both authors and readers are cognizant of their precariously privileged positions" (Dalal, 2022: 84). While Dalal underscores the shared responsibility of writers and readers in representing silenced voices and urges them to remember the overlooked members of the society, Aw's novel extends beyond mere awareness-raising and catalyses concrete activities to improve the living conditions of marginalised groups. Literature acts as a dynamic force for negotiation and contestation with current power structures. Aw's novel challenges the grand narrative of nationalism and attempts to construct alternative discourses, evident in the author's deliberate invisibility and the self-expression of the lower-class voice in *We, the Survivors*. In a sense, the act of rewriting propels fellow authors to intervene in official narratives and at least engage in struggles over the power to articulate silenced groups. The readers, in return, are called upon not merely to acknowledge the plight of underprivileged groups but also to take concrete actions to enhance their sense of home. Aw's optimism about this prospect is expressed by his assertion that "[...] there are a lot of people out there doing things. I think we have moved forward enough that there is a sufficient number of decent people in the world, and we just have to galvanize ourselves... I don't have the answers, but I do feel hopeful" (Aw and Wei, 2019). Aw stakes his hope on what he calls "decent people", including not only intellectuals like Su-Min but also engaged readers.

In summary, for Aw, the significance of memory writing in *We, the Survivors* is to contest the official narrative that intends to cover up the systematic inequality in Malaysia and to bring visibility to the overlooked members of society. In essence, his novel seeks to recover a sense of home for subaltern groups and appeal for the creation of an inclusive and tolerant nation.

## **Conclusion**

*We, the Survivors* is essentially a novel of memory and recollections. Ah Hock's notion of home is always illusory, although his memory narrative about the homemaking efforts is tinged with a tone of hope. Although Su-Min's act of bearing witness and circulating Ah Hock's memory narrative helps him recover a sense of home, the suspicious nature of her representation seems to undermine the ethical function of Su-Min's retelling Ah Hock's story. Through Su-Min's ethical

dilemma, Aw's novel underlines the ethics of memory, as the author believes that preserving the memory, especially of the lower class, contributes to retrieving the power of articulation for the marginalised people. Therefore, this novel invites us to think how the intellectuals can assume their responsibility in showing concern for those whose voices are silenced by the official narrative.

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# **Religious mobilization and social boundaries: A case study of Hassan Shehata Assassination by Sunni facets**

**Marian Ramadan**

## **Introduction**

In the last few decades, Egypt witnessed an acute rise in incidents where religion was engaged and violently politicized against certain minorities, including Shia facets. The current academic studies concentrated on the societal changes that proved the growth in political movements founded on religious fundamental ideas. Religion had severe implications in directing several bomb suicidal campaigns and civil wars, and the revival of “public religion” to be perceived as a “private” theme, which was ignored by political scientist in the past, but became the main catalyst for vengeance of “found religion”, while social scientist and anthropologist and other prominent historians in the specialization of religion studies showed great interest in conflict and political violence (see Almond, Gabriel Abraham, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan 2003, 173).

To illustrate further, Weber’s focus was on themes other than religion, violence and conflict. But he reflected on them separately in his book “*Economy and Society*”, where he talked briefly about the progress that has happened in the traditions of religion. Moreover, “violence” was centralized in his work of “*Politics as a Vocation*”, where he indicated that “whoever” indulges with “violent means”, like politicians, are exposed to its consequences. Weber emphasized that “religious” and “revolutionary” are equally the same for the “Crusader” (Weber 1946, 124-25). Furthermore, he explained the “ethical paradoxes” (125) that are produced due to what is so called “ethical irrationality of the world”, which refers to the propensity of the believer to use “violence” as a last option to bring peace and eliminate violence (122). Thus, the following question arises: Even though Barth (1969, 15) directed us to focus on ethnic boundaries not the "cultural stuff that it encloses," in the locally mobilized attack that targeted Hassan Shehata at Zawiyat Abu Musallam Village in Giza Governorate of Egypt during Imam Mahdi Birth Religious Celebration, why does it look as if his Shi'a religion was triggered by Sunni Salafis for its content?

Religion related incidents are distinguished; however, they require careful analysis of the dynamics of how religion is involved and in what sense. In so doing, two positions will be introduced: namely, “particularizing” and “generalizing” sense of religion. In more detail, “particularizing” sense considers political conflicts that are based on religious beliefs as “sui generis”. Meaning that, religious

ideologies, identities, beliefs, are utilized to convert political conflicts in specific ways than any other ideologies. For example, religious nationalism, religious civil wars, and religious ideologies require specific causal analysis different from other forms of conflicts. As a result, this kind of analysis cannot be integrated into one general “rubric” like others (Brubaker 2015, 2).

Conversely, “generalizing” sense of religion doesn’t recognize religion-related conflicts and violence as “sui generis” (Cavanaugh 2009, 39–48). To illustrate further, like any other ideologies and identities, religious ideology and identity are equally the same, and they can be integrated under one general subsumed political conflict or violence. In other words, religion doesn’t require special consideration, but instead, to reach the individual goals of analysis like “religious conflict” and “religious violence”, it is essential to involve the triggering features of practice from public course and apply it into individual analysis.

However, the “particularizing” and “generalizing” sense of religion cannot be absolutely alienated. Religion is a contested subject, and it includes diverse sets of beliefs and phenomena that are not similar practically and theoretically. Moreover, the advocates of “particularizing” and “generalizing” sense of religion tend to choose their preferable aspect to suit their analytical framework. A better approach would be to dispose the one-sided aspect of religion and introduce various dimensions of religion that monopolize group interaction and verify cultural recognition, or even sustain old traditions and scrutinize the common categories involved with other religious and ethnic groups. Doing so, the hidden distinctiveness and similarities across different incidents will be clarified, evolving new cognitive understanding of how religion is politicized.

This paper argues the peculiarity in which religion is implied in the event of Sunni local mobilization attack that resulted in the death of Shia Hassan Shehata at Abu Musallam Village in Giza Governorate of Egypt, focusing on the “generalizing” strategy of religion in accordance with “particularizing” one. I do so because “religion” can be applied more adequately to illustrate underlying hidden causes of the incident as part of culture than considering it independent from political violence and “culturally empty”. I adopt Rogers Brubaker views of religion, seeking to evolve a nuanced account of the explanation of the incident to add more into the effort of how “religion” dynamics are defined and developed.

### **Analytical Framework**

“Generalizing” aspect considers religion as equally the same as identity and mobilization, that transformed to be part of “tribe”. This can be traced back to Fredrick Barth work of “*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*”, where he claimed to shift the attention of similar pattern of culture to focus on the differences which mobilize societal interaction. He believed that ethnic boundaries can be scrutinized,

disregarding what he regretted later, and called it “cultural stuff” which appears in his following quote: “The critical focus of investigation... becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (see Fredrik Barth 1969, 15). In 1969, Barth suggested that “the issue of cultural content versus boundary, as it was formulated, unintentionally served to mislead” (1994:17).

Apart from this, between 1970s and 1980s, academic research analyzed how the rise in political movement was centralized on “primordial” identities such as language, religion and race like Clifford Geertz; 1976. Ethnicity was considered part of those primordial identities that were shared among people who used them to define themselves. They dismissed the detailed structure of language, religion, identities, and focused on the external shared features among individuals. Meaning that individuals used the “primordial” aspect of shared cultures, race, identity, religion and ethnicity to constitute groups and mobilize them in political activities to reach common goal or interest.

On the other hand, Joseph Rothschild opposed Barth’s approach of separating culture from “ethnic consciousness, solidarity and assertiveness”. He emphasized that applying his approach would cause more challenges to see the picture more precisely as he mentioned that: “it is difficult to see what precisely would be [...] meant by the residual notion of ethnic groups and their ethnicities” (Rothschild 1981, 9). He saw that it doesn’t matter if political leaders employ religion, language and race, but what is really imperative is how they can be instrumentalized to form set of symbols upon which groups depend and are politicized. In other words, themes like identity, religious belief, shared language and racial background can be manipulated by political leaders to affiliate alliance and networks that help to forge groups with common ideology and sense of solidarity.

Two approaches have been practiced independently in terms of “ethnic boundaries”. First, the Barthian approach that draws upon the comprehension of how ethnic boundaries are formed and sustained. It dissects “social organization” and its dynamics. Second, the political approach explores how “ethnic boundaries” are politicized by elites, to mobilize individuals for their political interest. It is concerned with political mobilization and claim making. Later, the analysis entailed both approaches in terms of society and politics. However, both approaches are situated on “culturally empty” form of ethnicity. They demolished culture by elaborating on how ethnic boundaries are constructed socially, and expressed politically.

Moreover, these approaches can be traced back to Max Weber’s fragmentary but strong idea of social closure. A key dimension of the recurrent process is that monopolization of material and opportunities is “independent” of “substantive culture” of the groups or individuals. He refers to it in his quotation:

“some externally identifiable characteristic of a subset of the (actual or potential) competitors – race, language, religion, geographic or social origin, descent, place of residence, etc. – is taken by the others as the occasion for seeking to exclude them from competing. What characteristic this is in individual cases is irrelevant: whatever most readily presents itself is utilized” ((Weber 1964 (1922), 260; cf. Weber 1978, 342, Brubaker 2015, 13).

In so doing, he particularized the notion of religion instead of generalizing it. Meaning that he scrutinized the distinction of religious ideas and their content in addition to its religious organization. However, similarly to Barth’s view on boundaries, he considered social closure as “culturally empty” social form. As a result, Weber inspired many scholars who wrote about religions as a generalized sense in relation to the politicized ethnicity such as Andreas Wimmer 2013, 35–51, and Charles Tilly 1998, 1–27 categorical inequality of generalizing theory. They combined religion along with culture, race, language and so forth in its generalizing sense. Weber’s idea of “social closure” as “culturally empty” stimulated Tilly (1998) and Wimmer’s (2013) perspective. The dynamics of “closure” engages monopolization of resources, suitable opportunities, and independence of “cultural” context of the outsider and insider groups.

In a brief, religion is not centralized to their analytical approach as politicized *sui generis*. But rather, ethnicity comes first, then religion emanates from its broader context. However, in the discourse of this paper, politicized religion will be represented mainly instead of politicized ethnicity, and its decisive role of how it inflicts violence.

## **Background Information**

On June 23, 2013, Abu Musallam village in Giza witnessed an incident of local mobilization contained of 3000 people to attack group of Shia Muslims who gathered to celebrate religious event of the born of “Imam Al Mahdi”. As a result, four Shia personnel were murdered, including Mr. Hassan Shehata after being dragged in the streets, tighten their hands, and hit brutally with metal heavy sticks on the neck and the head. The irony here is that this event happened before the eyes of the police, but they didn’t intervene to protect the victims. This attack took place in time when the Egypt diplomatic relations with Iran was strong under “Mohamed Morsi” regime, who was Egypt’s first democratically elected president and belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood faction. Consequently, the proliferation of ties with Iran encountered anger of the Sunni Salafist faction, leading to hostile statements of mainstream Salafist leaders. For example, Muhammad Hassan, who is a famous Salafi Imam, categorized Shia believers as a “filthy renegade”. Doing so, the local Egyptians were triggered by the statements of religious leaders and elites, which led to the public disguise of any individual who identified as Shia facts. Moreover, Hassan Shehata used to be Sunni

Muslim lecturer before converting to Shiaa Muslim, which constituted a controversial social castigation against him. Furthermore, the overlapping consensus and the division in the society between those who supported the present regime of Muhammad Morsi and those who counteracted it in the aftermath of 25th January revolution contributed to the polarization of the society members and therefore the occurrence of insurgencies.

Additionally, the Islamic political elites used religion to categorize identities which was transnational, and hence their authenticated memberships were confined to those who are similar to “us Sunni”, excluding “they Shia” ethnoreligious boundaries.

### **Religion as Politicized Ethnicity in the Conflict Stake**

The apprehension of the religious dynamics in forging the social identities of Sunni and Shia groups is necessary to explain the toppled relation between them. The stake of conflict engaged religious identified actors or claimants, doesn't necessarily have to engage religious defined stakes. But instead, this conflict stakes may be caused due to cultural replication, symbolic acknowledgement, or self-determination. This helps the estimation of subsuming religion as politicized ethnicity that recognized the “Sunni” and “Shia” identities as different factions.

However, religion cannot be assimilated to ethno-political conflict. Meaning that, it is essential to distinguish the so called “boundary defining” approach of the religion from “normative ordering power”, intrinsic to different shapes of religious life, as Andreas Wimmer 1997 referred to in his book of “who own the state”, which was about conflict stakes between religious Sunni militants and Shiites with other Sunni (Wimmer 1997, 3(4):631–66). In the case of Egypt, the involved parties of the incident are identified as “Shia” and “Sunni”, but religion is not the stake of conflict. In other words, religion is not recognized in its significant sense in the accident, and the conflict occurred not because of the “struggling over the religion” or not “fundamentally about the religion” (Jenkins 1997, McGarry and O'Leary 1995, 311–316). Even if the struggle between Sunni Salafist and Shia was over religion, it emphasizes the similarities between certain configuration of religious and ethno-political conflict. It was fundamentally about the role of Shia ideology in Egypt public life. Yet the struggle of Shia minorities is an aim to secure the conditions of cultural reproduction. In theological perspective, Sunni Salafist and Shia did not assume to reproduce mass segmented particular culture. But in political and social institutional perspective, they were doing the same. According to the religion teachings of Sunni and Shia in Islam, cultural segmentation and the distinction between two facets was not promoted by the religion itself, but instead the group segmentation and the animosity between Sunni and Shiaa was a production of sociopolitical



institutions that monopolized the different boundaries for their own benefits.

In other context, it is potential to integrate religion as “ethnopolitical” conflict, however it is essential to elucidate the difference between “boundary defining” or “diacritical” (Barth’s term) of religion and “normative ordering power” intrinsic to religious forms of life. The first considers religion as a form of “politicized ethnicity”, and the latter construes the difference of religious stakes and dynamics of political conflict.

The normative order of religion is situated at personal, societal, communal, familial and cosmic levels. These levels are in compliance with religion as distinguished and privatized domain of activities. On the other hand, shapes of order or disorder are perceived as tightly interconnected, which enable the public to generate religious claim making and provoking the common idea of religion as strictly separated from politics. To illustrate further, claim making has emerged due to the common religious understanding of the “right order” that cannot be integrated with the rubric of “politicized ethnicity”. It is not just a claim for power, recognition or “self-determination” in a context of “cultural pluralism”, but rather a “distinctively religious understandings of right order” that is not only held within the personal, familial, communal activities, but also the wider arena of politics and society (Brubaker 2015, 5).

Apart from this, Charles Tilly counted the collective violence as a form of “contentious politics” because the contenders are making claims that influence the interest of each other. It is considered politics because the relations of the participants to the government are always at stake. He counted that the contentious politics to consist of discontinuous, public, claim making, where government, organization, individuals dominate intensified means of coercion. He introduced the so called “short run salience” where interaction among claimants is dissected, and it inflicted damage that imposes this interaction. The “low extreme damage” happens “intermittently” in the discourse of the non-violent predominant violent transaction, while the “high extreme damage” is the predominance of damage on the course of interaction. He presented the process of “polarization” that engages the wide gap of political and social space between claimants in the episodic contention. It merges dynamics of opportunity-threat spirals, competition, category formation, and omnipresent brokerage. It promotes collective violence because it increases the salience of us-them boundaries, leaving no room for the middle moderates, intensifies boundary conflict, and giving more opportunities to the elites to initiate hostilities against their opposition. Apart from this, the involved actors in the incident developed previous contentious relations with other collective actors which helped to form the distinctive internal structure of the actors producing this event. The claim making actors established social sites (Abu Musallam neighborhood), where the relational networks that was

created among the actors share the same history, culture and produce collective sense of connection with other similar actors. However, those actors don't designate themselves to a set of networks, but they narrate themselves in collective nouns (Sunni Salafist and Shiaa), so that they can express their political boundaries with collective identity which enable them to answer question like; "who are you?", "who are we?", and "who are they?". Tilly dismantled the components of political identities which are: boundaries, shared stories, and social relations. In more detail, boundaries separate "us" from "them" (Tilly 2003, 21–32). For example, "Sunni Salafists" who represent "us" as inside group from "Shias" the outsider others who represent "them". Shared stories about boundaries like the allegations of Salafist of legitimization the death of Shia because their offense to Islamic holy characters, like Aisha who was the wife of prophet Muhammed, peace be upon them. Lastly are the social relations, the common characters and features which refer to their membership.

Geertz explained such boundaries under the term "information gap", which is the contradiction between the innate feeling of the body in what to do, and the externally controlled culture of what to do, in order to function. He described the situation of "vacuum", that individuals fill with either formation or misinformation presented by the culture. Meaning that, the actions we take are controlled by either the culture, or the intrinsic feelings that comes from within ourselves, which are "ill defined" (Clifford Geertz 1973, 50–176). Moreover, he indicated that "religious disposition" induces the external boundaries of human rituals, and they "reflect" back the perception of the individuals toward the constructed world. Furthermore, religious belief is viewed as "homogeneous" features of individuals, like his place of living, his occupation and so on. This religious belief engulfs the whole existence of the individual, transmitting him into different experiences. He distinguished between the ritual religious belief, and the everyday life religious belief, which are two different things. The first is religious rituals and it is very powerful spiritually, while the latter is less ritually intense and can be politicized in social life. The capacity of religion lies in serving the individual, groups, self, and relation between them. It builds the structure of the world and shapes the cultural identities of the people. Religion goes beyond the "metaphysical" contents to provide meaning to intellectual, moral and emotional experiences. How Sunni Salafi viewed Shia group as a Kafer, who are permissible to be killed. This stems from the causal sense explained by elites who instrumentalized religion to achieve their targets.

### **Religion Engagement to Violence**

Hassan Shehata's death involved certain form of religious claims that entailed violence. Past research showed that in recent decades, religion has increasingly inflicted violence such as suicide bombing (Moghadam 2008, 33(3):46–78), he indicated that the majority of suicide attack took place

in politicized Islamic regions with significant perpetrators, most commonly by Salafi Jihadist group, and civil wars (Fox 2004, 41(6):715–31; Toft 2006, 2–9). To elaborate further, religion can construct certain forms of violence which facilitates and legitimizes its occurrence. The dual nature of religion of creating peace through sense of solidarity, can also establish polarization by categorizing the infidels through set of rituals, beliefs, and symbols.

Hassan Shehata was a previous Sunni Muslim before his conversion to Shiaa: this could be explained by Mohamed Hafez' indication of "the authoritative system of classification" that contains clear religious classifications of those extreme "other", like apostate, heretic, infidel and so on. The category of "Takfir" is claimed by Muslims when another Muslim individual is not a real believer or his actions and practices go against religious principles, so he becomes an infidel (non-believer), which becomes a legitimized target of violence (see Hafez 2011, 25–46). For example, Salafist categorized Hassan Shehata as an infidel, which desecrated the religious beliefs of local Sunni Muslims, and therefore Shia were legitimately killed in certain circumstances by the local Sunni mobilization. They identify the process (of ex Muslim or Takfir) for situating individuals in such categories. As a result, violence is authorized to be employed against individuals of such categories. Although religious context of Sunni Islam and Shiaa Islam is nearly the same, violent escalation is still a potential in the tension between the two groups. The authorized religious classification of the extreme "other" facilitates violence against those "others", which is a "potent discursive" method. Religion also demonstrates methods to mobilize and threaten measures against them (See Appleby (2000:82) about religious constructions of emergency and existential threat where he talked about Jewish categorization of the so called "rodef" who put the lives of other jews under the threat, and therefore, it legitimizes them to be killed as it is the situation of the murder of prime minister Rabin by Yigal Amir in 1995). Doing so, expression of "profanation" and "sacralization", the concept of negative or positive morality, approval of deity on a divine sanctioned task and "utopian" transformation are all elaborated to stimulate the stakes (Juergens Meyer 2000; Wessinger 2000). Declarations announced by religious authorities can mobilize violence in response to perceived threats which resulted in radical devaluation of the existing social and political order, and legitimized violent repression against "outsiders".

Most of the religious violence studies concentrated on the "micro-level" dimension that elucidates individual "beliefs" or "identity" (stern 2003), and "macro-level" dimension that elucidates "culture" or "values" (Huntington 1996, 28–33), while dismissing the intermediate or "meso-level" that embraces elements like "elites" and "ideology" (Hassner 2011, 7–25). In more details, there's inclination to emphasize the "civilisation" and "tradition" of Islam, or individual "beliefs" and

“goals” of Jihadis. However, Hassan Shehata assassination occurred due to meso- level or intermediate scale that involved religious leader. Religious violence comes as a result of an alliance between political and religious elites who are abandoned from power (see Gorski 2012, 280–326). Gorski and Turkmen discussed the issue of religious political conflict in sociology, and they provided strong argument about the connection between religion as monotheism and violence. However, the main problem lies in how “violent rhetoric” is more common than “violent action” (Melton and Bromley 2002, 54–64). Violent outcomes engage with intervening elements that may be exogenous, such as antagonistic media, prolonged reluctance to the law imposition, while endogenous may be such as employment of strong commitment mechanism, “impermeable social boundaries” that make it harder to find a peaceful way out from the group or movement, which suggests the importance of meso-level process of religious violence.

Moreover, Gorski and Türkmen-Derrişođlu (2013, 204) suggested that “religious nationalism” engages what is so called “synchronization of ‘principles of vision and di-vision’” across religious and non-religious field. Doing so, religious and national concepts become more aligned and salient. This linkage and alignment result from “strategic alliance” between groups of elites in the related contents. The notable advantage of this approach is that it creates demonstrative prosperous and “historically contingent” examination of “religious nationalist mobilization”.

Apart from this, Brubaker and Wimmer argued that collective identity neither emanates from “Putatively” common culture nor are they given “supposedly” by nature (Brubaker 1996, 2004 Wimmer 2002, 2008). Instead, it evolves or dissolves, strengthens or weakens in the discourse of “social struggle” about “relative salience” of contested identity and categories; as Bourdieu’s referred to it as, “classification struggles” about the influential “principles of vision and di- vision”. Even if the ethnicity competes with the class, central ethnic classification is not always predetermined, but it is continually in a progress dynamic. On this account, ethnicity is not a structure or entities or a thing, but it is a process, relations and events. On the other hand, “collective action” does not emanate from a pre-social aspect of interest or rationality, but it is ascriptive to specific narration. Interests are occupying social positional, and symbolic meaning; however the constraints of culture allow a room for improvisation and creativity. Therefore, conflict and “ethnic mobilization” involves symbolic exclusions. Moreover, “collective rituals” may produce solidarity, a form of hierarchies and ethnic boundaries (Gorski and Turkman 2013, 202–203).

Local assailants were managed in a crowded group and killed their Shiaa victims where they found them in their homes and dragged them to the streets. Their action involved collective violence that included “episodic social interaction”. Local assailants inflicted physical damage on the Shiaa

group, and the mob attack engaged more than two perpetrators, and it had form of coordination among them. This collective violence eliminated nonmaterial damage, individual actions, indirect or long-term influence of the damage. Charles Tilly asserted that there's no universal law for the episodic collective violence; however, similar causes may be operated in different settings. Therefore, the atmosphere of collective violence is complicated, progressive, and unpredictable, but it comes out as a result of similar causes in a different place and time. In order to explain collective violence, it is imperative to get the causes, combination and settings correctly. Structures, social ties, and process influence collective violence in how they shape it and forge the variation. There's a relationship between collective violence and injustice, exploitation, and repression. As a result, physical damage takes place as a "contingent outcome". However, the term "violence" includes interpersonal disapproval, and disagreeable actions exacerbate the efforts to reach solid understanding about the root causes of violence. In general, broad application of violence weakens the variation of inflicting physical damage voluntarily (see Tilly 2003, 3–4).

Contention of Islamic violence has emanated not because of "ideational" factors or unbalanced "psychological" attitude, but rather because of "exogenous contingencies" that are constructed by "state policy". Specific Islamic groups may be involved in violence regardless of state actions, but the stable strategies for these external groups cannot explain the total level of violence and its timing. A better alternative is to scrutinize the "inputs into repertoire" accounts which lead to rise in violent activities (Hafez 2003, 62).

There are two clustered approaches discussed under the term of "Islamic Violence". First approach is called "ideational school", which implements the unchangeable origin of religion; Quraan and Sunnah, and ethics of prophet Muhammad to perform decisions about behavior. The new circumstances and challenges should be addressed by the unchanging nature of religious understandings and principles. Consequently, violence becomes rooted in the tenants and origins of Islam itself, that is survived under specific circumstances met on religious basis. Therefore, there is an intensity of "ideational constancy" (Voll 1983, 32–47; Sivan 1985, 112–116; Vatikiotis 1987, 553–555). The current studies of this account embrace the variety of religious interpretations that come from "ambiguities" of ideational origins; however, ideology is the main focus of analysis (Jansen 1986; Hafez 2000).

The second prominent approach is what Salwa Ismail referred to as "psychosocial model" (Ismail 2000, 366) which entitles the "socioeconomic background" of violence. This approach seeks to understand the "demographic roots" that resulted in activation of violent groups. Some studies suggested that "most militants" had high education status and moved to urban centers to look for

employment opportunities. Researchers argued that they became radical because they were cut off from their families and rural roots and lived with different values in the new urban environment. Therefore, they struggled with a sense of anomie and social isolation that caused them to be exposed to the traditions of Islamic message (S. E. Ibrahim 1980, 12: 423–53; Ansari 1984, 123–44). However, later on, researchers showed that the less educated members of society were more exposed to radical recruitment that was motivated by psychosocial pressures (S. E. Ibrahim 1996, 5– 20). On this account, the socioeconomic background referred to sense of grievances and why individuals joined violent groups (Hoffman 1995, 199– 230).

## **Conclusion**

Religion witnessed repetitive incidents related to the discussed context in this paper, and it still provides distinguished accounts in analyzing radical violent events. While the extreme forms of religious exceptionalism are easily dismissed, the counterclaims of political contention, violence and conflict lack the distinguished elements are equally inadequate. Religion can forge reality, establish commitment, construct communities, generate strong emotions, cause collapse to the current order, devalue others and privileges the self, impose punishments, justify threats and dangers, impose sanctions and give rewards. It connects the existing reality to the composition of emotions and impositions. In so doing, it legitimizes, verifies, and enables violent actions to encounter imminent “threats”, “profanations of sacred symbols”, and “extreme others”.

Even though there’s no linkage between religion and violence; however, religion provides potent verification of ideological, moral, organizational origins which can justify, enable, legitimize and maintain aggressive conflict which enable more engagement of political and moral involvement. The main challenge was to identify the condition and context in which religious discourse, origins, structures and practices that lead to production, reproduction and transformation of political conflict and violence.

Religion can be exploited to implement aggressive speech against a group of individuals which can escalate to violence and be hard to be contained later. Religion is usually manipulated by higher authorized elites and politicians, who are exposed to its consequences the most. In doing so, religion can be employed radically to convict ethical violation against powerless individuals. Moreover, religion’s power lies in shaping new selves and subjectivities forming new realities for the converter from one religion to another, demanding more religious engagement as in the case of Hassan Shehata conversion from Sunni Muslim to Shiaa Muslim. This conversion can alter identity, change the way of how to view the world and experience it, reconsider the current ties and “devalue” it and extreme cognitive of physical and emotional “re-socialization”.

This paper aims to add a modest perspective to contribute to the progress of nuanced and adequate generalizing accounts in accordance with particularizing one in which religion can be involved in political conflict and violence. It is necessary to reconcile with the distinctive stakes of religion in political conflict and violence that are produced by distinguished religious understanding of the correct order that is constituted in the substantive claims of public life in regard to religious concepts. Moreover, religious stakes of conflict that involve actors who are identified in religion terms, are essentially similar in mechanism and structure to other conflicts over natural resources, political domination, and cultural reproduction and recognition.

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# **Coloniality as Project of National Identity: Postcolonial Reading of Froylán Turcios**

**Héctor Uclés**

## **Introduction**

Coloniality has two dimensions, the desire to replicate, the destruction of the other, and the justification of that destruction that fits within the model conceptualized as “Colonial Matrix of power” (Mignolo, Walsh 2018: 4) whose two facets are colonialism and modernity. Coloniality within that duality, exists as replication of the techniques that allow the exploitation and destruction of what was not coupled to the interests of the colonizer. As a replication, coloniality is a persistent method inherited by the physical and ideological violence of a colonial background.

Froylán Turcios (July 7, 1875 - November 19, 1943), as a writer promulgated an ideal construct of the Honduran identity. His poetry and literature are mandatory readings in the national education system, always touted as an aspirational behavior of the ideal citizen. Even with his relevance or perhaps of it, postcolonial analysis of his writings is lacking. This paper argues that Turcios literary work is constructed under premises of colonial ideology. He defended a national project that call for a systematic molding of the nation within paradigms of illustration with such radicalization that its ideology implied a class apartheid that was determine by those who were illustrated and those who were not.

As a center of this analysis is his short story “The Best Alms” (La mejor limosna)<sup>i</sup>, a short story that in its brevity conveys the ideology and perception of Turcios, by deconstructing his work through postcolonial tools, an ideology marked by the process of colonization and the scar of its violence appears. The first section of the article is an introduction that holds two subdivisions. The first subdivision gives a brief historical background on Turcios and his epoch. The second subdivision contextualizes one of the postcolonial tools to be used, the native informant, a subject that exists as a bridge between the colonizer and the colony, the particularities of these subject in the Latin-American context are framed.

The second section delves into the work of Turcios, where a second postcolonial tool, the catachresis, is utilized to elucidate the meaning behind the analyzed literature. Showcasing Turcios’

opposition to a life outside the boundaries of illustration, utilizing the rhetorical instrument of leprosy to refer to it and alms as the solution to it as an analogy for extermination.

The third section utilizes two more tools of postcolonial analyses, the native informant and the subaltern. Turcios inclination to extermination was directed to the subaltern, a subject that is outside the illustration, the individual to carry out such extermination is the native informant. A case for a singular project that allows no bifurcations marked by a Eurocentric perception is made in Turcios narrative.

The fourth section and conclusion collect the past findings and elaborates a synthesis of the implications.

### **Brief Biography of Froylán Turcios**

Recognized as one of the most representative modernist writers of Honduras, his literature shapes the ideal of identity of the Honduran projected through the educational programs of the State. His influence is rooted in the aspects of the letters. He was a promulgator of literature, through his editorial and directorial work in three literary magazines (*El Pensamiento, La Revista Nueva and Esfinge*). He was friends with various members of the Central American literary modernist community, among them Juan Ramón Molina and Ruben Darío. During the Presidency of Policarpo Bonilla (1895-1899), recognized continuator of the political modernist project of Marco Aurelio Soto, Turcios was named representative of Honduras in Costa Rica's commemoration of the defeat of William Walker. Turcios political activism cost him his freedom briefly, submitted to exile at the Embassy of Mexico during the Presidential Period of Vicente Tosta (1924-1925). He had a friendship and later estrangement with Cesar Sandino of Nicaragua motivated by a discrepancy concerning political strategies<sup>ii</sup>.

### **Turcios Historical context**

With the arrival of the Enlightenment and its advent of independence, the justification for control becomes secular. In the case of Central America, with its peaceful independence<sup>iii</sup> and subsequent bellicose dissolution, Honduras finds itself in the hands of the Creoles. The country opens to multicultural incorporation and the call of European migration.

The Honduran modernization<sup>iv</sup> process, as a political project, starts in the period of President Marco Aurelio Soto (1876-1883), accompanied by the ideologist Ramón Rosa<sup>v</sup>. It proclaims the

incorporation of ideas that praise progress, science and rationality, with the intention of generating a constant development towards a State of cultural and economic vanguard within the ideals of modernity.

### **Contextualization of the native informant**

The Native Informant is a subject generated under the pressure of colonization, concept taken from Gayatri Spivak, in one of its most general forms it is catalogued as the (Spivak 1999: 141) “re-naming of the colonial subject, as citizen”. It is a product of the colonization process, within the canon of modernity, it is a subject that exists as a bridge between the colonizer and the colonizing subject, it exists as an in-between.

Edward Said observed on the West-East relationship, defining the Orient as the strange-hidden from the West, in his words: (Said 2003: 44) “Orientalism was finally a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, The East, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’).” The West is defined by what it assimilates, to the point that it seems unrecognizable that the religion that was touted to justify colonization is of Eastern origin<sup>vi</sup>. These references clarify the position of West and East, leaving America as an uncomfortable in the middle of which Portantiero characterizes as follows: (Mignolo 2021: 408) “Latin America is not the East, since it has common characteristics with the peripheral West, late in its development, are clear.” The previous fiction, encapsulates Latin America as a Europe to be developed, there is no fiction that can incorporate all the multiplicity of reality, but this one in particular invites to continue with the process of colonization in its facet of coloniality. A new Eurocentric continent. Following the idea of an Europe epistemically shaped by its colonial existence, we now find a new continent that seeks to mark itself within a framework of coloniality.

The Creole<sup>vii</sup>, with his European training, is the native informant par excellence, native of another land, non-European but Western, European in appearance and with access to the educational and bureaucratic apparatus of the colony but alien to the administration. Their restriction only exists under the administrative argument of power, that they were the most likely to command the final rebellions is now obvious, their submission is only justified in the necessity of injustice. The other subjects of colonization, excluded from the administration and the formal educational formation of the colonial entity, were under the argument of the soul and the goodness of civilizing tyranny, an argument that will persist even at the end of the colony with secular characteristics through coloniality.

## The catachrestic use of leprosy and alms

Catachresis is according to Gayatri Spivak (Spivak 2012: 70) “an analogy without historical accessibility or literal pole, in classical rhetoric the abuse of a metaphor.” A word whose meaning varies according to the historical context and cultural understanding in which it manifests itself.

Manco Mena utters to the leper in between tears before executing him: (Turcios 2023: 164) This is the best alms I can give you. The catachresis of leprosy; is a subject, portrayed by Turcios as the bearer of an ignominious existence, which must be eradicated as an act of alms and alms being itself a catachresis for extermination. Turcios does not present any evident vindication of the leper, his destiny is to be humiliated, the leper symbolizes what must be destroyed. The act in which the leper is executed is discerned in the second catachresis, alms, the leper begs for subsistence, and what he receives amidst weeping is extermination. The leper exists to protect his existence, he lacks the rationality necessary to recognize that his existence must be eradicated and that he does himself a disservice by continuing to exist, this decision falls into the hands of our enlightened criminal (note that jocularly it is a murderer who reads books in the rain). This is the best alms I can give you, carries the symbolic potential of being a catachresis for: the desires you have are well understood by me, but I consider your life pitiful as it is, your will to live is an affront to how life should be, for this reason I will kill you, because I am moved by your suffering.

Further correlation can be found in Turcios poem “To Honduras”<sup>viii</sup> (A Honduras) where he says: (Funes 2006: 201) before seeing your flag defeated, in rubble to look at you I would rather (...) made ashes. The term alms is not in use but its catachrestic meaning of extermination persists, as preferring ashes rather than existence in defeat. In a previous section of the poem, he says (Funes 2006: 201) Before I look at you chained, without ambition, without light, without thought. Four adjectives are poured that are found covering the same object, the lack of enlightenment and the colonizing force, chained and without ambition exist as connections of processes of movement and light and thought as processes of lucubration, the following catachresis is extracted: before seeing you without process of incursion and without mental alignment I would prefer that you did not exist. In the four adjectives we find leprosy as the absence of enlightened values and the destruction of a nation as alms. This tendency is also found in Turcios’s poem (Turcios 2007:456) “The prayer of the Honduran”<sup>ix</sup> (La oración del Hondureño) where the catachresis of alms continues, in this case the direction of the energy is internalized, when expressing “preferring to die a thousand times”, here the idea of Manco Mena arises again. Manco Mena is willing to kill and cry for leprosy, in the literary imaginary of Froylán Turcios is the willingness to die and kill for a homeland that fits the project of enlightenment or non-leprosy.

Non-leprosy is revealed in the following extract from *The prayer of the Honduran*: (Turcios 2007: 456) preferring to die a thousand times (...) May God bless the bountiful land where I was born! Free and civilized, may your power increase in time and may your name shine in the broad conquests of justice and law. The values assigned to the leper are inverted in “Prayer of the Honduran”, “free and civilized” under the conjunction “and” that under simple informal logic creates an equivalent formula, civilization and freedom become necessary to each other, which implies that a lifestyle outside of what is interpreted as civilization is found in the non-free. This idea of civilization under Eurocentric ideals of enlightenment associated with the baggage of a colonial matrix of power is a constant reflected in Turcios literature<sup>x</sup>.

### **The Native Informant that was Froylán Turcios and the Subaltern that he sought to avoid**

The difference between the native informant and the non-informant native is the exclusion inherent in the enlightenment. The colonizer, once a colonization process has been established, which by its nature implies an othering generally marked by paternalistic visions, creates a subject of colonization understood as another that sustains a mark of backwardness that will be resolved through the enlightenment produced by the colonizer. These epistemological premises give rise to a subgroup that is invited to bridge the communication between the colonizer and the colonized, it is categorized as the -elite of the nations/native informant-.

The native informant due its position of bridge between colony and colonizer, collects the titularity of the nation building project once the official project of colony is terminated, in the words of Pheng Chea (Spivak 2010: 193) “It is the postcolonial national elite that continues to build “the people””. Within the native Informant as Spivak has pointed out, there is an (Spivak 2008: 47) “internalized axioms of class apartheid”. Internalizing, in the case of the enlightened project, a separation between the enlightened and the non-enlightened. This internalized apartheid exists as a replica of the spirit of the colony, the motives for brutality changed. The famous reflexive non-infancy<sup>xi</sup>, justified the outbursts and destruction of what was not in tune.

The benign argument on the part of the Enlightenment is its illusory universalist pretension, of which I will refer to Spivak who says (Spivak 2008: 129) “even apartheid generates solidarity”, yet incompatible lifestyles persist, particularly those incompatible with the capitalist dynamic. Non-leprosy exists hand in hand with the native Informant. Leprosy goes hand in hand with the opposition of the native Informant, which introduces another category, popularized by Spivak, that of the subaltern. The native informant is a misrepresentation of the nation's subaltern subject, which Spivak manages to accurately classify by stating that (Spivak 2010: 40) “The subaltern cannot speak.”

Through this process, the disconnection between the position of the Subaltern subject and the native Informant becomes evident.

The subaltern exists as a figure of the unsaid, it exists in the hidden lines. Using the resource of the best alms, Manco Mena exists as the Native Informant and the leper as the subaltern. As a literary resource, Manco Mena is a man of letters and action, undoer of life and builder of intellect, a sensitive man who recognizes the price of light, this evidenced in his tears when offering the alms. The leper, as opposed to Manco Mena, is subject to the changes imposed on him, persecuted by children and dogs, usually social members from whom obedience is expected, a beggar in opposition to productiveness. The leper does not take his own life, he continues until he finds the enlightened man who guides him to extermination moved by (Turcios 2023: 164) superhuman pity, which alludes to a hierarchy of values. Being above the human is Manco Mena, an enlightened criminal, coloniality incarnate. The leper, as a subaltern, is not allowed an evident story, the causes of his leprosy are not narrated, the sensation of his pain is not portrayed, of the leper we only have one description and one condition, that of hunger. The persistence and constant struggle for food never abandoned him, it is known that he fights but his reason is ignominious for the native Informant, he exists in opposition to Manco Mena.

## **Conclusion**

Turcios could not break with the Eurocentric scheme, this debacle opens the doors to an influence that sought to suffocate the unenlightened, which according to his imagination was found in everything non-modern, which emerges as a discourse for class apartheid. Turcios advocated the elimination of what did not fit with his system.

As catachresis to what it should be produced and what should be eradicated, exists the unenlightened and the enlightened. These two categories follow a Eurocentric point of view that materialize in the subjects of the subaltern as in the leper and the native informant who exists as a portrayer of the ideals of enlightenment. Turcios' project did not allow bifurcation from this path of progress.

Within the Native Informant there is an internal apartheid, the leper and Manco Mena exist in the same narrative, they are the product of the same mind. Manco Mena cries showing empathy, in the end there is something of him in the leper, a possibility of being like him, leprosy causes terror since it does not discriminate. In a non-sensitive and insincere author, Manco Mena would be a heartless murderer, immune to sadness emanating from the justified reasoning of his actions. Manco



Mena cries because he kills something of himself, in Turcios' vision, that something of himself is ignominious. This parallels a nation that is seeking a self imposed purged of what does not follow this vision. Every sociological interpretation is a simplification of reality, what holds a striking danger is the pretention of recreating this interpretation by eradication of what escapes this simplification.

Turcios was a man of the land that saw him born, a product of cultures, the absence of imagination was the inability to see himself outside of that Eurocentric essentialism that does not allow combinations, his existence was forced to cut with those roots that were not proper to the illustration that represents a direct correlation with his imagination of what it is to be European. Turcios was not European, his ideals imply an unresolved contradiction within himself, the recurrent calls for self immolation in his literature portray the recognition of this fact. Such attitude could only construct a vision that is defined by radical separation of modes of life.

Turcios knew how to imagine within the lines of coloniality, affirming for himself an identity that repels the possibility of being the recipient of alms, making death pacts before seeing himself as the other subject of the colonizing process, the non-European subject, who within Turcios' vision is the subject of leprosy, the beggar, thus generating an episteme marked by coloniality that manifests itself in nationalist outbursts that border on the infantility, excluding other models of life, to the point of associating with self-extermination in the particular and self-genocide in the national. Turcios did not know how to imagine himself outside of the colonial episteme.

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<https://www.poesi.as/frt001.htm>

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Horrendo espanto produjo en la región el mísero leproso. Apareció súbitamente, calcinado y carcomido, envuelto en sus harapos húmedos de sangre, con su ácido olor a podredumbre.

Rechazado a latigazos de las aldeas y viviendas campesinas; perseguido brutalmente como perro hidrófobo por jaurías de crueles muchachos, arrastrábase moribundo de hambre y de sed, bajo los soles de fuego, sobre los ardientes arenales, con los podridos pies llenos de gusanos. Así anduvo meses y meses, vil carroña humana, hartándose de estiércoles y abrevando en los fangales de los cerdos; cada día más horrible, más execrable, más ignominioso.

El siniestro manco Mena, recién salido de la cárcel donde purgó su vigésimo asesinato, constituía otro motivo de terror en la comarca, azotada de pronto por furiosos temporales. Llovía sin cesar a torrentes; frenéticos huracanes barrían los plataneros y las olas atlánticas reventaban sobre la playa con frenéticos estruendos.

En una de aquellas pavorosas noches el temible criminal leía en su cuarto, a la luz de la lámpara, un viejo libro de trágicas aventuras, cuando sonaron en su puerta tres violentos golpes.

De un puntapié zafó la gruesa tranca, apareciendo en el umbral con el pesado revólver a la diestra. En la faja de claridad que se alargó hacia afuera vio al leproso destilando ceno, con los ojos como ascuas en las cuencas áridas, el mentón en carne viva, las manos implorantes.

—¡Una limosna!— gritó —¡Tengo hambre! ¡Me muero de hambre!

Sobrehumana piedad asaltó el corazón del bandolero.

—¡Tengo hambre! ¡Me muero de hambre!

El manco lo tendió muerto de un tiro exclamando:

—Esta es la mejor limosna que puedo darte.

Turcios, Froylán (2023) *El Vampiro y Cuentos de Misterio*, Inverciones Editorial Erandique, Tegucigalpa pp. 163-164

<sup>ii</sup> Further Reading of his life is recommended in Funes, José (2006) *Froylán Turcios y el modernismo en Honduras*, Editorial Banco Central de Honduras, Tegucigalpa

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<sup>iii</sup> For an approach to the history of Central American Independence, the following work is recommended, Funes, Matías (2008) *Valle: Su tiempo y el nuestro*, Litografía Lopez, Tegucigalpa Capítulo II: En medio del “Huracán Revolucionario” de América Latina

<sup>iv</sup> Mostly call the “liberal reform”

<sup>v</sup> As an introduction to the modernization reform in Honduras, the following essay is recommended, Yankelevich, Pablo, *La reforma liberal* <https://historia.unah.edu.hn/dmsdocument/1465-reforma-liberal-pablo-yankelevich> revisado el 18 de noviembre del 2024

<sup>vi</sup> This is a reference to the Palestinian and therefore Eastern origins of Christianity, the following reading is recommended of J.M Blásquez (1996) *El nacimiento del cristianismo*, Editorial Síntesis, Madrid

<sup>vii</sup> It’s recommended to read the Tesis de Pedro Quiel to underline the role of the creole inside the rebellious movements in Honduras and their social classification, Quiel, Pedro (2018) “Mueran todos los chapetones y que vivan los Criollos” La Alcaldía Mayor de Tegucigalpa entre reforma y crisis, 1762-1817, Tesis para Maestro en Historia, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Unidad Peninsular, Yucatán

<sup>viii</sup> A HONDURAS

Antes que verte triste y humillada,  
esclava de un tirano al torpe acento  
que te hiera indefensa en el tormento  
con sangrienta y horrible bofetada:

Antes de que te mire encadenada,  
sin ambición, sin luz, sin pensamiento,  
pisoteados los fueros de talento  
por los fueros del rifle y de la espada;

antes que ver idolatrado tu suelo  
bajo la planta ruin de un tiranuelo  
que te lance el desprecio de su risa;

antes que ver vencida tu bandera,  
en escombros mirarte preferiera,  
legendaria Numancia, hecha ceniza.

Funes, José (2006) *Froylán Turcios y el modernismo en Honduras*, Editorial Banco Central de Honduras, Tegucigalpa -Turcios, Froylán, Mariposas, Tegucigalpa, Tipografía Nacional, 1896.

<sup>ix</sup> LA ORACIÓN DEL HONDUREÑO

¡Bendiga Dios la pródiga tierra en que nací!

Fecunden el sol y las lluvias sus campos labrantíos; florezcan sus industrias y todas sus riquezas esplendan magnificas bajo su cielo de zafiro.

Mi corazón y mi pensamiento, en una sola voluntad, exaltarán su nombre, en un constante esfuerzo por su cultura.

Número en acción en la conquista de sus altos valores morales, factor permanente de la paz y del trabajo, me sumaré a sus energías; y en el hogar, en la sociedad o en los negocios públicos, en cualquier aspecto de mi destino, siempre tendré presente mi obligación ineludible de contribuir a la gloria de Honduras.

Huiré del alcohol y del juego, y de todo cuanto pueda disminuir mi personalidad, para merecer el honor de figurar entre sus hijos mejores.

Respetaré sus símbolos eternos y la memoria de sus próceres, admirando a sus hombres ilustres y a todos los que sobresalgan por enaltecerla.

Y no olvidaré jamás que mi primer deber será, en todo tiempo, defender con valor su soberanía, su integridad territorial, su dignidad de nación independiente; prefiriendo morir mil veces antes que ver profanado su suelo, roto su escudo, vencido su brillante pabellón.

¡Bendiga Dios la pródiga tierra en que nací! Libre y civilizada, agrande su poder en los tiempos y brille su nombre en las amplias conquistas de la justicia y del derecho.

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Turcios, Froylán. *Memorias y apuntes de viaje*. Tegucigalpa, Secretaría de Cultura, Artes y Deportes, 2007, pp. 456.

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<sup>x</sup> Turcios touches this idea in his work "Vampire" (Vámpiro), with another nuance, where the Patriarch of the family, "Don Humberto" of whom the work says found his end devoured by a lion in Asia, presented as a noble gentleman, given to combats, mortal enemies, adventures and constant love affairs. With the resources offered by the novel, we find a noble knight who engages in sword fights and gets involved in romantic idylls, whose heroic end is to be devoured by a lion in Asia, as one who imagines himself a British colonizer.

<sup>xi</sup> Allusion to Kant with his famous definition of enlightenment as "man's emergence from his condition as a minor", Kant, Immanuel, *Respuesta a la Pregunta: ¿Qué es la ilustración?*, No. 3 AÑO MCMXCIV, U. Nacional de Colombia, Bogota, D.C.

# **“X ¾ n m g t” and “Human Zoo” in Colonialism and Postcolonialism**

**Karin-Ullrike Nennstiel**

## **Historical Development of “Völkerschau” and “Human Zoos”**

With the first Europeans sailing around the world and reaching other continents, interest in the people living there, their lifestyle and customs rose, particularly when those people looked significantly different from the European ‘us’. This interest was not limited to those travelling themselves, i.e. adventurers, merchants, and missionaries. Many of these travellers liked to write letters and postcards with exciting news from abroad and enjoyed telling impressive stories once they had returned to Europe. Frequently, they described the strangers as weird, creepy or scary beings, and emphasized that only due to their own bravery and clever supremacy had they managed to escape and survive the barbarism and unpredictable actions of the threatening creatures they met. Hence, it is not surprising that a mixture of admiration and curiosity quickly spread among Europeans at home.

It was in this kind of atmosphere that showing ‘exotic’ humans on stages or even in cages like animals in locations scattered across Western countries gaining broad popularity. Exhibiting the ‘Other’, however, was by no means an invention of that time. According to Blanchard et al: “Already, in Ancient Egypt, black ‘dwarves’ from the Sudanese territory were exhibited, just as, during the Roman Empire, conquered ‘Barbarians’ and ‘Savages’ were paraded through the streets of Rome in order to reinforce the message of Roman superiority and hegemony over the rest of the world.” (2008: 4). Likewise, Christopher Columbus is said to have brought Arawaks from America to the Spanish court in 1492 (Boëtsch and Blanchard, 2008: 62), and in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, different looking people from various parts of the world were brought as ‘exotic trophies’ to the great courts in France, Bavaria, Spain and Italy (Boëtsch and Blanchard, 2008).

At the end of the Renaissance, ‘cabinets of curiosities’ from distant places, encompassing everything from rare minerals, vegetables and animals to human beings, evolved into important status symbols of the ‘aristocracy’. Servants of colour were valued at the courts not only as cheap labour, but also for bringing in some flair of the ‘exotic’ into everyday life (Gralak, 2019). Under pressure from the French Revolution, gradually menageries of the ‘aristocracy’ were either opened

to a wider public or the exotic animals from private properties of the wealthy were transferred to a zoological garden to respond to the demands and needs of a growing urban population during the Industrial Revolution. The zoological gardens with their exotic inhabitants were assigned the function “to create an ‘elsewhere’ [...] as the unlikely image of a lost paradise” (Blanchard et al., 2008: 2) or, at least, to divert attention from social problems towards sensual attractions and entertainment (Gralak, 2019). Excited by the opportunity to study and categorise the animals in the zoos, scientists developed a strong eagerness to study the diversity of human bodies as well. According to Blanchard et al. (2008: 2), “it was precisely at this juncture between exoticism and knowledge, between fantasy and rationality, that the human zoo appeared”. It was welcomed not only by the general public, but also by physical anthropologists and artists, as it offered them a convenient way to observe and measure every part of ‘exotic’ human bodies without having to undergo the hassle and risks associated with travelling. (Dreesbach, 2012: 25) The “ethnographic park” created by the French architect Edme Verniquet in 1802 as well as an ethnological museum of “Scandinavian peoples” provide early examples of such collections in which different ‘races’ were displayed to the public. (Blanchard et al., 2008: 5)

Among the first individuals transported to Western countries in order to be displayed for the amusement, fun and thrill of the public, and to be measured and examined by scientists, were the Siamese twins Chang and Eng (Gralac, 2019: 67-68). In the mid-1820s, they were brought to the United States and Europe to be “marketed as a curiosity” or as monstrous creatures in a “freak show”. Trupp considers them to have been “among the first public objects of exhibition in the development of human zoos.” (Trupp, 2011: 140)

Around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in North America, touring circuses increasingly included ‘ethnic shows’ and ‘freak shows’. This was influenced by the “European tradition of showing animals at fairs”. (Blanchard et al., 2008:3) According to Blanchard et al: “It was in these circuses that ‘ethnic shows’ and ‘freak shows’ would meet and cross-fertilize, producing the first popular manifestation of a systematic representation of human difference.” (2008:3)

The businessman Phineas Taylor Barnum, founder of the American Museum in Manhattan in 1841, initiated entertainment shows with humans whose unfamiliar look made the Western public gazing at them feel amused, excited or frightened. The shows often included pseudo-scientific commentaries and explanations, singing, dancing, or magical tricks. Having attained overwhelming popularity, the show soon was imitated by travelling circuses on either side of the Atlantic. (Blanchard et al., 2008:5). However, whereas the exhibitions and performances including human beings in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century concentrated on “essentially ludic displays of strength, strangeness,

curiosity or cruelty” (Blanchard et al., 2008: 7), the following decades saw the exotic and racial components gaining primary significance in human zoos, adding educational traits to the function of entertainment.

It was against this background that the established businessman in animal trading, Carl Hagenbeck from Hamburg began to transport humans, together with animals, from abroad to the zoos to present them on stage to the German public. According to Dreesbach (n.d.: 2), travelling exhibitions would not become popular in Germany until 1870. In 1874, Hagenbeck organized the first major „Völkerschau“, which differed from earlier shows in that he did not present unfamiliar and extraordinary creatures to be gazed and laughed at. Instead, he presented various ethnic groups as ‘entirely natural’ peoples, each in a seemingly authentic environment and displaying picturesque scenes of their ‘savage’ lives: Samis working with reindeers, Egyptians riding dromedaries in front of the pyramids, etc. (Zeitler, 2017). This approach was extremely successful, motivating Hagenbeck to organize similar events and to have them tour through various Western countries as ‘anthropological-zoological exhibitions’. The natives were asked to engage in various performances, from crafts, dances, religious rituals, ‘natural breast feeding’ or hunting to fights (Corbey, 2008: 99-100). As a result, “the illusion of a trip to a distant land became increasingly complete” (Thode-Arora, 2008: 170). According to Dreesbach (n.d.: 10), three basic types of “Völkerschau-presentations” could be distinguished: presentations of groups in ‘native villages’ where the spectators could perambulate, circuses with “an acrobatic and artistic program”, and the already rather conventional ‘freak shows’.

Comparable shows and performances were given in neighbouring countries as well, in the Netherlands (1883), Britain (1886) and France (1889), most often organized by private entrepreneurs from Germany, France or Switzerland. In 1885, the Canadian R.A. Cunningham recruited Australian aborigines to attract attention to them in Frankfurt and elsewhere as cannibals killing and eating shipwrecked white sailors (Historisches Museum Frankfurt am Main, 2024). In the United States, the first “ethnic village” was opened at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 (Blanchard et al., 2008: 31-32).

To Western eyes, exotic-looking individuals came to be exhibited to the European and North American public, and scientists studied their bodies. The probably most well-known (but by far not the only) person forced to suffer the terrible fate of such inhuman discrimination, tortures of gaze and treatment as a monstrous object or “curious animal” in London, Paris and numerous other places, was Saartjie Baartman. She arrived in London in 1810 and was renamed “the Hottentot Venus” by her owners (Boëtsch and Blanchard, 2008: 62-63), having to serve as object for sexual

stimulation and fantasies of the British, later the French and other (West-)European “gentlemen” (Wieczorkiewicz, 2011, cited from Gralak, 2019: 66). Even after dying from a disease, she was not allowed to find rest in peace, but within twenty-four hours after her last breath, she was already dissected by the zoologist Georges Cuvier. Based on his anthropological examinations, Cuvier later claimed that ‘races with depressed and compressed skulls are condemned to a perpetual state of inferiority’ (Cuvier, 1817, cited from Boëtsch and Blanchard, 2008: 62-66). Her remains were kept in the Musée de l’Homme in Paris and, despite South Africa already asking for them to be returned in the 1940s, not handed over by France until 2002. (Boëtsch and Blanchard, 2008: 67; Wieczorkiewicz, 2011, cited from Gralak, 2019: 67)

Around the turn of the century, the interest of anthropologists in these events faded. Some began to criticize the lacking ‘authenticity’ of the ‘specimens’ (Blanchard et al., 2008: 17), and indeed, identical persons appeared in different events as representatives of different ethnicities, sometimes even on the very same day (Blanchard et al., 2008: 33). As Dreesbach concludes “[...] the ‘Völkerschau’ in fact had little to do with showing representatives of a group of people as they really lived [...] the greatest emphasis was put on fulfilling the public’s expectations in the most spectacular way possible. ‘Authenticity’ was only important insofar as the audience *recognized* the presentation as being authentic” (Dreesbach, 2012: 13). In other words, clichés and stereotypes of ethnic characteristics had already so clearly taken shape that the public wanted to see nothing different from what they expected. Public excitement required constant novelty in shows and exhibitions (Blanchard et al., 2008: 20), but at the same time, even the novel had always to stay inside the confines of the familiar (cf. Bausinger, 1961-2005).

According to the dominant clichés and stereotypes, the Fuegians, Patagonians, ‘Hottentots’ and ‘Austral Negros’ were the most uncivilized and backward ‘primitive men’, closely followed by ‘the Africans’ who were considered only “slightly more advanced”, but still very close to animals. (Dreesbach, 2012: 16-17) At the British Exhibition in 1899, San people were presented as the ‘missing link’ between apes and human beings. (Gralak, 2019: 63) Neither Africans nor Fuegians, Patagonians, ‘Hottentots’ or ‘Austral Negros’ were thought of as being “capable of labour”. Arabs, in contrast, passed as a ‘mysterious’ but ‘civilized nation’, and the people in the Far North and northeast as ‘independent’ and not requiring any teachings from the whites. Pacific Islanders, finally, were envied for living ‘in an earthly paradise’ where they didn’t have to work and could spend all day singing, dancing ‘hula’ and celebrating festivals. “Only Indian and Sinhalese were rated culturally higher [...] than even the northern peoples” and “regarded as foreign, but still perceived as being on par with high European culture”. (Dreesbach, 2012: 18-22)



The public took the interest of scientists as proof of the ethnic ‘authenticity’ of the natives displayed. Politicians assigned the researchers an important role as an authority to propagandize the necessity of civilizing the ‘savages’, Christianizing and educating the ‘natives’ to Western values and standards, and to affirm advancements in ‘civilizing’ and helping natives climb up the ladder in the hierarchy of civilization and development. The premise that all peoples were on the same track of uniform development to modernity seemed even beyond doubt. The same held true for the premise that West Europeans (including the Whites in the Americas and all the colonies) ranked on top of the ladder. Notwithstanding, their ‘science of the races’ entailed obvious inconsistencies determined by the interests of international strategy, by which “Japan, as an emerging modern power, would be included in the dominant model from the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago onwards.” (Blanchard et al., 2008: 8)

Display of ‘the Other’ was supposed to foster interest in and support for colonization, while at the same time reinforcing the hierarchy of the ‘races’. (Blanchard et al., 2008: 25) According to Blanchard et al:

“[...] creation of an imaginary construct of the Other based on difference not only accompanied but sometimes preceded the great movement of colonization by the European powers, as well as Japanese and American imperialism. [...] exhibitions of the exotic were not, therefore, a consequence of imperialism, but, rather, one of the cultural conditions which made it possible by demonstrating the inferiority of many human groups and thereby legitimizing their future submission.” (2008: 15)

On the other hand, while conceding that “certainly, colonial exhibitions served to promote German colonization”, Dreesbach emphasizes: “At the 50 colonial exhibitions that took place 1896-1940, however, virtually no human beings were put on display” (Dreesbach, 2012: 23). The audience wanted neither to see ‘civilized savages’ nor be the object of colonizing propaganda, but to be entertained by ‘exotic adventure’ a la Karl May or *1001 Nights*. Apart from that, in 1900 a law “prohibiting the ‘export of natives of the colonies for purposes of exposition”” was issued (Dreesbach, 2012: 24). A number of ‘natives’ engaged in the early shows got sick or died from infectious diseases, necessitating countermeasures like vaccination and sufficient health care to be taken by those responsible in order to avoid difficulties in further recruiting and criticism from the public. Similarly, some politicians became concerned about the possibility that the relationship

between colonizers and colonized could be harmed by the display of people from the colonies as ‘exotic’, ‘inferior’ or even ‘close to animals’. Even though the relationship between the white colonizers, their soldiers and missionaries on the one hand and the powerless, suppressed and often ‘natives’ on the other can hardly be thought of as having been predominantly positive, it obviously seemed unwise to stress this tension additionally. Above all, as Admiral Franz Strauch underscored: “‘Völkerschauen‘ [...] were not aimed at educating the public, but in making money for their organizers”. (cit. from Dreesbach, 2012: 24)

### **Scientific Discussion on “Völkerschau” and “Human Zoos”**

Notwithstanding the growing interest in and efforts towards coming to terms with the colonial past and the cruelties European forefathers committed, scientific literature on the role of “human zoos” and “Völkerschau” in legitimizing colonialism and nationalism and in establishing the race theories of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries still seems surprisingly limited. Moreover, the existing literature reveals quite differing foci, perspectives and evaluations. As for scientific works on the topic, the comprehensive volume including 31 contributions on specific events, persons, areas, etc. edited by Blanchard et al (2008) offers a rich amount of information, insights and analyses from various perspectives. While so far there has been little appreciation of the phenomena of displaying humans in shows, exhibitions or zoos, some researchers like Blanchard et al. tend to explain the developments and public acceptance of the human zoos and Völkerschau by illuminating the historical trends and environments of the respective time. This can be observed in sentences like the following:

“In order to understand why audiences were drawn towards bodies which were first exoticized and then eroticized (a major factor in bringing in the crowds) we need to remember that a physical norm had developed in nineteenth-century Western societies” (Blanchard et al., 2008: 20).

This attitude, typical of critical scientists, does not at all mean to approve or even permit these events of the past. As Blanchard et al notes:

“While it is thus necessary to make a distinction between anthro-zoological exhibitions (De l’Estoile 2007), colonial pavilions at world fairs, travelling fairground and circus shows, and ‘exotic villages’, in terms of form and content, these different phenomena are nevertheless linked by their ultimate effect, whether explicit or implicit, which was to demonstrate the superiority of the white race and/or of Western civilization. .” (2008: 22)

Still, on the other end of the spectrum, Dishari (2021) in the *International Journal of Arts and Social Science* stresses the “hegemony of gaze” already in the title of her article in which she emphasizes the cruelties involved in the public display of human bodies and condemns these entertainments in unambiguous terms:

“Much like slavery, human zoo was living hell [...] They [the ‘natives’ displayed] were bearers of ‘bread’ for the Europeans and simultaneously they were the recipients of severe beatings, starvation, unpaid labour, maltreatment and deprived medical concealment” (2021: 28).

She also describes the St. Louis World Fair in 1904 as “[t]he Babylon of the New World” (2021: 26). Her criticism targeting specifically the “male gaze” is shared by others such as, for example, Galak (2019). In deviation from the one-sidedness, they accentuate “Contrarily, the women were denied the power and vehemence to subvert the very gaze [...]” (Dishari 2021: 28). Bowersox states: “Performers reversed the colonial gaze.” (Bowersox 2007: 8), adding a contemporary citation from the “*National-Zeitung*” (7. Juni 1896). While both cases presumably existed, the one-sided version was certainly the more common one.

Despite the fact that, as Bowersox underscores, there exist very few sources written by individuals who were themselves displayed in the shows, exhibitions or circuses, and that “almost all of the available sources are mediated by white middle class male [...]” (Bowersox 2007: 3), some documents offer comparatively detailed information of the fate of single individuals. Bowersox (2007) outlines the life story of Bernhard Epassi as one of them, while others discuss, based on the description of the German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow, the fate of Tobias and the other Inuit recruited for Hagenbeck’s travelling *Völkerschau* (Virchow 1880). The book *Deutsch*

*sein und Schwarz dazu* by Theodor Wonja Michael represents one of the few documents based on the author's own experiences as member of a touring Völkerschau (Michael 2013). Though often hesitantly, efforts have been growing in museums, historical institutes, archives and some churches to reconstruct the tragic past of humans displayed for the amusement, entertainment or validation of those in power by humiliating, deriding, exploiting and haunting others. The Africa Museum in Brussels demonstrated one example of such efforts with a show entitled "Human Zoo: The Age of Colonial Exhibitions" displaying documents of exhibitions of human beings between 1800 and the mid-1900s. (Nayeri 2021)

One, if not *the*, most controversial issue among scientists analysing and discussing the phenomena is the question of its definition, especially in terms of time. The editors of the voluminous edition mentioned above refer to debates occurring in French conferences since June 2001 as follows:

"The form of the human exhibition of 'exotics', which included ethnographic shows, 'negro villages' and theatrical performances within the specified time frame, seems to us to constitute a genuine historical pattern. [...] 'to place a man, with the intention that he should be seen, in a specific reconstructed space, not because of what he "does" (an artisan, for example), but because of what he "is" (seen through the prism of a real or imagined difference) is in our view the most precise definition of the human zoos' (Blanchard 2002: 419)." (Blanchard et al., 2008: 23)

Deviating from this, the historian Dreesbach points out that individual "Völkerschaus" still "appeared sporadically" after the Second World War, mentioning a *Wild West Apache Show* and the *Hawaii Völkerschau* at the Munich Oktoberfest in 1951 and 1959. According to Dreesbach, the diffusion of films and the beginning of long-distance tourism as alternatives diminished the interest in "Völkerschaus". Moreover, "the increasing criticism of the exhibition of 'exotic' people and the Europeans" changed attitudes towards non-European cultures and caused the 'Völkerschau' concept to eventually become obsolete and disappear altogether." (Dreesbach, 2012: 30) Most historians tend to date the decline of human zoos and Völkerschaus either in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or in the period after the First World War. The Belgian Expo 58 in 1958 has widely come to be viewed as the last of its kind (Blanchard et al., 2008: 38). While acknowledging this, Galak advances the opinion that growing opposition to treating humans like animals in a zoo contributed

to the decay of this business (Gralak 2019: 69).

By contrast, some researchers argue that certain forms of tourism today do not differ too much from Völkerschau and human zoos of the past. One of these researchers is the geographer Alexander Trupp, who points to similarities in the power relations and “forms of representing the ‘living other’” (Trupp 2011: 142) in the context of modern ‘ethnic tourism’. He cites “admission fees, entrance gates, clear[ly] defined boundaries, and ‘exhibit living others’” (Trupp, 2011: 142) as characteristic properties of the “modern forms of ‘human zoos’” which would make them similar to those of the past. In contrast to the colonial times when ‘natives’ were brought to Europe, America or Japan, today, people from these countries travel to ‘faraway’ places in South-East Asia and elsewhere to visit modern theme parks and ethnic villages. The individuals presented in the ‘ethnic villages’ most often belong to ethnic minorities who “[...] do not fully belong, culturally, socially, or politically to the majority (national) population of the state within whose boundaries they live” (Cohen, 2001: 28).

While Trupp as well as Cohen are focussing on tourism in Thailand and China, Dishari describes tourism and its advertising of Jarawa in India, indeed reminiscent of posters previously announcing shows of the human zoo. In contrast to China and Thailand, however, where the government is said to manage and exploit the minorities of the ethnic villages, in India in 2013 the Supreme Court banned this kind of tourism (Dishari, 2021: 29). Dishari specifically demonstrated strong parallels between contemporary advertisements of tourist companies and (re)presentations of the Igorot, a native Philippine people, about one hundred years ago: “The Igorot village was considered the least civilized among all ethnic groups. They were displayed on stage with minimal clothing and they were asked to eat dogs, where the western audience gazed at them with disgust and ludicrousness. They were compelled to perform sacred rituals and hunting stunts before the masses.” (Dishari, 2021: 27)

The outraged protest of Filipinos at home, however, resulted in the show being banned in 1904.

### **Examples of Ethnic Tourism Today<sup>i</sup>**

Further insights can be gained from a look at the situation of indigenous people (IP) in the Philippines today. They are estimated to number about 14 million individuals, their “cultural zones” making up about 44% of the Philippine land. Were all the IPs allowed to live on “their cultural land”, their living conditions would be very different from what they actually are.

At the time of Spanish colonization, all land not proven to be owned by any individual was declared land of the Spanish Crown, and neither the US colonizers nor the Philippine government have changed this rule. Instead, they just took over it to use it for themselves. As a result, even those IPs who lived on the land earlier than anybody else have to undergo the time-consuming and costly process to apply for the recognition of their ancestral domain. Without this, they can hardly stay independent and must find employment as a wage labourer. Their life expectancy is about ten years less than the average of the Philippine population, they own significantly less money, and spend fewer years in school education. However, not even the most basic population data exists, and the coverage of their situation is based only on estimations. Almost only those IPs able to use all (or at least most) of their ancestral lands can continue life in their community. But even then, their culture is in danger of becoming a product to be marketed to tourists. The reasons for this are as follows.

IPs are expected to be poor. In fact, they (usually) do not have much money, and many IP parents are not eager to have their children receive higher education. They are “outsiders” who do not belong to mainstream society. Therefore, social workers employed in government organizations as well as high school and college teachers consider IP as their clients. They intend to support these clients by offering scholarships and special conditions in educational institutions. However, IP students are often not supported by and almost always separated from their families and communities, as they have to study and take examinations in English, which is (at least) their third language and is never used at home or in their everyday life. Moreover, having to think in a way unfamiliar to them up to that point makes it extremely difficult for them to pass all examinations by the end of college. Hence, most of them cannot apply for the job they had been studying for. Nonetheless, social workers and teachers try to convince them to stay in the cities, fulfilling some kind of job and/or studying for another qualification. These social workers and teachers confirm: “Of course, they don’t have to give up their culture because it belongs to them. They can practice their dances and songs thereby earning some (pocket) money.”

Representatives of another IP living in the mountains several hours by motorbike away from the city have become hosts for backpacker tourists, who visit their community on individually guided tours and stay overnight in the hut (usually the only room) of an IP family for exotic “real life” experiences. Unlike the examples of ethnic tourism cited by Trupp, there is no entrance fee and no clearly defined boundary. Rather, the tourists can be seen as intruding into the most private rooms of their hosts, taking whatever they are offered for granted and legitimizing this attitude with “we have paid”, although the IPs receive only a very small share of that fee.

On the other hand, IPs living on their ancestral domains, including the IP mentioned above, do not consider themselves poor. Whenever it comes to this topic, they would laugh and say: “We are not poor! We have our land, our family, our community – we are rich. And when we sell something, we even have money.” According to various representative informants, the money is needed mainly for transportation, electricity (as far as they cannot use their solar panels), medical and other extraordinary expenses. Because at least the IPs who were included in this research have three to four children on average and their communities don’t shrink, even though the number of young people leaving for the city to get a job or receive higher education is increasing. Besides, quite a few return earlier or later, not necessarily to live there again full time but to work with the community as teacher or social worker – the most frequently pursued professional qualifications – or to support them as lawyer. Others just come to spend the weekend with their family and community. It is said to be up to every individual to come, stay or leave as they choose.

Very different from this is the situation of the Ainu people in Japan. They were living mainly in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan before Japanese settlers arrived around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Comparable to the Indians in North America and Indigenous in many other regions, they first traded and later attempted to resist the colonizers, whereat many were killed or died of diseases. Eventually, most of them tried to enter Japanese mainstream society, giving up their traditions, culture and language and hiding whatever might expose them as indigenous. Many of them married to a person of Japanese ancestry. The comparatively few Ainu people who did not choose this way of life ended up living in an extremely downsized community on a small piece of land. Nowadays, they sing and dance in traditional costumes for tourists, sometimes offer traditional events and sell self-made handcrafts to tourists. As (not only economically) poor and discriminated people, they live in the villages allotted to them. With the support of researchers, some try to revitalize their language which they were forbidden from using for decades.

To the ethnic village of the Ainu, there is an entrance fee and, although tourists can stroll around in the traditional village and houses (which were built for the purpose of attracting tourists), there are clearly defined boundaries separating the tourists as viewers and payers on the one hand from the indigenous as entertainers and pay-dependents on the other. This obviously resembles to Trupp’s description of ethnic theme parks in Southern China and ethnic villages in Thailand.

## Conclusion

“Völkerschau” and “human zoo” are phenomena that in Western countries grew out of curiosity, interest in the unfamiliar, fear and fascination of the ‘exotic’. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, authenticity of the ‘exotic’ became requested. With the public gradually getting used to the occasional opportunity to see human beings from different parts of the world, these beings had to perform crafts, dances, etc. in order to continually offer new attractions. While there are differences in the details between countries and cities, “Völkerschau” and “human zoos” are said to have lost their public appeal and to have decreased after World War I. The reasons for this are seen in the rivalry of film, but also in growing criticism against treating and displaying human beings in this way and, not least, in the influence of political considerations concerning the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.

As long as “Völkerschau” and “human zoo” existed, ‘otherness’ was their constitutive element. As it has frequently been emphasised in the literature, this ‘otherness’ entailed not only difference but rather a fundamental asymmetry, including obvious distance, clear boundaries and polarization – in other words, distinct power relations. These power relations were founded and supported by direct physical power and military force in the beginning, and later by transactions between powerful and powerless contractors and/or by other forms of economic dominance.

In light of this, a clear-cut separation between human zoos as dealt with in the literature and the touring circuses still existing in the 1960s and, although getting rarer, in the 1970s, becomes difficult to uphold, with the latter still featuring acrobats, artists and conjurers from foreign countries performing in their shows and alternating with drilled lions and elephants. Undoubtedly, there are basic differences between “Völkerschau” und “human zoo” of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries on the one hand and circuses in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century on the other, but it proves quite challenging to draw an unambiguous line dividing one from the other in their historical development or their performative manifestations.

With regard to ethnic tourism, it has also been asked whether “Völkerschau” and “human zoo” can and should be considered as problems belonging ‘only’ to the past. The concrete form of human exhibitions including ethnographic shows, ‘negro villages’, etc. are presumably historical patterns. However, “to place a man, with the intention that he should be seen, in a specific reconstructed space, not because of what he “does” (an artisan, for example), but because of what he “is” (seen through the prism of a real or imagined difference) [...]” (Blanchard et al., 2008: 23) seems to apply to tourists visiting indigenous people in their villages as much as to the human zoos of the past. The



power relations underlying this kind of visit do not seem to differ very much, nor does the search for the exotic on the side of the voyeurs and tourists. Whereas 100-200 years ago the exotic people were brought to the payers, often by force, nowadays the payers intrude into the tiny hideaway of the “left-over” minorities, forcing them to speak their (foreign, the colonizer’s) language and to live up to their expectations – even in their own house. Last but not least, indigenous peoples become forced even more to participate in the capitalist market, including those who would be able to and/or prefer to continuously live in their IP community another and more sustainable way of life.

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## **Protective Colonialism – Challenging Colonialist Preconceptions**

**Geoff Keating**

Colonialism is a philosophical concept which never fails to draw debate as to its operation and effects on developing nations. Historians are now challenged to observe and study through the various colonial lenses, while institutions are motivated to practice decolonisation throughout their research and teaching outputs. Colonialism was, and is, an international phenomenon of power and control which continues throughout the world today, which involved the movement of people and establishment of centres of power or control.<sup>ii</sup> It is human nature to try and define and categorise the ways in which the world operates; in the case of power relationships, it is finding a sense of commonality and meaning within the broad diversity of colonial endeavours.<sup>iii</sup> Two predominant, overarching models exist within scholarship, both perfectly validly for the vast majority of colonial entities. However, the case of Papua requires a re-examination of these general approaches to understanding colonisation: they are perfectly adequate in dealing with small elements of the Papuan experience but do not adequately cover the full nature of Australia's first overseas colony. Instead, a new instrument of analysis, hereafter described as Protective Colonialism, more fully reflects the motivations and operations of Papua as a colony. This paper will examine the nature of colonialism as a concept and offer an explanation as to why the Anglo-Australian colony of Papua does not conform to these. It will then propose the concept of 'Protective Colonialism' and illustrate its relevance by discussing the elements of the governorship of Sir Hubert Murray, governor of Papua from 1905 to 1940.

To fully appreciate the necessity of defining a new section of coloniality, it is important to examine the two pre-existing categories that form colonialist scholarship. Broadly speaking, the motivations and policies undertaken by the colonial power have been analysed with either a mercantilist or settler-colonialist view. Mercantilism encompasses a colonial entity designed or developed for the express purpose of trade or the exploitation of a resource.<sup>iv</sup> This would include colonies such as Cape Town, established as a trading post for the Dutch East India Company, and Bermuda, established for growing sugar to feed the British market. These colonies were established with an economic imperative: to make money, and their continued existence depended on this. Settler colonial entities, on the other hand, aimed to establish outposts of the metropole through the movement of people. They aimed to replicate, or improve, the conditions of the metropole into the

periphery of empire, mainly for those whose shared the racial or cultural background of the metropole.<sup>v</sup> This would occur alongside widespread dispossession of land and resources from Indigenous peoples and the imposition of the settler's culture, language and customs on the colonised. Oft-cited examples of this phenomena include Canada and Australia, both transplanted British colonies.<sup>vi</sup> These both will be explored in greater depth later in this research paper.

The challenge which arises is when colonial examples, such as Papua, do not adequately meet the thresholds established under theoretical systems. This area, lying somewhere in the middle of an imagined colonial continuum, is currently not explained, or dealt with in contemporary colonial research as it is currently established. This, therefore, lends itself to the development of a new framework for which to examine the practices of colonial rulers within a colonial sphere. This theory, which I propose, is called Protective Colonialism. Simply put, Protective Colonialism can be defined by what it is not, more than what it actually is. It may have small elements which are like settler colonialism or mercantilist colonialism, but as a philosophy and as a practice, does not conform to these major themes.<sup>vii</sup>

A further, more detailed definition, however, would show that Protective colonialism is:

*“The establishment of a colonial entity that is deigned to exist without the deliberate intention of profitability or the duplication of the culture of the colonizing power. The policies of said colonies are implemented to protect the rights and freedoms of the Indigenous culture who is experiencing colonization.”*

The complexity that stems from establishing such a definition is understanding the system that it is not, namely the mercantilist and settler colonial theoretical frameworks. By understanding said systems, the necessity of Protective colonialism, especially as it existed under the Governorship of Hubert Murray in Papua, becomes apparent.

Mercantilism is a long-established motivation and system of governance in the colonial space. Mercantilism is, according to Adam Smith, is the process of establishing self-sustaining trade networks between the metropole and the hinterland. It dates to our earliest understandings of colonialism as well as the human condition.<sup>viii</sup> Humans have always established these networks of colonies, as can be witnessed by as diverse of societies as the Phoenicians, Greeks, Dutch, and Venetians. Whether it be for exploitation of resources or the establishment of trade routes, colonisation has been a process to develop exploitative relationships with land and resident peoples. The crucial element of this form of colony is the profit motive; while there may be an implicit understanding the profitability may not be immediate, nor directly attributable, the access to raw

materials may be significant enough for the metropole to establish and continue such a colonial entity. In the Pacific, a prime example of this attitude towards colonialism was in the establishment of German New Guinea, across the north-eastern quadrant of the island. The company established their colonial entity, German New Guinea, as an attempt to access the resources not available in Germany. Copra from plantations built across the colony, nitrates and guano from Nauru and copper from Bougainville all fuelled German economic, military, and agricultural expansion in the late nineteenth century. The structure itself was indicative of the purpose of this endeavour. By chartering a corporate entity, the newly-unified German state followed in the mercantilist tradition blazed by the British, French and Dutch East Indian Companies, the Hudson Bay Company in Canada and the French Compagnie des Indes Occidentales in the Caribbean.<sup>ix</sup> There was significant encouragement by the German government to undertake plantation activities in the colony, in order to increase the outputs of agricultural commodities such as copra and jute. From this, the increased need for labour coupled with the pseudoscientific belief that white people were not suited to working in the tropics, meant that there was a largescale policy within the colony of Indigenous labour was necessary to operate. Parallel to this was the need to import labour from other colonial holdings, in this case, Tientsin in China. <sup>x</sup> Again, German New Guinea was not an outlier in this space. The British, for example, exported Indian labour to Singapore, Malaya, Kenya, and Fiji, while the major European colonial powers exported African labour (through slavery mostly) to the Caribbean and both North and South America.

The alternative, more modern theory which explains colonialism is that of settler colonial. This theoretical framework has been championed most recently by historians such as Lorenzo Veracini, Tim Rowse, Patrick Wolfe and Sai Englert. Settler colonialism, at its core, explains the nature of colonialism that exists without a profit or resource motive. It is the process where a colonial entity is established, whose sole intent is to replicate the conditions of the metropole in a new hinterland. This new colony aims not to preserve the indigenous culture and knowledge that was pre-existing, but instead supplant it with their own; the existence of Indigenous people was also negotiable.<sup>xi</sup> Indigenous populations were dispossessed of their land through forced relocations, such as the missions system in Australia and the reservation system in the United States or Canada, or through warfare and massacre along the frontier of settlement. These massacres were generally kept quiet, to avoid any potential consequences by authorities. Once Indigenous peoples had been 'dealt with', new settlement by the colonising power would be allowed to flourish, and a new frontier would develop.<sup>xii</sup> The important consideration of said settler colonies was their eliminationist nature: by eliminating Indigenous people, the necessity to bring in foreign labourers, such as Pacific Islanders (Australia), Chinese (United States), Indians and Africans (United States) increased, as there was no

indigenous labour to participate in the low-skilled section of the economy.<sup>xiii</sup> Ultimately, the philosophy of settler colonialism dictates the destruction of the Indigenous for the inclusion of the settler.

When examining the founding of the colony of Papua, one cannot establish definitive links between the dominant theoretical frameworks as to purpose and management. The colony was financially unsuccessful and struggled economically to develop, even with the ample natural resources available. Similarly, the active discouragement of permanency vis a vis settlers and land tenure, indicate a colony without the intention of supplanting Indigenous Papuans from their lands. Instead, a focus exists on a degree of modernization, though strictly within a minimalist interventionist policy. Thus, with these considerations, Papua does not conform to the settler-colonial ideas of colonialism, not does it exist within the mercantilist-economic framework. This does not mean, however, that Papua existed as some form of colonial utopia; violence and exploitations were features of the Papuan colonial experience, though can be witnessed to be less significant and dominant within the colonial experience, especially when compared to other colonial enterprises of the period. Colonialism implies the strategic intent of British and late Australian incursion into Papua. The establishment of Papua as a formal colony only occurs after to occupation of northern New Guinea by Germany. Initial British engagements in New Guinea occurred in the late 1870's to stop the growth of blackbirding, which was akin to slavery but contravened British bans on enforced servitude. A protectorate was eventually established, and migration policy established to keep out Queensland colonists, prime proponents of the worst excesses of settler colonialism. The colony of Papua was governed by the British as resident governor but financed by the Australian colonies. This is a highly unusual situation, and the only instance in the Imperial systems of the modern times.

To fully appreciate the nature of colonialism in Papua, and to be able to try and apply a label to said colonialism, one must look at the actual administration of the Colony, particularly after the take-over by Australia. The governorship of Hubert Murray, particularly in the period before the Great War, illustrates the establishment of a system which it neither a mercantilist nor a settler colonial arrangement. Instead, the theory of 'Protective Colonialism' is relevant.

Initial attempts at establishing Papua for the British crown were attempted by Queensland in 1883 due to the concern around German involvement in the region. Premier McIlwraith of Queensland saw the need for Queensland. While defence had been an openly stated motivation by Queensland, it was the implicit need for the recruitment of labourers that formed a strong motivation to establish this colony. The involuntary recruitment of these labourers, known as 'blackbirding', was a widely supported practice among the landed elite in Queensland, including future Premier of Queensland, Sir Robert Philp.<sup>xiv</sup> The destruction of the indigenous peoples of the state meant that

there was little access to cheap labour, and thus the annexation of Papua would provide opportunities for economic growth, as well as the possibilities of expropriating land for widespread plantation agriculture. This effort, however, was quashed by Britain, who saw Australia's colonies as too unreliable to participate in direct colonial rule.<sup>xv</sup> Thus, the Queensland motivation for colonialism can be directly attributable to that of a mercantilist colonial state; however, British intercession meant that these plans never truly eventuated.<sup>xvi</sup> Instead, the first elements of protective colonialism were established, primarily as a response to criticisms that had been levelled across the British Empire about how individual colonies had been managed.<sup>xvii</sup> However, there still existed opportunities for retributive raiding and massacres against Indigenous peoples.<sup>xviii</sup>

Hubert Murray arrived in British Papua in 1903 as one of the judicial officers of the colony. The colony in which he arrived had an extremely small population of colonists and governed only the coastal regions and the Port Moresby hinterland.<sup>xix</sup> It had also recently seen an outbreak of violence between colonist and indigene, due to the continual incursion of missionaries, prospectors, and potential plantation owners onto their lands. This culminated in the Goaribari massacre, where missionaries were killed and eaten on Goaribari Island. In response, then-governor LeHunte led a retributive raid which killed a number of Indigenous men and boys. A subsequent raid led by Christopher Stansfield Robinson led to further deaths when seeking out the perpetrators of the original murders. Murray used his political connections and his judicial power to conduct an enquiry into the conduct of these leaders, resulting in findings that the leadership was reckless and such murders were unwarranted.<sup>xx</sup> As a consequence of these findings, Governor Robinson committed suicide. The death of Robinson led to Murray's elevation to Chief Justice of Papua in 1904, and to Lieutenant Governor in 1908. To understand the radical changes in the governance and structural ideology of Papua, one must first understand the two general approaches that emerged during the first decades.

In the administration of Papua, there were two distinct camps: the 'Australian' and the 'British'. The Australian philosophical tradition was to look at Papua as an extension to Australia and therefore to adopt colonial policies which benefitted Australian interests. This included such ideas as the further development of mining and plantation interests, an encouragement for greater (though not rampant) white settler immigration, and the encouragement of Indigenous people being forced to provide their labour to said economic developments. It was also a perspective which encouraged greater interventions into the social life and structures of the Indigenous people, using missionaries and patrol officers.<sup>xxi</sup> The British philosophical tradition, however, was a fundamental shift from their earlier colonial philosophy. Pioneered by Sir Peter Scratchley, the first British Special Commissioner of Papua (forerunner to the role of Lieutenant Governor), this ideology was to impose minimal outside influence on the Indigenous peoples of Papua. The first Lieutenant Governor of



Papua, Sir William MacGregor, truly pioneered what I am now arguing is ‘protective colonialism’. MacGregor’s policies were self-described as ‘paternalistic humanitarianism’. He empowered villages to remain autonomous by strict regulation of immigration and land ownership. He prevented the ownership of permanent title of land, instead instigating a series of leasehold spaces which operated under the permission of traditional indigenous owners, with some degree of joint ownership.<sup>xxii</sup> He ensured the maintenance of law and order by recruiting Papuans into both the Papuan constabulary, as well as setting up native recruits in each village. Macgregor, however, was not strictly against Western influence in Papua. He explored widely, documenting the cultures that he and his patrol officers encountered and collecting artefacts on these journeys. He also sought to outlaw what were regarded as barbaric practices against civilised society, such as cannibalism, polygamy, and head hunting.<sup>xxiii</sup> These policies formulate a substantial element of understanding protective colonialism – they actively diminish the economic returns of the colony, thus negating any concept that the governance of the colony was profit or trade driven, while also negating any thought that this was a settler colonial space. By implementing policies that were protective of Indigenous Papuans, he changed the trajectory of colonial rule in the Pacific.

The governorships of LeHunte and Robinson, however, conformed much more closely to the Australian vision of colonial administration. While maintaining much of MacGregor’s policies, they nonetheless aimed to encourage greater settlement through weakening restrictions on immigration and land ownership. They also signalled a change in relationships with Indigenous people using retributive shows of force, most notably the Goaribari massacres.<sup>xxiv</sup> The death of Robinson, as stated previously, indicated a turning point for the administration of Papua.

When Murray was elevated to the role of Chief Justice, and then Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, he was widely considered as enmeshed in the Australian philosophical tradition. He was, after all, a former New South Wales circuit judge, whose father was one of the original New South Wales parliamentarians and who had strong political friendships with Prime Ministers Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin.<sup>xxv</sup> Initially, Murray was somewhat supportive to the requests of the Australian settlers. However, the retributive raids of Robinson on Goaribari soon soured his vision of the Papuan colonial experiment. Murray instead undertook a more British approach to governance but was increasingly interventionist. He maintained the policy that made land ownership by settlers impossible, which continuing to manage population growth through financial disincentive. He did, however, develop policies to encourage settlers to enter in order to work in development, such as teachers; in this, he did maintain the White Australian policy, refusing to submit to commercial demands for the import of indentured labourers from China or India.<sup>xxvi</sup> He undertook further exploration and made efforts to hold court sessions in villages, rather than centrally in Port Moresby.<sup>xxvii</sup> These alone meant that a

greater degree of sovereignty was maintained by Indigenous people than colonial authorities. Later efforts by Murray included the establishment of schools in regional areas to develop literacy, and the provision of medical training for indigenous Papuans at University of Sydney.<sup>xxviii</sup> He also empowered patrol officers to undertake anthropological works while patrolling to capture and maintain the unique nature of Papuan traditional cultures and artefacts.<sup>xxix</sup> However, the economic challenges of maintaining these policies is a constant during the Murray administration. Throughout his papers are constant appeals for increased funding from Australia; the replies, however, tend to encourage Murray to make more pro-business reforms to meet the needs of his limited exchequer.<sup>xxx</sup>

Alongside efforts to improve, but not impose, upon Indigenous Papuans were efforts to minimise the coercive impact of settler-colonists. In governance, settlers were politically represented by a three-man Legislative Council, who had provision to represent economic and social interests in the colony but had no direct political power.<sup>xxxi</sup> Papuan colonists also had no provision for political representation in the Federal Parliament, a constitutional decision reinforced by the *Papua Act 1907 (Cwlth)* that created a degree of frustration among the expatriate community. Instead, the colonist interests were represented by the Lieutenant-Governor via representations to the Minister of External Affairs.<sup>xxxii</sup> They were unable to import labour to work the plantations (due to the White Australia policy) and were not able to compel Indigenous labour to work on the plantations due to<sup>xxxiii</sup> government policy, these factors, coupled with a general belief that white labour was unsuited to manual labour in the Tropics, meant that Indigenous lands were protected from speculation and development. In the post-war space of 1919, Murray advocated an expansion of his policies into the newly acquired Australian (Northern) New Guinea, though the military authorities at the time saw it appropriate to continue the pro-Mercantilist policies of the Germans, leading to greater development and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. However, highest praise was made of Murrays policies by Sir William Macgregor who, as Governor of Queensland, argued that Australian rule was acceptable, so long as Murray maintained control.<sup>xxxiv</sup> While some have argued that this period of colonialism could be simply considered ‘masterly inactivity’, it is simply not accurate. Murray deliberately pursued a policy which aimed to minimise the impact of Western colonists on the Indigenous people of Papua.

Ultimately, the concept of Protective Colonialism is a fundamental shift in how we perceive colonialism. In many ways, it conforms to a nostalgic understanding of the process; something which unfortunately permeates a significant amount of people’s understanding of the concept.<sup>xxxv</sup> Unlike people’s understanding of colonialism, however, this understanding of colonialism provides a positive protective outcome for the indigenous people under the structure. In the case of Murray as our key example, Papuans were able to access medical assistance and have intra and intra tribal

conflict mediated through the rule of law. The uniqueness of a protective colonial entity is that there remains a high degree of autonomy and preservation for the Indigenous peoples, while also benefitting from the expertise and knowledge of the coloniser.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Unfortunately, the concept of protective colonialism was not a universal undertaking, though it can be argued that there were periods of this which existed throughout colonial history, such as early German influence in Nauru or British influence in Tanzania.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In closing, the idea of protective colonialism provides an analytical tool to look at the possible benefits and interventions of a colonial power into an indigenous space. It recognises the benefits that could be, and are often attributed to colonialism, while also recognising the importance of cultural, political, and economic preservation by the colonial ruler. The case of Anglo-Australian Papua, as illustrated through this paper, indicates that while some governors conformed to a more settler-colonial or mercantilist dream, most of the time, the governance and policies of the territory reflect this new theoretical framework. The governorships of MacGregor and Murray show a protective benevolence that is more than merely 'masterful activity', but a concerted effort to learn about Indigenous ways while minimising the effects of colonialism on them.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> The information in this section is mainly based on fieldwork the author conducted on Luzon in the Philippines and in Hokkaido (Japan).

<sup>ii</sup> Peter van Dommelen, "Colonialism and Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41, no. Volume 41, 2012 (2012), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145758>, <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145758>.

<sup>iii</sup> Wm Matthew Kennedy, "An Australian empire," in *The imperial Commonwealth* (Manchester University Press, 2023).

<sup>iv</sup> Nancy SHOemaker, "A TYPOLOGY OF COLONIALISM," *Perspectives on History - The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*, 2015, <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/october-2015/a-typology-of-colonialism>; Adam Smith, *The wealth of nations [1776]*, vol. 11937 (na, 1937).

- <sup>v</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito, "Tales of Color and Colonialism: Racial Realism and Settler Colonial Theory," *Florida A & M University Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2014-2015 2014), 108, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/floramulr10&i=14> <https://heinonline.org/HOL/PrintRequest?handle=hein.journals/floramulr10&collection=journals&div=6&id=14&print=section&scction=6>.
- <sup>vi</sup> Kennedy, "An Australian empire."
- <sup>vii</sup> As Kendrick LeMar says, "They not like us".
- <sup>viii</sup> van Dommelen, "Colonialism and Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean."
- <sup>ix</sup> Stewart Firth, "The transformation of the labour trade in German New Guinea, 1899–1914," *The Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 1 (1976); Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler colonialism," *Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan* 10 (2010); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of genocide research* 8, no. 4 (2006).
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- <sup>xiii</sup> Patrick Wolfe, "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2692330>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2692330>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Edward P Wolfers, *Race relations and colonial rule in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1975).
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- <sup>xvii</sup> John Neil McLean, *A Mission of Honour: The Royal Navy in the Pacific, 1769-1997* (Winter Productions, 2010).
- <sup>xviii</sup> "Report of the Royal Commission on the affray at Goaribari Island, British New Guinea on the 6th of March 1904 : together with the proceedings, minutes of evidence, and appendices." <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2772887973>.
- <sup>xix</sup> At this point, only 64 settlers lived in the territory, not all centred in Port Moresby
- <sup>xx</sup> "Report of the Royal Commission on the affray at Goaribari Island, British New Guinea on the 6th of March 1904 : together with the proceedings, minutes of evidence, and appendices."
- <sup>xxi</sup> Peter J Cain, "Character, 'Ordered Liberty', and the Mission to Civilise: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870–1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 4 (2012); IC Campbell, "Anthropology and the professionalisation of colonial administration in Papua and New Guinea," *The Journal of Pacific History* 33, no. 1 (1998); Peter Fitzpatrick, "Really rather like slavery: Law and labor in the colonial economy in Papua New Guinea," *Contemporary Crises* 4, no. 1 (1980 1980), 96, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/crmlsc4&i=77> <https://heinonline.org/HOL/PrintRequest?handle=hein.journals/crmlsc4&collection=journals&div=6&id=77&print=section&scction=6>.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Francis William Sutton Cumbræ-Stewart, "First attempts at settlement in New Guinea," *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 1, no. 3 (1917); Firth, "The transformation of the labour trade in German New Guinea, 1899–1914."
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- <sup>xxvi</sup> David YH Wu, *The Chinese in Papua New Guinea, 1880-1980* (Chinese University Press, 1982).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> H. N. Nelson, "Hubert Murray: Private letters and public reputation," *Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971/04/01 1971), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314617108595447>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314617108595447>.

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- <sup>xxviii</sup> Though, it has to be remembered, that the education generally provided was basic literacy and numeracy, with secondary schooling and tertiary education not available in Papua until the post World War II period.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Anna Edmundson, "'Preserving the Papuan': JHP Murray and doomed race theory in Papua New Guinea," *History and Anthropology* 33 (11/11 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1689973>.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Atlee Arthur Hunt, "Papers of Atlee Hunt," (1900); Lewis Lett, "Papers of Lewis Lett," (1910). <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-241505051/findingaid>.; Hubert Murray, "Papers Sir Hubert Murray," (1900).
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# **The Marginalized Speaks Out Loud: Debunking the Politics of Demonization by Caliban**

**Oumeima Mouelhi**

When power is met with resistance, superiority with subalternity, and hegemony with confrontation, the concept of “colonialism” is brought back to the fore. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, allegedly his last to be written play before the Bard of Avon passed away, does not remain without controversy. The self vs the other, the center vs the periphery, and the ego vs the id, become the stage where debate is ignited about the rule of a white supremacy and the subalternity of a subordinated weak walking in the shadow of the hailer of civilization. It is in this framework that *The Tempest* has paved the way for a postcolonial reading since it first saw the light. The mythic relationship of a once upon a time usurped duke, Prospero rendered usurper himself, with a subhuman savage, Caliban, envelops a world made of two opposite forces that struggle to ensure its survival and control. Portrayed as half an animal, half a human, Caliban’s image served to represent the outsider from the European realm in an emerging colonial discourse. Though not a major character in the play, the figure of Caliban has garnered a worldwide interest in the postcolonial paradigm. Critics perceive Caliban as an oppressed creature who stands above his feeble self and precarious conditions to speak on behalf of all the mutilated.

Examined from a postcolonial context, this paper seeks to study Shakespeare’s play from the lens of the “oppressed” by laying bare of the practices of the European colonial mind who, in the name of a degenerative and backward third world, justifies the whole colonial enterprise to find an excuse for the other’s subjugation. This paper is based on postcolonial theory examining all throughout the research the tenet of eurocentrism via the character of Prospero. Shakespeare shapes the plot of his play within a European ethnocentric paradigm. The play is seen in terms of colonial relationship governing the resisting maneuvers of Caliban who declares his rebellion against Prospero who strangles his freedom. As a European man being a contemporary of Britain’s greatest expansion overseas, Shakespeare casts Caliban as one of the West Indians “whose human status has been denied by the Europeans”.<sup>i</sup> It is such a denial which explains the aboriginal’s enslavement. As a matter of fact, the theme of imperial power is announced from the outset with Prospero’s permanent attempts to subjugate Caliban to his will. Usurped of his rule as a Duke of Milan by his own brother Ferdinand, Prospero finds refuge in an exiled island in which he establishes his new dukedom and paradoxically become, himself, a usurper. The island once belonged to Caliban’s mother Sycorax whose Prospero



accuses of witchcraft to strip it from her and subdues her along with her deformed son, the “poisonous slave/wicked dam” (I.2.376-377) to his will. Infuriated, Caliban answers,

I must eat my dinner.  
This island’s mine, Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou can’st first  
Thou strok’st me, and made much of me; (I.2.1-4)

The binary relationship which Prospero sets with all the inhabitants of the island has one single purpose: tightening his grip on people and land and intensifying his coercion on the “infidels” and the “savages”. Prospero perceives Caliban and the spirit Ariel as raw materials to be consumed and formed according to his own whims. In *The Tempest*, Caliban is portrayed as an evil spirit, a semi-human, ferocious, and explicitly awful, further legitimizing Prospero’s colonial enterprise and thirst for dominance. Cannibal is thought to be an anagram of “Cannibal”, which served as a muse for the labelling of “Caliban” in the play. According to Vaughan, Caliban’s name is originated in the Arabic word “kalebon” meaning “vile dog”.<sup>ii</sup> Prospero’s inclination to address the island’s native through the label of “Caliban” is extremely derogatory. It dispossesses him from any human value and reduces him to a minable category, if not “thing”. It becomes obvious that Prospero is embracing the early modern European prejudice against any different race. From Prospero’s vantage point, being non-European, and in Caliban’s case in particular, stands for ignorance, regress, monstrosity, and artlessness. Therefore, the profusion of Prospero’s racist feelings and brutal conduct towards Caliban are made clear throughout the play despite the islander’s devotion and love towards him in the beginning of the play. Caliban bitterly retorts,

and then I loved thee  
And show’d thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle,  
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile:  
Curs’d be I that did so! (I.2.4-7)

Whatever the source from which the name, “Caliban” springs, it is quite obvious that Shakespeare meant his character to look inferior, low, despicable, and even bestial. The sheer fact of having Caliban think of violating the chastity of Prospero’s daughter, Miranda, reveals his evil and primitive character by nature. Such a demeanor was incontestably the last of Caliban’s winning cards to restore his freedom. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Prospero, as the new ruler of the land, was

initially trying to find any fault with Caliban without a reasonable justification. Even before Caliban attempts to sexually assault Prospero's daughter, Miranda, he was visibly denigrated by his European master who had already been using him.

PROSPERO. ... I have used thee-  
Filth as thou art — with humane care ...  
till thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child. (I.2.344–47)

Prospero's insulting words are the ultimate displayed proof that his antagonism to Caliban is prior to his discovery of his affair with Miranda. The only fault that Prospero finds with his slave is his difference of colour as well as race. Difference becomes a curse on all the island's livings other than the new Duke and his daughter, and by extension Miranda's future husband. In this sense, Shakespeare gives justification to the new master of the island whose urgent motive for enslavement and retaliation is vividly felt for the rest of the play. Both subhuman Caliban and Ariel, the spirit, are a product of the European fantasy vis-à-vis the "other": the "East", or "the Orient". The dichotomy between the new usurper of the island and his enslaved people triggers the long-lasting issue of "the clash of civilizations" and the blurred notion of "superiority" vs "inferiority". Kunat explains that, "The play's oppositions—between nature and civility, master and slave, African and European, man and woman— all appear to be validated by natural law and political right, but the chiasmic exchange between superior and inferior terms reveals the fault lines of a signifying system predicated on suppressing alternative, subaltern forms of desire".<sup>iii</sup> Caliban, in Prospero's eyes, falls into this stereotype and his disfigured shape is a reminder of the West's prejudice against the unknown other. Ultimately, he becomes an object, not only of ridicule, but a ripe source for subjugation on which the whole colonial enterprise is posed. Wymer comments that, "The Elizabethan encounter with the New World likewise provoked important reflections about the origins of British civilization and, indeed, the origins of all societies and all authority".<sup>iv</sup> Wymer alludes to the fact that Great Britain as a great hailer of the human solemn notions of freedom, democracy, and equality is caught in the fire of its own contradictions. Great Britain's colonies which extended from the eastern to the western parts of the hemisphere during the Renaissance time reaching the West Indies and the New World runs against the long-standing beliefs that the empire has been delivering to the whole world. From a New Historicist point of view, "*The Tempest* reflects contemporary colonial activity in Virginia and Ireland, with Prospero's appropriation of what critics assume to be 'Caliban's Island' standing for European of indigenous peoples".<sup>v</sup>

British history is rooted in conquests and colonialism reaching an unprecedented degree of involvement in foreign territories, which it snatched from its aboriginals. *The Tempest* highlights the idea of this British hegemony and power and rethinks the past of a big empire like Great Britain in the midst of turbulent colonial and unequal forces in the play. In this sense, the typical image that Shakespeare launches his character, Caliban, into, is also the typical image that exists in the mind of the colonizer, one epitomizing a culture that, “reproduces and re-creates itself”.<sup>vi</sup> It re-creates itself within the realm of prejudice where only the Western Hemisphere of the globe should stand at an upper rank. Those living at the periphery of the hemisphere turn into the “marginalized”, the “low others” whose subsistence depends on the force of the superior cultural model represented by the European.

Prospero as a leading figure of the white European advanced civilization becomes a pure epitome of the “us” vs “them” duality. He aggravates the fissure which for long has been clinging to the collective mind: that of a split image between two opposite worlds that can be hardly redeemed. His take on Caliban’s race, color, and primitive culture that lacks refinement and sophistication, resuscitates Papia’s stance that, “The way different cultures were talked about within colonial discourse relied on the hegemonic and stereotypical concepts of race, age and gender differences. The association of blacks with notions of evil and bestiality and the rendering of “whites” as innocent and pure continually helped to justify the system of exploitation and the plundering and conquering of lands by the colonizers”<sup>vii</sup>. The binary relationship between the Orient as represented by Caliban and the Occident emblemized by Prospero becomes a site of contest, conflicts, and thirst for “the survival of the fittest”. This spot of encounter becomes paradoxically a milieu of antagonism and disjoint forces where imperial power is confronted to minor forces regarded in the eyes of the oppressor as backward compared to a progressist modern west. The difference between the East and the West is reflective of the widened schism between Prospero and his slave Caliban. Striking issues like orientalism, racism, and oppression breed Shakespeare’s colonial text. Both Caliban and Prospero perceived as great ideological enemies with an obvious demarcation between the two opposite poles of the sphere. Caliban is seen as a standard exemplification of a regressive third world colonial subject living in the shadow of a corroborative liberal world. Personifying the native “primitive” connate example of humanity, Caliban’s figure stands for the natural unrefined savage, chaotic, and lustful individual, thus giving Prospero a reason for his sequestration namely after his failed attempt to sexually assault Miranda. Set in confrontation with his misdeed, Caliban never denies the accusation pointed to him. Surprisingly, he confesses that he would have peopled the island with calibans if chance was on his side.

O ho, O ho! Would't had been done!  
Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else  
This isle with Calibans (I.2.419-421)

Prospero's atrocious conductance extends to verbal offense. He explicitly makes fun of Caliban by calling him a "tortoise": "come, thou tortoise," he says. (I.2.317) He also denigrates him by insulting him as a "mis-shapen knave" (I.2.268). Prospero's merciless stigmatizing description leaves no room for doubt that his depiction of Caliban could, under no circumstances, reconcile between two irreconcilable words. He deems Caliban to be an offspring of a weird satanic mix of witch mother, Sycorax, and an unknown demon father. Such a combination brought about a loathsome creature who could be neither entirely human, nor utterly evil, thus a half-devil. Caliban, along with all the inhabitants of the land, are marginalized, discriminated against, and overlooked. This process of "othering" or setting any different entity as the "other" is the driving motive behind Prospero's enslavement of Caliban. Instead of celebrating differences, Prospero rather condemns it creating a red line between seemingly two contradictory ends. And rather than bridging the gap between them, he further aggravates the distance. Such a prejudice is shaped by Europeans against non-Europeans most often culminating into a sort of bias from both parties towards the other. In her book, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England* states that,

English people were most eager to stress the ways in which their nation was unique, culturally as well as topographically. The trope of the island, in other words, although long powerful in imaginary literature and material policies, began to serve not only as a metaphor but also as explanation for English dominance and superiority in arts and arms. And as islands became important devices in the examination of self, society and species, they also served as the engines for new ways of thinking about nation, race and gender, in pointing to the ideological commitments and anxieties that underwrite the eighteenth century's troping of islandness.<sup>viii</sup>

Bringing civilization to the uncivilized was only a subterfuge to command an insurgent slave like Caliban to Prospero's presumably heuristic decree. The new cultivated living mode that Prospero is desperately trying to inculcate into the new land is sorely odious and unwelcome. It threw out Sycorax and subordinated her son in a most treacherous way. The civilizing mission that Prospero is bringing with him to his new world is nothing than a new colonizing mission waved by Europeans to

sustain their capitalist status, accumulate their wealth, and further promote their position in the world. As a European, Prospero reigns all over the island through intimidations and threats. He forces his subjects, Caliban and Ariel to comply with his orders, lest they meet their demise. He terrorizes, daunts, and scolds them for the least shortcoming. He relocates himself as the real governor of the island and deprives Ariel and Caliban of their own liberties. Ariel is constantly promised freedom by Prospero who never gives it to him. He totally commits to Prospero clinging to the hope that, one day, he will restore his freedom. Ariel reminds Prospero, “Let me remember thee what thou hast/promised,/Which is not yet performed me” (I.2. 243-245). Thirsty for his freedom Caliban, by contrast, does not declare utter obedience to Prospero. He conspires along with Trinculo and Stephano to put an end to Prospero’s life so that he could breathe his former liberty, a scheme which to his bad luck was declared a fiasco. He reminds Stephano that, “As I told thee before, I am subject to/a tyrant, a sorcerer that by his cunning hath/cheated me of the island” (III.2.38-40). Ariel and Caliban become an example of every oppressed person who has been denied their freedom by the colonizer in the name of the white European supremacy to enlighten minds and civilize the savages. Writing about freedom, Freire comments that, “Almost always, during the initial stage of struggle the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend to become oppressors, or sub-oppressors, the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of concrete, existential situation by which they are shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors”.<sup>ix</sup>

Freire notes that freedom does not exist without the bipolar existence of oppression and violence. He adds that the binary of “oppressor” and “oppressed” are reflections of “dehumanization” which should be cut short if we aim to progress.<sup>x</sup> Such is Prospero’s enlightening enterprise that he seeks to establish on the unlettered and unrefined non-Europeans; one fraught with fear, bluster, and oppression. Prospero’s endeavors right from the onset has only one “significant” purpose: enslaving the inhabitants and turning its dwellers into his own subjects. He can be recognized as a colonial agent who dictates his imperial power on the diminished natives exerting a stranglehold on the aboriginals rendered into subalterns. Through his portrait of Prospero, Shakespeare communicates to the reader the idea that, “Prospero’s project to civilize ‘natural man’. Prospero is also a model for the playwright himself, a creative authority at the height of his powers who looks back in the play upon the capacity of creative art to change nature”.<sup>xi</sup> The natural flow of “things” was that Caliban is the real owner of the isle. He was living in peace in it until Prospero’s feet treaded on it. Overnight, he changed the fate of Caliban for good by the dual use of power and force. As such, Prospero’s cursed presence as a colonizer is reminiscent of Prospero’s philosophy that it is the society which corrupts human nature.<sup>xii</sup> Prospero’s hegemonic nature becomes obvious when he behaves as a cruel ruler on the island taking his presence for granted as an almost semi-god. He mercilessly tortures Caliban when he

disobeys him bringing him to his utter subjugation and putting him under his entire control. Foucault writes that, “it is in the nature of power (...) to be repressive”.<sup>xiii</sup> Nevertheless, Prospero does not seem to be conscience-stricken or remorseful. When Caliban happens to disobey the orders of his master, he is showered with insult and degradation. Prospero abuses him by calling him a “fool” and reminding him that he should be submissive and dutiful seeking “for grace”. “Be wise hereafter”, he tells him (V.2.245).

Ariel, too, seems to meet Caliban’s same desperate fate when he deviates from the path Prospero traced for him. When he complains about the burden of the charges his master imposes on him and asks for his liberty, Prospero responds by belittling him reducing him to a “thing”: Thou liest, malignant thing” (I.2.257). As he did, previously, with Sycorax’s son, he threatens Ariel that, “If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters” (I.2.293-5). In this regard, both Caliban and Ariel become Prospero’s undeniable subalterns and colonised subjects, repressed by Prospero’s repulsive threats and hegemonic rules. According to Althusser, “the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology”.<sup>xiv</sup> Referred to as a second-class citizen, going against the mainstream, the subaltern has become a common agreement on a subcategory of people living on the periphery of the society, “a name for the general attribute of subordination”.<sup>xv</sup> This social class is derogated on the basis of its race, colour, gender, ethnicity or religion. In “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” Postcolonial thinker Spivak defines “the subaltern” as people “removed from all lines of social mobility”.<sup>xvi</sup> The term was principally used to connote a state of ‘subordination’ of someone considered of lower rank”.<sup>xvii</sup>

In the same way, Gramsci describes the subaltern as someone living under a “hegemonic position” of those in power, “The historical unity of the ruling classes takes place in the State”.<sup>xviii</sup> According to him, a subaltern is identified as an individual banished from the socio-political structure of the system, the means by which people have a voice in the society. He adds that, “for a social elite, the elements of subaltern groups always have a barbarian and pathological side”,<sup>xix</sup> an approach widely explaining Prospero’s intentions and schemes ever since he landed on the deserted island. As a colonial subject, Caliban is only expected to obey the orders of his master from a pure colonial lens. Miranda refers to his race as a “vile race” (I.2.358) while her father describes him as a “devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick” (4.1.188-9), yet fit enough to make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us” (I.2.311-3). This profit generated by colonial exploitation is later hinted at by Antonio, who terms Caliban “a plain fish, and no doubt marketable” (V.1.265). In their eyes, he is merely a servant, compelled to submit to all orders under the permanent physical threats of a colonizer reminding him of being punished with “cramps, / Sidestitches ...; urchins”

(I.2.327-8). In the play, Prospero tries to ‘enlighten’ Caliban yet through the politics of demonization over the colonial subaltern. Gramsci highlights the presence of two levels of hegemony stating that, “These two levels correspond on one hand to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of ‘direct domination’ or command exercised through the state and the “juridical” government”.<sup>xx</sup> Gramsci also adds that, “The subaltern classes, by definition, are not united and cannot unite unless they become a ‘State’”.<sup>xxi</sup>

The term “subaltern” has already been in use by a group of academicians who were longing “to rewrite the history of Indian nationalism from the perspective of ‘the people’”<sup>xxii</sup> as the subaltern has become, now, an agent of socio-political change.; therefore an equivalent “power”. Caliban as a figure whose demeanour has become closely associated with resistance and the thwarting of the “fascist” conduct of Prospero has become menacing to the whole imperialist project. Prospero’s fury towards his subject’s defending manners has increased his anxiety regarding his “legitimacy” in taking over the island. Caliban’s manifestation has become synonymous of the Western project to “constitute the colonial subject as Other”.<sup>xxiii</sup> Consumed with a thirst to rebel against his Master and to retrieve what was initially his, Caliban conspires along with Stephano and Trinculo to impede Prospero’s rule with “all our company else being drowned, we will / inherit here” (II.2.150-2). Writing about the power/resistance binary, Foucault notes that, “There are no relations of power without resistances”.<sup>xxiv</sup> Caliban along with his accomplices resist the Duke’s despotic rule. Stephano promises to put an end to Prospero’s life and take over instead, “Monster, I will kill this man. His daughter and I will be / king and queen – ‘save our graces! – and Trinculo and thyself shall / be viceroys. Dost thou like the plot, Trinculo?” (III.2.99-101). The complicity of the subalterns to unite, fight, and resist together a foreign colonial rule under a local “leader” was exemplified in Gramsci’s elucidation of the subaltern mindset and acts stressing that, “Among the subaltern groups, one will exert or tend to exert a certain hegemony via a party”.<sup>xxv</sup> Caliban seeks solace in Trinculo and Stephano to end his nightmare under Prospero’s dominance. The once-upon- a time immobilized and subjugated slave has now become a resisting opposer daring to challenge the supremacy of his new breadwinner. Shakespeare allows his character, Caliban, to throw terror in his master Prosper. While the latter flutily attempts to teach him a new European language, Caliban brutally yells that, “You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language” (I.2.364-366). Commenting upon the use of language as a tool of communication, Maria Lugones writes that,

when we talk to you we use your language: the language of your experience and of your theories. We try to use it to communicate our world of experience. But since your

language and your theories are inadequate in expressing our experiences, we only succeed in communicating our experience of exclusion. We cannot talk to you in our language because you do not understand it... [this requires] that we either use your language and distort our experience not just in the speaking about it, but in the living of it, or that we remain silent. Complaining about exclusion is a way of remaining silent.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Caliban, surprisingly, marks a shift from utter submissiveness to a revolutionary agent. He becomes resentful, vengeful, and even curseful defying Prospero's authority and othering him on equal terms. While Prospero tries to enlighten Caliban's mind on the basis that he will be eternally grateful for him, Caliban recognizes in his Master's taught language a new stratagem for colonization, a new means of cultural hegemony, thus cultural prison, which he systematically rejected. Caliban sees in Prospero's language a cultural invasion of the West through the process of westernization.; "a cultural encasement of meaning, a prison – house of language and ideas, that is "freely" entered into by both dominators and dominated".<sup>xxvii</sup> Poststructuralists like Derrida and Lacan investigated the way the individual is framed by language. According to them, language is a potential discursive power.<sup>xxviii</sup> In the play, Prospero's books acquire him the attribute of a "magician" providing him with a vast knowledge that enables him to seize power over the island and its inhabitants. Caliban is cautious about confiscating his books. He urges Stephano to:

Remember

First to possess his books, for without them

He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command. They all do hate him

As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (III.2.88-92)

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon acknowledges the importance of language as a political discourse. He holds that it consumes the colonized mind through the transmission of the target language culture and mentality.<sup>xxix</sup> Caliban was aware of the danger of using the language of his subjugator, therefore cursing him along with his whole system of enslavement. Ashcroft notes that, "[Co]lonial languages were the vehicles of such a pervasive and intrusive cultural control that it was almost inevitable that many people in post-colonial societies assumed that the language itself was inherently the key to that control".<sup>xxx</sup> Language and knowledge turn into a site of encounter and paradoxically disintegration for Prospero and Caliban. The latter is aware that his enslaver is devoid



of any possible potential without his books, thus his knowledge. Therefore, Caliban's major purpose was to reach and seize Prospero's generator of power. Worse than this, he was yearning to burn them whereby Prospero will no more have any agency on him, nor on the island. It is Prospero's books which enables him to manipulate all, making his acts of dominion as an instance of sorcery. He tells Stephano and Sebastian,

For this one night, which—part of it—I'll waste  
With such discourse as, I not doubt, shall make it  
Go quick away: the story of my life  
And the particular accidents gone by  
Since I came to this isle. (V.1.317-322)

Caliban seems to be pertinently conscious of the potential danger that Prospero's knowledge may exert on the island. Learning his oppressor's language would be to get closer to his colonial mindset, thus to stand in his face and resist the whole colonial system Prospero allegedly brought with him. Language becomes the undeniable tool owing to which Caliban can free himself. Since language, power, and knowledge are closely intertwined, Caliban's pursuit for freedom now all relies on his mastery of Prospero's language. Derrida and Foucault explore the way in which language creates knowledge and discursive power. In the play, Prospero has been attempting to shield his books away from Caliban's eye realizing its eminent source of power and control. Caliban secretly says to Stephano:

Remember  
First to possess his books, for without them  
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not  
One spirit to command. They all do hate him  
As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (III.2.88-92)

Ultimately, language becomes Caliban's liberator and prisoner; the means by which he feels free or unfree. Language which in Prospero's eyes is a blessing for Caliban when taught to him has, now, become a curse for him as Caliban used it to curse him. In a defiant tone, Caliban dares challenge his persecutor using his own language to revile him. He says, "You taught me language; and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse" (I.2.517- 518). Therefore, language becomes a double-edged knife on

both parties: oppressor and oppressed to empower and paradoxically resist. Language, finally, turns into a thread where to bridge the gap in relationships between opposite forces and undermine it at once. Through his colonizer's language, Caliban not only defies his master, but on several occasions reveals the hegemonic and demonic demeanour in him in light of which he feels psychologically liberated. Caliban adds, "The red plague rid you/For learning me your language! (I.2.2.363-365). Language which was initially used as a tool for manipulation by Prospero becomes synonyms of freedom for Caliban. Following this, it is obvious to observe that Prospero's colonial enterprise was doomed to failure. Prospero failed to make Caliban a full obedient. He also failed to teach him his language serving his own purposes as language turned into a tool of indignation, a means to sweep the colonizer. Caliban's resistance to his suppressor is a literal blow in the face of the colonizer. Caliban proved that a colonized is not always subservient, free from his own willingness and that an oppressed can also stand up in the face of injustice and inequality. Caliban acquired a discursive ability not to be further subjugated as his master might have thought, but rather to effectively invest it in breaking down Prospero's authority and plotting to get rid of him. He understood Prospero's politics of demonization and engaged into his usurper's cultural discourse to resist his process of transforming him into a colonial "other".

Throughout the play, Caliban shows a hostility against the human who reduced him to bestiality. He uncovers his demonic endeavours highlighting the essence of his imperial presence on the island through a postcolonial narrative in which he uses the same language of his usurper to dismantle the Western stereotyping of the non-European. For the colonizer, language is a pivotal agent in subordinating and marginalizing the colonized under his will and 'sovereign' culture. Through language, the colonizer can inculcate into the oppressed mind all his knowledge, intellect, legacy, and social codes, thus appropriating the colonized more than enlightening him. That Caliban resents his master's language and books best illustrates his antagonism of the cultural hegemony imposed on him. Prospero's books instead of being perceived as a source of progress have become Caliban's main target. He is aware that without them, Prospero will be devoid of any power and command on the island as Foucault put it, "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together"<sup>xxxii</sup>. For his liberty, Caliban conspires along with Ariel to burn Prospero's books and challenge his authority. Caliban's resistance to his oppressor is transformed into the resistance of all the subordinated nations raising their voices high against acts of oppression and despotism.

This article has attempted to showcase Caliban's resistance and antagonistic attitude as a counter-discourse to the imperial power. Above all, Caliban's case runs against what Spivak believes it to be a removal from "all lines of social mobility"<sup>xxxiii</sup> for the subaltern. The latter embodied through the character of Caliban *does speak* unlike what is expected from a weak submissive engulfed by the

hegemonic practices of a powerful usurper. The long familiar silence known by the mute and wretched of the earth has been breached by Caliban in whose voice all the miserables of the colonized countries can, henceforth, speak out loud in the face of the empires. In a bid to educate Caliban, Prospero announces his defeat in front of the assumed oppressed he has been trying to tame and abuse. The culture Prospero has been trying to transfer to Caliban has been reversed into a fateful weapon pragmatically used by Caliban to protest, resist, and even curse his master. In so doing, Caliban becomes the true hero of the play, the representative of all the oppressed voices “from Africa to Latin America”. According to Roderiguez, “After three hundred and fifty years of abuse, Caliban is beginning to be recognized as the true hero of “The Tempest”<sup>.xxxiii</sup>

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## Notes

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<sup>ii</sup> Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Something Rich and Strange: Caliban's Theatrical Metamorphoses." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36.4 (1985): 390-405.

<sup>iii</sup> John Kunat, "'Play me false': Rape, Race, and Conquest in The Tempest." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.3 (2014): 313.

<sup>iv</sup> Rowland Wymer, "The Tempest and the Origins of Britain". In *Critical Survey*. Vol 11. No.1 (1999):3.

<sup>v</sup> Robin Headlams Wells, *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), P. 186.

<sup>vi</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), P. 2.

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- xix *Ibid*.
- xx Qtd in Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints* (New York: Routledge, 1990), P. 98.
- xxi *Ibid*.
- xxii Afzal-Khan, "Subaltern Studies", P. 552.
- xxiii Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", P. 76.
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