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HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1900-1924

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This paper attempts a historical review on the British conquest of Northern Nigeria; the Chiefs and the Europeans at the time of European occupation of the North. The emirs were entirely aware of the motive of the European counterparts that may change existing economic, political, cultural and social structure of the northern region. So, the chiefs and the emirs resisted to the detriment of their military power to encounter the Royal Niger Company. In 1897, the company's small force of about five hundred, which comprised of African soldiers conquered the lower Northern States of Ilorin and Nupe. The paper also discusses the changes in the economic, cultural and political leadership of the northern states between 1903-1906. However, the paper reveals that Nigeria or northern Nigeria, in particular, could not regain its past glory of economic, social and political dependence, because of the deep rooted impact of colonialism on the entire country.

I. INTRODUCTION

Northern Nigerian chiefs who resisted the imposition of colonial rule were subdued systematically throughout the nineteenth century. There were also some African chiefs who managed to hold on to their power by timely surrender and collaboration, even when European rivalries were not very much in the picture. Some emirs of Northern Nigeria retained a great deal of power by cooperating at the right time with the earliest British officials when the British soldiers embarked upon an expedition into the region. During, the pre-colonial times, they were governors over the emirates of the caliphate of Sokoto, which had already consolidated for

position by the late nineteenth century as a cooperative empire, no longer actively expansive with ultimate control in the hands of the caliphs but with most day-to-day administration in the hands of the emirs of a dozen or so provinces.

The first European incursions on the emirates of Northern Nigeria from 1887 onward came from officials of the Royal Niger Company, who though with commercial interest gradually established authority in the name of Great Britain, the metropolitan power whose interest was to secure effective access to the navigable water of the rivers Benue and the river Niger. In the late 1890s, the company began to impinge on Sokoto's outlying emirates; especially Ilorin, to the south of the Niger in Yorubaland, and Nupe, just to the north of the river Niger. In 1897, the company's small force of about five hundred African soldiers made separate attacks on both Ilorin and Nupe with the aim of subduing the area. The company then made itself a suzerain of Ilorin emirate and replaced the emir of Nupe with one more favourable to its interests, all without raising a unified resistance from Damagaram in the caliphate as a whole, largely because the caliph was equally fearful of the French advance from the west, German feelers sent north from Togoland, and the presence of Rabih's force from the Nilotic Sudan in Borno to the east, which conquered the empire in 1893 and put its rulers to flight within and outside Borno. As a result, each emirate had to face the European commanded force individually on its own, as a major military challenge of the time.

Expeditions and Conquests on the emirate of Northern Nigeria, 1902-1906

This combination of strong provincial government with the lack of a common military effort from the caliphate as a whole was almost ideal for conquest by very small forces under European leadership. Each emirate could be forced to surrender after one or two sharp engagements. In the years 1902 to 1906, a British force barely exceeding a thousand men advanced in a series of brief campaigns to conquer the emirates one by one. Some emirs surrendered and were allowed to remain in office as stooges of the British colonial masters. Others resisted briefly and were deposed. Some tried to flee toward the eastern Sudan were caught and killed at the battle of Burmi in 1903. In the case of Northern Nigeria, indirect rule was introduced with African chiefs in authority, in spite of this territorial incorporation in Nigeria, the old ruling class remained in power as effective as it did in Rwanda or Burundi – and far more effective

than equivalent groups did in North African protectorates like Morocco or Tunisia.

The Ethiopian experience was a nearly opposite reaction to European power. In contrast to the northern emirs' success in following a policy of surrender and survival, Ethiopia found it possible to the Italians at the battle of Adowa and retain her independence. In resisting colonial rule altogether (apart from the brief Italian occupation of 1935-1941), Ethiopia was thus the hero of Africa and unique on the African continent for preserving her independence. (Liberia through a protectorate of America, was the only other exception, and Liberia's rulers were Afro-Americans, who were westerns, not Africans, in their ways of life). Yet the Northern Nigerian emirs and the Ethiopian aristocracy's reacted similarly to western culture. The neo-colonialists for defensive purpose only and defended their sovereignty and culture with remarkable success until they were overthrown by military coups in the 1960s and 1970s.

Central Nigeria witnessed colonial conquest in 1924. The 'mama' (Kantana), Mada and Eggon lived just to the south-west of the Jos Plateau escarpment. In 1923, the Kantana were called the last unadministered unit in the whole of Nigeria. In 1925, a patrol was undertaken to remedy this situation. Their fine two-storied houses were destroyed, and their grain burnt or carried off. Driven further and further from their friends and shelters, they were left without food and without cover in the rains.

After the successful imposition of colonial rule, African communities were broken up into emirates and provinces and were put under the control of the European colonial administrators such as Resident and district officers. The old chiefs of the African states were reorganised into new administrative districts, and states. To make socio-economic and political exploitation easy, radical changes were introduced to reflect the existence of the colonial state. According to Lugard.

> "The government holds the rights in land which the Europeans took by conquest from the chief, and if the government requires land it will take it for any purpose. The government holds the right of taxation and will tell the chiefs and emirs what taxes they may levy, and what part of them must be paid to the government. The government will have to all minerals the people may dig for Iron and work in it subjects to the approval of the High Commissioner, and may take salt and other minerals subject to any excise

imposed by law. Traders will not be taxed by Chiefs but by the only government."

II. ECONOMY BEFORE THE CONQUEST OF NORTHERN NIGERIA

The economic activities were widespread among the indigenous peoples of the Kanem-Borno empire. It was found in all societies, among the pastoral and nomadic ethnic groups of the northern areas, among the scattered, economically divided agricultural communities of the various peoples in the empire, and among the centralised, agricultural based kingdoms of the Darfur in the eastern part. All these societies had a low level of technology, and domestic animals were not exploited for their labour potential. Consequently human labour was the only source of power available. The southern part was Wadai, this placed a high premium on securing human labour, and slavery was one means of accomplishing this. The most common sources of slaves were captives taken in intercommunal wars and cattle raids. in some communities, 1 criminals were enslaved as well. Such slaves were used both in production (e.g. farming and herding) and as domestic servants, usually female slaves employed in the arduous and time-consuming task of grinding, baking four (finger millet). One woman working all day could grind enough four to satisfy the daily needs of five or six people. In general, they were well treated and considered almost as a family member.

He went on emphasising that: "Slaves were important to the state economically as well. Colonies of slaves were settled upon the land by the Sultan both to develop the state economically and to increase his personal wealth."[2] They were actively involved in and beneficial to the general economy. They were used in the agricultural and the pastoral sectors of the economy. In contrast, slaves played

[1] Abdul Fattah o. *Islam in Nigeria One Crescent Many Focuses*, op.cit

[2] *Ibid.*

no significant role as artisans in Dar Fur. This was probably due to the low level of artisanal development in Dar Fur as a whole rather than to any lack of accomplishment among the people of Dar Fartir, whose industrial accomplishment are compared favourably to those of the English in some respects. Newly captured slaves were used as a medium of exchange in the marketplace, and some ethnic groups paid their taxes in slaves.

Added to the above reason, was the fact that, the trans-Saharan slave trade was not likely to yield the empire flourishing prospects. This means that the economic lives of the Kanem-Borno people would be at the mercy of the foreign buyers who buy for the economic, political and social elevation. This was dangerous enough since the slaves were not employed within the Kanem-Borno empire itself rather were taken away to either Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and other nations for their internal economic power. [3] Another precarious slave trade was the European one known as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which stripped off African economies and endangered the generations of economic growth. For example, massive farming with a large quantity of labour and machinery produces agricultural commodities of the study area. Both are used to produce the same amount of goods; one uses a small plot of land but uses large quantities of other resources, whereas the other method uses the large plot of land but it is frugal with other resources. Similar possibilities are available with manufactured goods. It also depends on the quantity of human labour, but the trans-Saharan slave trade and the latter Trans-Atlantic slave trade reduced agricultural produce to pace way to the economic recession of the Kanem-Borno empire.

According to. O'Fahey;

The slaves must do the work in the house, if they are unwilling to work, they must be beaten with the whip or must be beaten with the stick. Then they begin to cry (ana) be willing to work. Their language is difficult, people don't understand them. If we find a girl among them, who pleases us, then she doesn't need to do any housework. I make her my wife, so that we can sleep together in bed and 'eat the skin,' So that we will have children. Then she becomes pregnant and has a child. If it is a boy, then everything is fine.[4]

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[3] *Ibid.*

[4] R. S. O'Fahey, Slavery and Society in Dar Fur: In *Slaves & Slavery in Muslim Africa*, Frank Cass, 1985, p.83

This portrays a full economic system based on slave labour which has taken place in most parts in the slave trade, despite the importance of administrative and military slaves in the maintenance of society. Slave concubines and domestic slaves were common and indeed affected the nature of marriage as an institution and the organisation of wealthy households. The adaptation of similar practices in Trans-Saharan zone involved a parallel transformation there.

III- The Effect of the Imposition of Colonial Rule on the Economy of Northern Nigeria.

Colonial rule was only a short period in African history, in most areas it lasted for about the lifetime of a man who lived for seventy years. The European empires in Africa were some of the shortest-lived in world history. Africans regarded the white men as economic adventurers by virtue of their power, not by the consent of the people. Independence was never far from their minds. The revolts described above are connected with the successful struggle for independence in the twentieth century. The difference between the early revolts and the later struggle is that instead of merely aiming at a return to old African traditions, the later nationalists wanted to use also the best things that the Europeans had brought them in building the newly independent Africa. But the attitude of the European rulers was sometimes openly one of exploitation of the Northern Nigerian economy, that is the development of the interests of the whites or untouched mineral resources in the region. There was also an attitude of paternalism, a desire to educate the white man's young African brother and bring modern inventions to his consent. Guggisberg, Governor of the Gold Coast in 1925, is one of the early examples of a man with such an attitude. Some of the British foresaw the eventual withdrawal of Europeans from the colonies. Lord Lugard in his book: *the Dual Mandate* (1922), summed up the theory that colonialists had an obligation to those they ruled while at the same time maintaining that the colonies had to be exploited in the interest of the world. The French imperial policy, however, was one of 'assimilation', that is to develop the colonies and attach them firmly to France by economic and political ties so that they become parts of France beyond the sea.

Here, the paper analyses seven factors determining the economy of Northern Nigeria thus,

1) the great dependence of the cash economy on other countries,

2) The philosophy of Colonial rule which introduces pay tax its own way without help from the imperial powers,

3) the effective replacement of traditional system by modern one

4) the first and second World Wars; the World depression of the 1930s

5) the regaining of the independence to investment and cultural contact from many more sources.

IV- Conclusion

From the above, it is now very clear that the European expedition in Northern Nigeria, which was consistently crippled structured of existence economy and almost every other non-European in the world. While it is perhaps natural for everyone to see in their own culture only what is best for which we may excuse the Europeans, when we look at history we are apt to be disappointed by the European sense of fairness and objectivity. When we ask in Africa who is it that has caused the greatest damage to the Nigerian economy, robbing it of one hundred and twenty million souls in an unbroken period of three full centuries the answer obviously is the Europeans. When we ask where to have our gold, diamonds, silver, tin, cotton, rubber even antiquities (national heritage) and other assets have gone, the answer inexorably points to Europe, yet there we can clearly see the impact of our plundered human and mineral resources in the prosperity and beauty of the European cities and the 'grandeur' of its civilisation. The Europeans perceiving African Chiefs as people destined forever to be drawers of water and hewers of wood. This perhaps they would not have allowed their economic interests to overshadow the interests of their fellow Africans, and perhaps they would not have made themselves ready tools in the hand of the Europeans whose interest in Africa was largely commercial. Yet, who would like to achieve this, regardless of any inconveniences it caused to the Africans. Added to the above that is new trade '*legitimate trade*' – was not likely to yield the African chiefs flourishing prospects. It was clearly to them that it was going to be directly and controlled by the European themselves, which resulted in the imposition of colonial rule. This means then that the economic lives of the African would be at the mercy of the European. This was dangerous

enough since the denial of this economic power would certainly strip them of other powers – cultural, economic, political and religious – because they were inseparable. This was why the African chiefs failed completely to be persuaded.

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Coming Down Out of the Ivory Tower: The State and Fate of the Humanities

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Abstract: The study of Humanities, despite its ongoing importance, has been in decline for decades. Having been described as 'myopic', 'rigid', and its researchers being considered 'in their ivory tower', it is no wonder that the study of Humanities has fallen out of favor with mainstream society; and thus its potential student pool. Humanists have been considered out of touch with their students for so long, that the students no longer see the benefit of taking Humanities courses. Defining what constitutes the field of Humanities and the necessity for its study has also been a point of contention among scholars and students alike since its inception. As a lack of an agreed upon clear definition continues to be elusive and with the emergence of digital humanities, potential humanists are discouraged from entering the field because they cannot see how they can contribute. As the politicization of education increases, humanities courses have over time been relegated to 'general education' course the only status and have had their department funding cut. As necessary as Humanities are for the perpetuation of democracy and culture, it is of utmost importance to redefine and reclaim the field for layman and academic alike.

Keywords: academia, democracy, digital humanities, humanities, pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of Humanities, despite its ongoing importance, has been in decline for decades. Studies analyzed by Holden (1985) [1] and studies conducted by Armitage et. al (2013) [2] both offer trends showing degrees within the field of Humanities reduced by half across 20 and 40 years, respectively. Having been described as 'myopic', 'rigid', and its researchers being considered stuck 'in their ivory tower', it is no wonder that the study of Humanities has fallen out of favor with mainstream society and its potential student pool. Humanists have been considered out of touch with their students for so long, that the students no longer see the benefit of taking Humanities courses. The students also feel that their opinions in regards to what would be the best way for them to learn and

understand Humanities are going unheard (Sabirov, 2000) [3]. Defining what constitutes the field of Humanities and the necessity for its study has also been a point of contention among scholars and students alike since its inception. As a lack of an agreed upon clear definition continues to elude, potential humanists are discouraged from entering the field because they cannot see how they can contribute.

These issues are not completely the fault of humanists and their potential students. As the politicization of education increases, humanities courses have over time been relegated to 'general education' course the only status and have had their department funding cut. As the idea of education for national economic gain (Nussbaum 3) [4] spreads, fields such as Humanities face budget cuts while quantifiably profitable career fields and trades see budget increases. This work will look at what Humanities means, the impact of that definition (or lack thereof) on the state of its study, as well as other important factors that influence the current state of Humanities. It will also discuss the emergence of digital humanities and its contribution to the field. Finally, this author will offer their research and empirically based suggestions on what can be done to reignite interest in the study of humanities and the restoration of democracy in the humanities.

II. That Which Cannot be Named: The Fraught Task of Defining the Humanities

Carlos Leone (2006) [5] defines the Humanities within Kant's definition in his work *The Contest of the Faculties.* Written during the Enlightenment, Kant divides the Humanities into fields of historical and rational knowledge. This included "Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts, Language Studies, Life Sciences, Exact Sciences, and so on… It constitutes the sum of knowledge available in a society…It is the model of an enlightened society" (266). This Kantian model saw Humanities as the critical counterpart to the sciences, a keeper of tradition and culture while providing the humanist link between science and society. Leone also notes that Kant distinguished the Faculties between "those that are directly profitable to the government, and the one that is not as interesting to the political powers and, therefore, can deal with its interests more as it sees fit" (265). It is the freedom of Humanities that cannot be quantified that has contributed to its decline in interest among university administration.

Ullman (1946) [6] highlights the vagueness of the term 'humanities'. Noting that there is such a vast array of connotations that one should preface

their particular definition, he states: "It is all things to some men, and only a few things to others but these few things are priceless" (301). Ullman also calls attention to the synonymous use of humanities with liberal arts before settling on a definition of the "sum total of man's activities" (302). Both Ullman and Leone refer to the disciplines considered part of Humanities as those essentially 'left over' from the other disciplines of the time, namely Law, Medicine, and some Social Sciences. These were English, foreign languages, philosophy, music, art, and history, according to Ullman (303).

Jay (2010) [7] also notes the disputed term. To him, it ranges from the classical liberal arts to the interdisciplinary study that occurs today. He is also the only author noted in the research other than Alford & Elden (2013) to broach the topic of marginalization of race, class, and gender by Humanities. Traditionally studying the 'canon' of white, elitist men, humanist scholars base their definition of what should be considered academic off of this lack of inclusion. Included in this more contemporary and inclusive definition, Jay points to this marginalization in addition to the increase in professional schools and science fields as a reason for the "…steady decline in institutional support and prestige…" (52).

As technology becomes more and more prevalent in everyday life, education has become accessible to a greater number of people. This has changed the definition of how the humanities are studied. Out of this has come the study of digital humanities, which has also had an effect on what it means to study Humanities. The next section discusses the intersection of humanities and digital humanities, and how it relates to the state of Humanities, as well as the overall state of the study of Humanities.

III. Out of the Ivory Towers and into Technology: The State of Humanities and the Emergence of Digital Humanities

As previously stated, degrees in the field of Humanities have decreased by about half over the last 40 years (Holden, 1985, Armitage et. al, 2013). The study conducted by Armitage et al was specific for Harvard University's Humanities program, but the results are parallel to those at other universities across the country. They start by noting that from 1966-2010, completed Bachelor's degrees in Humanities fell from 12% to 7%, most of this happening between 1966-1987 (7). It is worth mentioning here that this dramatic downfall coincides with the Civil Rights, Women's, and Gay Rights movements. There is a strong possibility that due to the lack of clear definition of Humanities and its

contribution back to society, people who would have entered the field instead entered sociological and social justice fields, which more concretely outlined their contribution to society. They also note a decline in Humanities concentrators in addition to a decline in enrollment in Humanities courses. These drops in enrollment are steeper when History is included (36-20% instead of 24-17%). This also caused a decline in enrollment in General Education classes, as a majority of Humanities classes are general education requirements.

When accounting for the overall decline, Harvard dismisses the notion that its financial aid or the need to find immediate job security upon graduation as reasons for the loss of what it calls "would be Humanists" (8). They cite the social sciences as the reason that many students are drawn away from Humanities, almost blaming them. Armitage et al. do note that student satisfaction is higher in the humanities concentration than it is in others and that once declared, students remain faithful to the major in impressive numbers (93% in 2011) (9). In their survey, they also found that "intellectual curiosity and opportunity to contribute positively to society are primary motivators" (9). This indicates a predisposition towards community engagement and civic mindedness in students that can be utilized in a community collaborative academic service learning environment.

Alford & Elden (2013) [8] discuss the role and state of Humanities in the community college curriculum, where "Workforce training has become the mantra of college presidents and politicians…" (81). They also state that this leads to "…advocates of technical education in the community colleges questioning the utility of courses in the humanities…" (79). Alford & Elden report the same experience of humanities enrollment declining for decades and cite the main issue being the lack of marginalized voices in the canon (79-80). They believe that by introducing these narratives in the classroom, they can prepare today's students to understand and think critically about these groups and why they are oppressed (80). This is particularly important, considering the student population attending community college are often marginalized themselves, whether it be for race, class, gender, ability, or age. The decrease in courses in humanities in favor of technical certifications and workforce training "curriculum in most community colleges is devolving toward an educational model of passivity and inequality" (81); the opposite of what Alford & Elden suggest for the future of Humanities.

The emergence of digital humanities has grown both out of the increased technological access and as a do-it-yourself solution to departmental budget cuts

and changing needs for scholarly access and communication. This access has helped with the 'elitist' view of Humanities by emphasizing images and dialogue that can be taken or written by the common person. According to Liu (2010) [9], the digital humanities not only encompasses the older humanities disciplines, it also includes design, visual, and media arts (409). In this article, he examines the meaning of digital humanities within "the relation of the digital humanities to the humanities generally" (410). He equates them to "a shadow play for a future form of the humanities that wishes to include what contemporary society values about the digital without losing its soul to other domains of knowledge work that have gone digital…" (410). Liu discusses the tradition of non-collaboration in Humanities, positing that the digital humanities are a step forward in encouraging collaboration, which may help end the stagnation in the field. The contributors to *Hacking the Academy* [10] also highlight this instant sharing and collaboration as a means of jumpstarting the curriculum and moving it forward into the present. Throughout the book, the authors turn different contributing factors to the current down state of Humanities and turn them into do-it-yourself opportunities for instant feedback and communication in the field.

IV.   Putting the 'Human' Back in Humanities: What Can be Done to Turn the Tide and Re-Engage Students

There are several key shifts that need to occur for the humanities to regain some traction in both the academic and public spheres and the interest of the students. One of the most important and first things that need to be done is that the field as a whole needs to reconsider its apprehension to change. This includes re-examining the canon of authoritative texts on the humanities. Stock [11] writes: "Humanities methods have been extraordinarily stable over something like five centuries; all attempts to introduce alternatives have been successfully rebuffed" (1762). Bradford [12], in his article, states: "However, we must turn to philosophy to understand the basic errors lurking behind the complaint that Classical studies are out of date" (100). He also notes it is useful to "offer some check upon the variety of the forms of pride that have led the disciplines away from their proper channels" (101). The lack of inclusive research on marginalized people in Humanities when writing this paper is also another signifier of the need for Humanities to broaden its horizons. Human existence in itself comes in a variety of forms, which makes for a variety of histories, art, expressions of language and writing, and or course, film, music, and other digital arts. Even philosophy is not a static field. As plastic as human existence

is (Williams) [13], the field of Humanities should be just as transparent and malleable. Humanities have to apply its process of critical thinking about culture to its own culture.

The second factor is accessibility to learning humanities. Part of the reason for the decline of interest in Humanities is because of its elitism. Inherent in this issue is also classism. The origin of Humanities was created by elitist thinkers who also had the privilege to be able to obtain a higher education. This still persists today in both the public and private university atmosphere. Private universities, which tend to have larger Humanities programs, are also expensive to attend and are largely comprised of highly institutionally educated white professors teaching largely white upper middle-class students. Although there are more women attending these schools than there used to, there are not nearly as many ethnic, differently abled or queer students at these universities. Even in the public universities, where the ratios of diversity are a little higher, there are still a disproportionate amount of white middle-class students than poor, queer, and/or people of color.

The endeavor of educating the poor and people in prison in the humanities has been taken up and analyzed separately by Frank Cioffi [13] and Earl Shorris [14]. In his article, Cioffi shares his methodology of teaching humanities courses in prison. Sharing the similar issue of having to make the case for teaching Humanities in an environment where learning skills that have a greater marketability upon release are preferred and less costly (50). Considering the role of the college professor in prison as the "link between two worlds: the educated middle class and the largely lower-class, minority populated segment of society that makes up our prisons" (50), Cioffi shares his insight into balancing university classroom methods with methods necessary in such a restricted environment. In his book, which was inspired by a conversation with an inmate in a women's prison during a visit to conduct research, Shorris writes about his experience and methodology designing and implementing Humanities programs in poor areas all over the world.

The third is the incorporation of service learning into the program, which can actually enhance the accessibility factor in reaching potential students. Jay notes: "Many faculty and students have testified to the excitement of such collaborative projects and the prospect they offer for rejuvenating humanities education and salvaging the reputation of the humanities with the public" (55). One person Jay interviewed for his article stated: "…the outreach model reinforces conventional academic and public conceptions about the legitimate

production and ownership of knowledge. A vital practice of the humanities, we believe, depends upon the breakdown of this hierarchy and this conception." (55). Believing in this methodology as a means of bridging the rest of society with the 'ivory tower' university academic, Jay recognizes the setbacks that may prevent a professor from wanting or having the budget to create a service learning course. Admitting these programs are "among the first targets for budget cuts" (57), he then makes the argument for and provides solutions to common beliefs and outdated opinions about academic service learning and scholarship. He argues that "Successful community engagement requires critical reflection on gender, sexuality, diversity, and multiculturalism" (58), and that these courses create community collaboration, allowing for originally underserved youth to see they have access and purpose in higher education (58).

Sandy (2013) [16], in her article, writes: "This participation addresses community defined needs; integrates local and expert knowledge; includes academic texts, reflection and hands-on work; and may include explicit goals for citizenship and character development as well as aspirations for social justice" (308). A former community organizer, she has a solid perspective on why service learning should be integrated into the Humanities curriculum. She discusses the Sophist history of the humanities and its effect on the further development of humanities during the Enlightenment. She notes the shift in the study of Humanities during this time, in which it became integrated more with science, set the stage for academic service learning to flourish in the field. By bringing in a new "*public, pragmatic philosopher's paradigm*" (313), Humanists opened the door to community collaboration.

Another key emerging factor is the issue of acceptance of the growing field of digital humanities within traditional humanities. All of the aforementioned suggestions to improve the field are present here. The digital humanities are more inclusive than traditional humanities, are more accessible, and can be incorporated into a service learning curriculum. In his article, Jeff Rice [17] outlines how the field of digital humanities can improve itself as it continues to emerge, and shows traditional humanities scholars how they fit into the picture. He notes that humanities scholars can help those in the digital humanities by: "…showing coded meaning in various digital texts so that experience is better understood" (361).The contributors to *Hacking the Academy* iterate the idea that education is everywhere, and as society evolves, it is necessary to evolve the idea of what is considered academic. Throughout the book, the writers discuss publishing articles online instantly instead of waiting

months for a response from an academic journal. The articles, they argue, are peer-reviewed right away, in an ever-evolving discourse and exchange that is at the heart of the reason people enter the field. By utilizing the digital environment, researchers are also able to take a do-it-yourself approach to the dissemination of information and communication in the field. This inclusive nature of accessibility and flexibility breaks down hierarchies by leveling the academic playing field of who has access to being published. It also allows work to be read by a wider audience, spreading ideas even further than the standard conference/publication format.

V.   Conclusion

The humanities are just as important now as they have ever been, perhaps even more so with the current political environment being one that stifles democracy and the arts. It has been shown throughout this writing that the humanities are necessary to teach empathy and critical thinking skills, both of which are required tools for a democratic society. Holden notes in her article: "…they are a body of knowledge and a means of inquiry that conveys serious truths, defensible judgments, and significant ideas" (150). In addition, despite the disagreement in the definition(s) of what the humanities are across the articles used for this research, all authors referenced agreed that critical thinking and empathy were key lessons learned in Humanities. These skills allow for a constructive exchange of ideas through the ability to see the viewpoint of another, which leads to more peaceful settling of conflicts, challenging the status quo, and strengthening our democracy. With the rising interest and popularity of the digital humanities as both an alternative and enhancement to the field of Humanities, this process has the potential to simultaneously be easier for those outside of the academy and to expand the field exponentially.

It is important to iterate the other, political reasons that contribute to the continuing decline of interest in Humanities. Nussbaum points this out in her book*,* noting the shift toward education for profit over education for democracy. As career programs that provide economic growth for the nation are heavily funded, those that do not produce an immediate tangible effect are cut, including Humanities and Social Sciences. The fallout from this, as Nussbaum points out, is that: "Nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves…" (2). Considering the suppression of democracy that occurs from cutting the departments that teach critical thinking, it is necessary for humanists to re-think what it means to study the humanities. It's time to climb down out of

the ivory tower, and into the streets and onto the computers to show the powers that be that being a 'citizen of the world' is still important and that it includes ALL citizens, not just the elite that can afford a college education. Humanities have the opportunity to make resurgence in popularity, as well as show society that it does have a clear role in contributing back in a way that positively affects social change. If the research is any indication, Humanities are necessary for a continuing and thriving society. Given the anti-intellectualism that is insidiously infiltrating both the academy and the streets, the time to revive the important study of our culture is now.

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Inducing a Global Phantasm: The Case of the Veiled Presence of Islam in *The 99* or the 'Islamic' Comic Superheroes

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Abstract: *Using the concept of phantasm, this article examines the media stories by Naif Al-Mutawa, the creator of The 99, which is touted as the first 'Islamic' cartoon superheroes. His stories attempt to globalize The 99, but in a manner that veils Islam. His global phantasm, therefore, upholds the visual policy of Islam, but it also makes The 99 no longer Islamic. This is how the global phantasm is induced—by making in/visible Islam but makes questionable the super-heroic status of The 99.*

**Keywords*:* cartoon, comic superheroes, Islam, Naif Al-Mutawa, phantasm

I. INTRODUCTION

 In defining cartooning not as a method of drawing, but "a way of seeing," McCloud is drawing attention to its "special power:" magnifying an idea by stripping it of details. In short, simplifying by amplifying (1994, 31). Strictly speaking, a cartoon drawing is empty, but the emptiness "draws our identities and awareness," thus filling it up with ideas or concepts (Ibid. 36). This became the situation of *The 99*, the first comic cartoon to feature Muslim superhero characters that represent The 99 virtues of Allah. Its creator, the Kuwaiti Muslim Naif Al-Mutawa, constructed a simplified narrative to magnify what *The 99* is all about.

Al-Mutawa engaged in what Mamdani calls 'culture talk,' a kind of rhetoric that makes culture the explanation of an event, thus stripping it of historical and political underpinning (2004, 17). He traces its foundation from the intellectual works of Bernard Lewis's *Roots of Muslim Rage* and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, which had long prepared the Western

public to equate Islam and terrorism as one and the same. Culture talk promoted the idea that the Green Peril was more dangerous than the Communist Red (Ibid., 25).

Having studied in the US and openly acknowledging his identification with American values (PRI 2014), Al-Mutawa's engagement with culture talk is understandable. His own kind of culture talk is to personalize the anxiety toward Islam that such talk had elicited. As Santo points out, "the story of *The 99* is almost always also the story" of Al-Mutawa rather than about the comic's content (2014, 686). Indeed, Saint-Louis (2011) questions the legitimacy of *The 99* as a comic book. It earned a publishing award from UNESCO and praises from influential organizations like TED Talk despite 'little proof of influence and literary value.' *The 99* became valuable, not for any result, but for its "potentials" (Ibid.).

Al-Mutawa has explained these potentials to the media as stories. These stories came in the form of interviews and media coverage in 2010-2011 when *The 99* entered the US's comic market through a 'crossover' team-up with DC Comics. International media, whose self-identity is global and having understood *The 99* as 'Muslim' tagged it as 'global' and 'Islamic.' Al-Mutawa's expressed goal is to use the comic cartoon as a medium for 'correcting the negative perception of Islam/Muslim among Muslim themselves. His 'corrective goal' provides the context for his stories about *The 99*, which he constructed as a phantasm to underscore what makes *The 99* global, but not Islamic.

II. STORIES AS PHANTASM

Fox Harrell points out that human condition or that which we accept as reality is 'partly the result of imagination.' Imagining is made experiential by "broader stories" conveyed by different media like film, television, photography or books. These media convey a phantasm, which provides the audience a sensory experience by watching images that also contained ideas or ideas that also suggest an image. Those images and ideas are filled up by our "subjective, emotional and intellectual impressions," hence the notion of phantasm as imagined and experienced by our senses. The diagram below represents how phantasm is constructed according to Fox Harrel (2013, 11-12).

Phantasm (space) is drawn from a cultural worldview, which is basically a source of one's knowledge, beliefs, and values. As such, it also functions as a knowledge domain where one can propose an epistemic space or a shortened version of worldview. Also known as a conceptual space, the epistemic space is framed by arranging ideas or information about the recent event. These sensory images inserted into epistemic space results in the creation of a phantasm. What we see is the phantasm, but not the cultural worldview from which it is derived. By examining these sensory and ideas, one can expose the worldviews being upheld or challenged by that phantasm. Al-Mutawa provides an interesting angle to Fox-Harrel's phantasm revealed; Al-Mutawa hides as much as he reveals.

III.   THE COMIC SUPERHERO AS PHANTASM: 9/11 VS THE 99

The comic superhero is a medium of phantasm. Superheroes, then and now, basically performs the same function: to impart a worldview, an epistemic understanding, of a world has gone awry (Robb 2014, 360).

> Ancient myths and legends are littered with 'supermen', gifted by gods with extraordinary powers. They offered explanations of why things were as they were, explaining customs, civilization's institutions, and origins of their specific taboos. From the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, through the Indian's *Mahabharata*, to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, right up to the Virgil's *Aeneid*, the epic tale took shape and proved to be a major influence on the creation and evolution of later superhero stories (Ibid., 20-25).

Superheroes are particularly popular during bad times or moments of social unrest and political upheavals, which generate a corpus of explanations from politicians, activists, intellectuals, media organizations and the popular culture industry. These bad times are actually good for the creators of superheroes. The economic boom of the Clinton years bankrupted the Marvel Comic Group, but the Bush/Blair war on terror was profitable for superheroes' writers (DiPaolo 2011, 1). After 9/11, the "villainous Arabs and Muslims" that serve as backdrops to American superheroes "reached a critical mass," thus creating a "market for the increasingly curious" (Phillips and Strobl 2013, 59). Though the 9/11 event "minted" new heroes from the first responders who

assisted the victims and survivors, which suggests the notion that the fictional superheroes have nothing to do anymore, the "villainization of the Arab and Muslim continued" (Ibid.). Al-Mutawa has made such villainization the primary target of his phantasm.

Though 9/11 made it possible to imagine the Islamic world as a phantom or a specter, it also iconized anyone who looks like an Arab as both a "Muslim" and a "terrorist." Thus, the phantom is also a phantasm that can be corrected by a worldview of progress, modernity, and secularism. In recent years, the image (pictorial) and the imagery (idea conveyed), the Muslims have sharpened the profile of the terrorists as they started identifying themselves as Muslims (Shyrock 2010, 1). This also strengthened Al-Mutawa's belief that the prevailing Islamophobia is the fault of the Muslims themselves.

The 99 was launched in Kuwait in 2006 or five years after the 9/11 event. Al-Mutawa's initial epistemic domain is the conflation of 99/11 with 99 by a simple mathematical equation. In an open letter to his son he wrote for the BBC website (2009), Al-Mutawa addresses the third one and recounts how he figured *The 99.*

> Khalid, you were born in New York City, shortly after 9/11. I had already made a decision that I needed to find a way to take back Islam from its hostage takers, but I did not know how. The answer was staring me in the face. It was simple, and as difficult, as the multiplication of 9 by 11:99.

The mathematics appears simplistic but the outcome appears smart. By equating 9/11 with his 99 comic cartoon project, Al-Mutawa created the figure of the victim—Islam—and the villain—the Muslim themselves. He recalls a pre-9/11 incident in an article he wrote for the CNN (2010). He further describes his action as "a point of intellectual critical mass where my love for religion overwhelmed my sitting in silence any longer."

> Fifteen years ago I walked out of a mosque in silent protest of the imam's sermon. The imam was railing against the foreign enemies of Islam and the sinners within. With every genocidal rant came an "amen" from the congregation. As I stood up, I

stared at the imam to make sure he knew that at least one person
would no longer accept the recipe of his revenge.

Al-Mutawa's is concerned about the image of Islam, of how it is being "manipulated even within my extended family" and how Muslims "see themselves in my part of the world." (Ibid.). He expresses "alarm at how Islam is being seen in the West" after the 9/11 event but stresses 'it is more important how Islam sees itself.' As a licensed psychologist and a father, he thinks children will get "fixated on bad things" (Rogers 2010). In other words, Muslim children might play the role of the villain, which has already been rendered visually.

Upon learning the circulation of children's stickers "glorifying suicide bombers," Al-Mutawa promptly "put his clinical psychology practice on hold" to raise the capital for "heroes the Muslim world could be proud of" (Brittan 2006). The powers and characteristics of a superhero, however, are also "the characteristic of a villain." True villains regard themselves as a superhero and just like the superhero, the villains also regard themselves as the "representative of the values of their society (Fingeroth 2014, 16). But in Al-Mutawa's epistemic domain, such figure of the villain-as-also-hero will have no space.

IV.   THE ABSENT MUSLIM SUPERHERO AS PHANTASM SPACE

A moderate, Al-Mutawa considers suicide bombers neither honorable nor heroic-- though they convey the heroic image of self-sacrifice in the name of communal interest (Hassan 2009). As far as he is concerned, it is an expression of violent extremism from which Muslim children needed the figure of a superhero, which Al-Mutawa regards as absent on his side of the world. He points out that superheroes were defending North America and Japan (Macmillan 2008). "But where were the superheroes for children in the Islamic world?" (Haggman 2012). In finding none, Al-Mutawa had created the absent superhero. This absence provides the phantasm space for *The 99*, which Al-Mutawa imagined as fighting, not some actual invaders or oppressors, but ostensibly the perpetrators of Islam's negative image—the Muslims themselves.

Such perceptions have been strongly conveyed by "guns, bombs, and war," which Al-Mutawa believes can only be countered by "crowding them out," that is to present something stronger than "bombs, guns, and war." To a

Western audience, these are iconizing acts that picture Islam/Muslim as extremists. Al-Mutawa tells his interviewer "how you compete with that?" Apparently, the approach is not to compete, which is more the language of crowding them out. Thus, in the same interview, Al-Mutawa shifts from crowding them out to "averaging it out" (Ellliman 2012). In other words, make it even. Al-Mutawa demonstrates his averaging-it-out approach by flashing this picture to his audience at his TED Talk (2010). He used this picture to "shock into action" prospective investors of *The 99*. For Al-Mutawa, this picture, which was selling millions, promotes a "culture of violence and death" and needs a counter-image to "save children from embracing" such a culture (Boustany 2006).

Fig 1   Fig 2

Al-Mutawa annotates this picture by calmly pointing out to an audience that is all too familiar with the sign of the cross and the horror of the swastika symbol: "you know there's a big parallel between bending the crucifix out of shape and creating the swastika." He draws a parallel between the Qur'an being twisted into a suicide bombing belt around a child's body. He informs his audience that there are parents and relatives who find this picture "cute." For Al-Mutawa, Fig 1 is neither cute nor heroic; it is a negative image. He tells his audience that by "linking enough positive things to the Qur'an, then one day we can move this child from being proud in the way they're proud there (Fig 1) to that (Fig 2)."

For Al-Mutawa, Fig.1, which he notes as a source of 'less pride,' spreads hate and must be "named and shamed." Al-Mutawa himself seems to hate and ashamed of what Fig.1 stands for. In an article he wrote, he reveals an affinity with the serial killer *Dexter*, an American television series about a man who witnessed the bloody murder of his parents as a child and grew up to become a serial murderer. Dexter, however, only kills those who deserved to die like his own fellow criminal. Al-Mutawa does not find Dexter problematic; he does not deserve to be caught, unlike 'Muslim protagonists who harm the innocents' (Al-Mutawa, 2015a).

Fig.1 is also very personal to Al-Mutawa. Consistent with his belief in the power of the image is the belief that his sons might become the very image he is trying to counteract. Upon the birth of his fifth son, a relative remarked he had enough "boys to liberate Palestine." He did not want to know if the relative was serious, but "offering my sons as cannon fodder to kill other children in a futile war was not how I wanted to spend my first day with my newborn." Since a war to liberate Palestine is 'futile,' he would rather that his boys win a basketball game (Al-Mutawa, 2015b). Al-Mutawa explains why fighting for Palestinian liberation is futile and won't provide a heroic figure worth emulating:

> One thing that kept popping into my mind was the lack of real, proper modern day role models and heroes in our part of the world. Historical figures as role models have issues; it depends on what side you belong. You know the whole George Washington conundrum…to American he's a political hero, to the British he's a political terrorist. So that's the problem with historical figures in Islamic society as well. Except with the prophet (pbuh), there are few people on whom everyone would agree as their hero (Mujtaba 2008).

Al-Mutawa's aversion to the political is evident when he turns into a humorous anecdote an incident he recalls to his TED Talk audience. As an undergraduate student at Tufts University, he distributed free falafel during the school's Middle East Day. A woman, who had just attended an Amnesty International Meeting, approached him and asked, "Who's Falafel?" With the audience laughing, Al-Mutawa emphasizes that misunderstanding due to 'twisting of religion' can be rectified by Superman and *The 99*.

Religion is central to Al-Mutawa's phantasm because it is "prone to misappropriations," particularly Islam. He promptly adds, however, that the West is also prone to use 'good books' to violent ends. His favorite example is Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, which he thinks was misappropriated by Chapman (John Lennon's killer) and Hinckley (Reagan's failed assassin) (PRI 2014). So why did not Al-Mutawa end up murderous despite being "enamored" with the author that he also read his other novels? He tried to seek the answer by rereading *Catcher in the Rye* for clues on why he himself did not have the urge to shoot somebody. But he "found nothing, "despite the personal effect on him of the author's words. Citing the millions of copies sold and linking the two violent incidents to this novel, Al-Mutawa concludes, "Clearly the fault is that of the reader" (Ibid.).

He had said the same of the readers of the Qur'an, "The problem with what's going on in this part of the world is not the Qur'an. It's the reader. It's not the book." Al-Mutawa portrays that reader as closed-minded and carries in its head 'burning thoughts of hatred' (Solotaroff 2002-2011). Coming from a licensed psychologist, Al-Mutawa's diagnosis of 'bad reader' of a 'good book' sounds simplistic. But it resonates with a public that would find it easy to explain away a murderer as psychotic. For what is a psychotic but a shortened explanation of the political, cultural, and moral ramifications of a violent act? Al-Mutawa labels those who literally venerate the Qur'an and disregard its literary 'depth and meaning' as 'shameful' and those not open to outside ideas as having a 'diseased intellect.' He calls the Kuwait court that was about to issue a verdict if he had indeed 'insulted' Islam by creating *The 99* "the dumb fish in the desert" (Al-Mutawa 2015a).

Responding to media's call for Muslims to apologize for the terroristic killing at *Charlie Hebdo,* which published a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammed, Al-Mutawa put himself on both sides of the clearly divisive situation. Siding with Islam's graphic policy, he considered the magazine's "content as heinous and hateful." But he won't apologize for acts inspired by "illiterate imams who spew hatred in their pulpits" and carried out by the "deranged, the ill-informed and the uneducated" (Al-Mutawa 2015b). His unapologetic statement further underscores his mission to 'correct' the image of Islam among Muslim themselves (Ahmad 2010). As proof the power of imagery, he cites the American television show *The Cosby Show* and how it "changed African American view of themselves" (Al-Mutawa 2015c). He likes to mention that

the show did not make any reference to racial inequality at all, "just positive representation" (Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 2011).

Associating one with the other is Al-Mutawa's phantasmic space because he believes in 'learning by association' as he tells his TED Talk audience. Through learning by association, he has effectively made the audience see the link between religion and superheroes.

V. RELIGION AS THE EPISTEMIC DOMAIN OF SUPERHEROES

Al-Mutawa is not exactly introducing a new meaning about religion, but he is posing an epistemic space where the Islamic superheroes can be easily inserted into the existing worldview or knowledge about the superheroes. As he likes to emphasize, Western superheroes are also affiliated with a religion. Moreover, Islam and Christianity "were born in the same neighborhood under similar conditions" (Al-Mutawa 2010). Jewish writers created Batman and Superman based on the Bible (Haggman 2012). Superheroes, "like the prophets," have missing parents and received a message "from above just like the prophets." Superman was sent to earth "in a pod much like Moses" and his father, Jor-el, tells earth, "I have sent to you my only son" (Al-Mutawa 2010).

In another simple but informative observation, Al-Mutawa points out that, though god-descended, these superheroes are not religious, for instance, they do not pray (Rogers 2010). Al-Mutawa likes to stress that it is their non-religiosity that makes them universally acceptable, which could be applied to *The 99:* "The premise is that I've secularized the content and archetypes from the Qur'an so the storyline is universal and applicable to everybody" (Kennedy 2011). In interview after interview, Al-Mutawa would draw attention to this premise. He would tell his prospective investors that 'western comics books were based on Biblical archetypes" so why not a comic book based on Islamic archetypes (KUNA 2013). He also likes to tell his audience that Pokemon is based Japanese values that also achieved a global following.

Pokemon is also something close and personal to Al-Mutawa because he got the idea of The 99 attributes from Pokemon's 300 attributes. "Pokémon spurred the idea for *The 99* and if I was going to write something, it would have to be something that has the potential of Pokémon," (Kennedy, Ibid.) If such a

recognizably Japanese name made it to the global, then it could be done to something unmistakably Islamic. Indeed, the media bannered *The 99* as "Islamic" in headline after headline. Al-Mutawa prominently displays some of these on *The 99* page of his website with Newsweek giving it a full cover treatment. A click of this photograph leads the reader, not to the full article, but to an enlarged version of the same photograph http://www.al-mutawa.com/newsweek/.

This web page is consistent with Al-Mutawa's concerned with dissociating Islam from *The 99.* Initially, the only apparent Muslim in the Newsweek cover is the word Muslim although the characters are not immediately recognizable as Muslim or Arabic. But there, in the far right corner of the cover, is a mosque or rather what looks like a mosque. One could easily mistake it for a castle or a palace, which is just as well. Al-Mutawa would like to see the day when children will not recognize it as a mosque, but identity it according to their cultural terms. A child calling the mosque a temple or a church is for Al-Mutawa mission accomplished. As proof that this is possible, he cites his Irish Catholic teacher who thought that Muslims "were all Irish Catholic!" (Kennedy 2011).

VI. THE DISSOCIATED ISLAM FROM THE 99 AS PHANTASM

Al-Mutawa's technique of associating *The 99* with the universal, and therefore, its global character, is also his technique of dissociating it from Islam. He has

assembled his own version of the news about *The 99* not only to emphasize the magnitude of media attention it generated but also to de-emphasize their emphasis.

In Al-Mutawa's version of media coverage, *The 99* is emphasized as global (East and West) with such attributes as 'working together,' eschewing 'hatred and selfishness,' inspiring for its 'cultural, historical, and philosophical values,' and 'secular yet spiritual.' In contrast, the stress in the original news article is on the religious affiliation of *The 99:* Islamic, Muslim, Qur'an, and 'terrorist.' Al-Mutawa's version is consistent with his goal of secularizing Islam through *The 99.*

As a medium of 'secularized Islam,' Al-Mutawa explains that *The 99* is "inspired by Islam," but "it is not Islamic" (Moulthrop 2012). Al-Mutawa emphasizes that though the characters 'personify the attributes of God,' they do not pray (Boustany 2006), go to the mosque or talk about Islam (Hagmann 2012). The editor of *The 99,* Marie Javins, echoes Al-Mutawa's definition of a secularized Islam, "they are *not* Muslim superheroes--we don't identify them as religious or not religious" (Moore, n.d.). Asked if "Islam is invisible" in *The 99*, Al-Mutawa replies "No, it's subtle...Islam as a religion is not in there."

Making Islam not obvious in *The 99* is, for Al-Mutawa, to "beat" religious extremism. To demonstrate how this will happen, Al-Mutawa another association: how art and culture prevailed over medieval Europe during the Reformation and Renaissance, and adds "that's what has to happen in the Muslim world" (Ibid.). The association, however, is meant to detach Islam from *The 99* as Al-Mutawa positioned it in the realm of art and culture. In that realm, the task of *The 99* is not religious but to "bring back wisdom and reason back to the world" (Ibid.). Al-Mutawa explains the "essence of *The 99:*"

> The concept of *The 99* doesn't directly incorporate Islam. It's only about its positive values. When you read the comic, there's no mention of Allah or the Prophet (pbuh). Nobody is praying, nobody is reading the Qur'an. There's no religion in the book. It's based on the basic human values that well share, the real virtues of Islam, the attributes of Allah...generosity, strength, wisdom, foresight, and mercy. This is the essence of *The 99* (Mujtaba 2008).

The translation of *The 99's* essence is built around the formula of a group of young male and female heroes who are given 99 stones that contain The 99 attributes of Allah. The stones contained the preserved knowledge of the great library of Baghdad prior to its destruction by the Mongols in 1258. These stones have been dispersed in 99 countries, hence, *The 99* characters are also drawn from different countries, both Islamic and non-Islamic, East and West. Al-Mutawa considers The 99 dispersed stones as the 'personification of the modern Islamic diaspora' (Ibid.).

Diaspora is another familiar term and strongly associated with the Jews and the imagery of forced displacement. Al-Mutawa seems to be forcing the same for the Muslims, but this for the purpose of underscoring his idea that "there is nothing fundamentally different between Islam and any other belief on Earth or any other way of being human." Thus, when asked if the characters in *The 99* are meant to be Muslim since Islam is not mentioned, Al-Mutawa says "we don't say...The 99 attributes of Allah are attributed that not only Muslims value but humanity values." These values, if detached from religion 'would bring us together' (Solotaroff, 2002-2011).

For Al-Mutawa, the Muslims are not together—with the rest of the world. Unlike minorities whose culture has already been integrated (Jewish Hannukah now scheduled during Christmas), Muslims (considering their large number in across different parts of the world), according to Al-Mutawa, have 'isolated themselves' (Ibid.). Al-Mutawa's solution is not to mention the word Muslim or Islam. This solution has been achieved by not hiring Arab or Muslim talent for *The 99* (Santo 2014, 686). One of *The 99's* talents who wrote for the series Batman and Superman stressed the no-difference approach, "Honestly, the only difference is in the specifics. It's the exact same thing. There's virtually no difference at all" (Cadwalladr 2010). This clearly creates a blank in the mind of the audience.

To what form then can *The 99* become visually appealing? Al-Mutawa admitted that "I knew from the beginning that I wanted *The 99* to look like an American comic book" (Vazquez, n.d.). So why not go straight to creating an American cartoon? "I am not naive. If it were the 98 superheroes, or the 101, no one would be interested in the stories" (Zekri 2007).

VII.   ISLAMIC ARCHETYPES/STEREOTYPES AS EPISTEMIC SPACE

The different specifics that did not make any difference at all are the "Islamic archetypes," said Al-Mutawa who further explains that he did not want a "Middle Eastern style or invent anything new or unusual' (Vazquez, n.d.). With his archetype in mind, Al-Mutawa admits "always having to correct people" who have stereotyped *The 99* as Islamic: "It's not Islamic. It's inspired by Islam. It is inspired by Islam in the way that so many American comics are inspired by Judeo-Christian archetypes" (Ibid.).

When asked what are the archetypes in *The 99*, Al-Mutawa cites a) the Noor stones containing the "wisdom of the ages," which has a self-updating mechanism so that knowledge is not frozen in the past; b) characters work in groups of three young people, which make the stone more effective than if they were old; and c) the stones are subject to misuse. His basic premise is that if religion is used for the wrong reason, "you get to blow yourself up. That's where I'm coming from" (Ibid.). To his interviewer (Vazquez) Al-Mutawa's archetypes appear more symbolic rather than Islamic. He asked what exactly makes them Islamic. Al-Mutawa's answers by reverting to what he has already denied or rather what he specifically said as 'we don't say.'

> Well, for one thing, all of the characters' powers are based on the attributes of God. But also the main bad guy's name is Rughal. And as any Muslim child can tell you, Abu Rughal is the name of the one who gave directions to King Abraha's army, which was marching on the Kaaba to destroy it the year the Prophet was born. It's known as the Year of the Elephant, because there were elephants in Abraham's army. Now in the Qur'an,…

In the course of the interview, Vazquez politely told him, "it just seemed interesting to fight stereotypes with things that are sort of blank." Al-Mutawa conceded that to a non-Muslim, *The 99* are simply good stories, but Muslims would know that these stories are from the Qur'an (Santo, Ibid.). Clements and Gauvin (2014) find that Kuwaiti students recognized Islam in *The 99* despite non-reference to Islam. Some of them agreed with the principle of *jihad* as a "defensive force" and the absence of graphic violence (42). Clements and Gauvin, however, note that none of them sensed the "revolutionary implication" of *The 99*: that the young are the most appropriate bearer of Islam's virtues (58).

They rationalize this by pointing out the Kuwaitis are generally happy with their political leaders and value the 'wisdom of their elders' that having the youth take on a leadership role is one "particular idea not consonant with Islam" (58).

Al-Mutawa, however, might disagree with their observation that attempts to link Islam and *The 99*. In another radio interview, he was asked again why the characters are "not overtly religious?" He emphatically underscores that the "keyword is not Islam, it is humanity."

> I am not interested in spreading Islam. Put human values, that's what human being can agree on. When you put on religion or behavior [such as praying], people will disagree (Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 2011).

In another interview, he calls *The 99* as a way of saying "Hey, this is how I personally choose to portray Islam." He hopes that someone would respond by saying "Hey, this is how I portray it" (Musaji 2011). Someone did and led *The 99* to the *Justice League of America*. Once again, Al-Mutawa's 'learning by association' did the trick. Obama had publicly praised Al-Mutawa at the 2010 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship for "spreading tolerance and *The 99* as "most innovative for capturing the imagination young people" (Walid 2011). Having already established a personal connection with DC Comics, Al-Mutawa prompted them to put *The 99*, in the same way, Marvel did it to Obama upon his historic election as president.

For Al-Mutawa, Marvel had "pulled a cheap shot" when Obama became president, but DC Comics "has the opportunity to fulfill Obama's vision" (Rogers 2010). Needless to say, it was also Al-Mutawa's vision, but once hidden and revealed by the prestige and stature of an American president. Indeed, the entry of Obama has been noted as 'legitimizing' *The 99* (Ibid.).

VIII. THE DIMINISHING PHANTASM SPACE OF THE 99

The 'fulfilled vision' was the 'crossover' of *The 99* and the *Justice League of America* (JLA) composed of Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman. The idea of crossover is an epistemic space. Not only is it a 'rare' feat for two sets of superheroes teaming up to battle bad and evil forces, it also serves as a 'corrective' for the 'Arabs evils' that have been beaten by Batman, Superman, and Wonder (Cadwalladr 2010). As a phantasm, the crossover becomes a shared

space for the meeting of "East and West," which is another shortened version of imagining the Islamic world with the rest of the world. Such a shared phantasmic space, explains DC's Fabian Nicieza, involves a "combination of seasoned veterans (JLA) and young, idealistic heroes (*The 99*). He tries to force an image of fun by making "odd combinations" like the friendship of Women Woman and "the cute" eight-year-old Samda the Invulnerable (Rogers 2010).

The DC expressed support of "The 99's mission of universal peace and brotherhood," but it is a qualified "brotherhood." The *Justice League* has full command of all situation, but "*The* 99 have to work in little ways" to assist civilians and "also" in solving problems peacefully. And this exactly what is visualized in the six crossover issues of *The 99/JLA*. The old, veteran, and professional superheroes have been endowed with command and control, thus, diminishing the presence of *The 99*. This is apparent in the crossover covers of Issues 1-5.

The cover of Issue no.1 introduces both world's superheroes with the *JLA* assuming the role of the 'greatest' and *The 99* as the 'newest.' The teaser conveys the idea that the *JLA* has 'joined' *The 99* to create unbeatable "super-powered beings." The word is double-edged for it implies the union of equal while also suggesting that *The 99* needs the other for its super-power qualities. This is represented by the most familiar image of Superman and Batman enclosing *The 99's* characters, particularly the women.

The seemingly questionable super-power of *The 99* becomes clearer in the cover teaser of Issue no.2. It actually asks "how can *The 99* hope to stop an out-of-control Superman?" It gives a tentative answer: 'perhaps with the help of Batman and Wonder Woman, *The 99* can make a difference.' But the help simply underscores the uncertainty of *The 99's* power.

The cover of Issue no.3 poses the same question (Can Hafiz harness the stone's power) as JLA's Hawkman is made to "join" three members of *The 99* in earthquake-devastated Brazil thus conveying the idea that without the *JLA*, *The 99* is inadequately super though they are given prominence in the cover.

Issue no. 4 attempts to even it out between *JLA* and *The 99* as shared the 'strain of dealing with an alien invasion.' However, it is up to *JLA's* Batman to find the one item that would save the "two venerable superhero team." Thus, the

visualization of this issue's cover prominently projects an unassailable Batman in contrast to the struggling characters of *The 99*.

Issue no.5 repeats the prominence of *The 99* on the cover. The teaser, however, puts into question the integrity of their team-up with the *JLA*. "Can the united 99 and the JLA" saved Dr. Ramzi's vision of global harmony? They did, proving that the two "disparate teams" can pull themselves together (Issue no. 6). But the final issue of the crossover, however, bows to the veterans and the old, or more precisely, the young literally bowing down to the upright positioning of the old and the veteran *JLA*.

IX.   CONCLUSION: PICTURING THE BLANK OR THE IN/VISIBLE

The *JL/The 99*crossover issues did not deviate from Al-Mutawa's vision, which he first presented during his 2010 TED Talk. Understandably playing into his American audience's cultural sensitivity, Al-Mutawa first flashed the picture of the *JLA* followed by *The 99*.

Note that the title of Al-Mutawa's slide makes an explicit reference to the Holy Cross while he completely omits Islamic references to The 99's characters as he introduces some of them to his audience. He has maintained the same position of muting or making invisible the Islamic derivation of *The 99*. No doubt, Al-Mutawa will always be asked on what makes it Islamic-inspired to an audience curious or unfamiliar with it and he will provide the same answer—of leaving one's imagination blank until he fills it up with information and icons that are already global, and therefore shared, in the first place.

Al-Mutawa's phantasmic stories, which literally cover-up the Islamic in *The 99* are also a screen against picturing it as Islamic or Arabic, which is a seeming conformity with Islam's visual policy on its god. Its global rendition by DC comics effectively makes it in/visible. It is there, but it is not immediately seen as Islam-inspired unless Al-Mutawa explains. In other words, it is global because it is not Islamic.

In another interview, Al-Mutawa is asked to choose between the power of flight and the power of invisibility. He chooses invisibility because it "takes the pressure off" (Burney 2011). Without Al-Mutawa's stories, the pressure of being Islamic/Muslim is divested from *The 99*. But his phantasmic stories also create the same effect—of making Islam dis/appear—into the heroic prestige of Superman et.al. If such is the case, *The 99* are neither super nor heroes. They are basically an empty cartoon from which a phantasm can be drawn.

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"But haud me fast…": The Socialization, not Psychoanalysis, of the Heroic Couple within 'Tam Lin' and Its Contemporary Retellings

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Abstract: Though the majority of contemporary criticism has shifted focus from the hero to the heroine, their concerns remain on the ways in which the external world reflects on the individual character. However, within the genre of young adult, there has emerged a new heroic category: the couple. Rather than focusing on the obvious connector of romantic love or sexual desire, I will examine the external ways heroic couples are bound together, and how this affects the overall structure of the plot. It is my contention that these characters are connected by external social/cultural conventions necessitating both their individual and combined actions. Using the established story structure of the ballad of Tam Lin as a baseline, I will look at the ways story-telling, nature and social expectations define the heroic couple within not only the original ballad but also the contemporary retellings of Perilous Gard by Elizabeth Pope and Fire and Hemlock by Diana Wynne Jones. In this way, I will also be exploring the ways in which this common folk tale has changed through its various retellings and how these changes are accentuated through the external conventions surrounding the heroic couple.
Keywords - heroic couple, culture, Tam Lin, story-telling, young adult literature

I-   INTRODUCTION- THE HEROIC COUPLE

Classically, a hero is a male individual progressing towards an ideal. With the popularity of Freud's theories, scholarship has been primarily focused on the psycho-systematic development of the hero rather than the sociocentric influences on characterization. Though the discussion of heroes has begun to include many heroines, the psychoanalytical approach remains a favorite even

today. Indeed, character relationships within this purview only serve as indicators of certain aspects of the heroic person's personality or internal struggle. Working under this premise, critics, particularly of young adult literature, find the shift in the heroic gender of more cultural interest.

However, heroes are not solitary outsiders. If they lack support from the community of their birth, they cultivate their own. Superheroes gain 'sidekicks' and join justice leagues; Sherlock adopts Watson. Heroes must "… direct 'the plot of [his own life]' so that each moment strengthens one's sense of belonging to a wider community" (Moretti 19). This increasing level of socialization informs and defines a hero's behavior. It is Watson who tells the stories and explains Sherlock's actions; it is also Watson who influences and changes Sherlock's perspective. The hero and the community have a symbiotic relationship without which they could never accomplish their idealized objectives. The 'sidekicks' are the characters that pave the way for the climatic last stand. Hermione and Ron, for example, complete the preliminary tasks so Harry can face Voldemort. Heroes cannot function without their communities.

The first gateway of socialization lies within the heroic couple dynamic.This term is defined as two characters whose relationship drives or defines the action within a story or novel. It is also an acknowledged staple of most young adult literature with a female protagonist. The scholar John Stephens in his essay entitled "Impartiality and Attachment: Ethics and Ecopoiesis in Children's Narrative Texts" identifies heroic couples as "cathartic relationships" (207). He further defines these character connections as those "…grounded in the ideational and emotional investment one person has with another which range from pre-teen close friendships to young adult incipient romances" (207). The emotional connection between two characters is not limited to mainstream heterosexual norms of romance and friendship. Homosexual and bisexual relationships also fulfill an individual's need to broaden their social sphere. However, I will be focusing my comments on heterosexual romantic couplings because of the added element of gender social roles. With this in mind, I will be focusing my attentions on the 'Ballad of Tam Lin' and two of its contemporary retellings: *The Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Marie Pope and *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones. There, I will be examining the external ways such heroic couples are bound together, and these factors (namely nature, social conventions and story-telling) necessitate both their individual and combined actions within the plot.

II-   THE BALLAD OF TAM LIN – A RETELLING OF SOCIAL ROLES

The story of Tam Lin is one of the most popular foundational components among the Fantasy or Supernatural/Paranormal genre. From Jane Yolan to Patricia Briggs, writers of this type of literature have either retold the tale or reused its shape-changing climax. Their interest lies in the unusual nature of the tale itself. It is one of the few folktales to feature a female hero, and is grouped with other such tales including "Beauty and the Beast", "East of the Sun West of the Moon", and "Cupid and Psyche." In those tales, the protagonist, by enacting her social role, finds and/or rescues her intended. In the case of Tam Lin, however, the protagonist-Janet- appears to not only reject the social norms of her society but to also gain her desires in the end. With the dearth of feminine role models in literature during the 70's, a tale that had a young girl carry the day was too tempting to overlook, and its "didactic potential" helps readers become "aware of issues and possible [fresh] interpretations in the texts" (Joosen 130-1).

Indeed, Janet's mannerisms, both before and after her pregnancy, carry a level of rebelliousness that would appeal to the modern aesthetic. First, she purposefully goes to a culturally forbidden place – Carterhaugh - because she believes she owns it and therefore, has a right to be there. "Carterhaugh it is mine ain; /My daddie gave it me; / I'll come and gang to Carterhaugh,/ And ask nae leave o' thee" (Child 33-6). Unlike Beauty or Psyche, who in their meekness and self-sacrificial tendencies exemplify pure clichés of women, Janet exhibits masculine traits. She states emphatically her right of property ownership (a generally masculine right) and asserts this right *against a man's*. This defiance becomes her primary characteristic and continues after her pregnancy becomes general knowledge. Rather than accept the man her father chose to make her honest, she not only accepts the blame upon herself but more importantly, declares that her child will only bear the name of her true love. "If my love were an earthly knight, / As he's an elfin grey, /I wadnagie my ain true love/ For nae lord that ye hae" (Child 81-4). The implication here is clear: even if her true love were human and still unavailable, she would not trade him for another who was. This stubbornness and unwillingness to deviate from her chosen course (a masculine prerogative) is what allows her to rescue Tam.

Or so many critics postulate. For them, her pregnant state only serves to facilitate the practicality of her actions. She is going to have a baby and therefore, according to the edict of established social norms, must have a husband. Yes, she is choosing who her husband will be rather than accepting the substitute her father may have chosen for her. Indeed, there is a level of practicality to "hanging" onto Tam; as the true father of her child, he has a

greater vested interest in her welfare. In her society, this would surely affect her final selection. However, the discussion of practicality takes away from the significance of her being pregnant at all, and her state of being muddles the question of whether Janet is, in fact,defying her social role.

The act of being pregnant is inarguably a decided feminine capability. It means, especially in regards to this ballad, that a piece of Tam resides within Janet, allowing him to remain tethered to the human world. Traditionally, women have served as the kite string within the relationship; and they are meant to keep their menfolk tied to home (i.e. society). Like the Victorian "Angel of the House," they represent home and family while the men symbolize the outside world. This juxtaposition becomes, even more, evident once children are conceived. Historically, women were mere vessels of masculine seed. They carried the child which they had no part in creating. However, looking at this from a purely modern perspective,the situation is much more balanced. Because they receive half of their genetics from their father and the other half from their mother, children are a permanent, irrefutable connection between two individuals. In the case of Tam Lin, it is the act of pregnancy which binds this couple together more assuredly than an act of marriage.

In a traditional Bildungsroman narrative, the story ends with either marriage or a social constrict of equal weight. "…For more than a century, European consciousness will perceive the crisis of marriage as a rupture that divides a couple but destroys the very roots …of those sentiments that keep the individual 'alive'" (Moretti 23). The act of marriage constitutes their acceptance of their position within society, and through this, the individual breaks down into a cog of the social machine. Instead of 'me' or 'I,' they become 'we' or 'us.' In the realm of the heroic couple, this means that, once the two people come to together, they become the extension of each other's will; they represent one entity.

For a heroic couple of Janet and Tam, her pregnancy functions the same way and is reflected in the way that Janet and Tam behave around each other. As demonstrated above, Janet acts defiantly when she first meets Tam Lin, and she remains so to the rest of the world afterward. However, after she loses her virginity to Tam, her behavior towards him changes. In the scene following her rejection of suitors, Janet goes to find Tam. There, he tells her not only his history but also gives her a play-by-play of how to save him. Her following actions word for word abide by his instructions; indeed, from the moment that she accepted his authority, she became the instrument by which Tam saved himself.

He uses the connection through their child to grant her the authority to accomplish this. His subtle actions are made even more apparent through the Fairy Queen's reaction. It is not Janet who the Queen reels against but Tam himself. She claims that had she known he intended to use his sexual conquests as a tether, she would have exchanged his eyes and heart for wood and stone (Child 225-35). Without his eyes, Tam would have been unable to acknowledge his attraction to Janet; without his heart, he could not have felt the prerequisite love. Thus, she would have effectively emasculated him, and he would have been incapable of developing the significant emotional connection that rescues him.

Most of the modern retelling have done away with the pregnancy subplot. However, they continue to utilize the ways in which external factors inform on the internal core relationship. The pregnancy in the original ballad both bound the couple and facilitates the resulting action. Without this aspect of the plot structure, authors have highlighted those other aspects of the plot that call for an external/internal social binary. Furthermore, to present a complete picture of the socialization of the heroic couple, I have included one retelling set in a historical setting (*The Perilous Gard*) and one contemporary (*Fire and Hemlock*). The aspects utilized within these retellings are reflective of their corresponding time periods.For *The Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Marie Pope, the dynamic choice between one set of social expectations over another lies at the heart of its conflict.Both the Tam and Janet of this novel act as bridges between two states of being. For Kate, she moves between two society's expectations: Elizabethan and Fairy. Not an official part of either society, Christopher suffers at the edge of the world and the realm of death, and for him, Fairy is a transitional stage between the two. It takes a physical act to defeat the Queen. In contrast, *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones handle the connection between the couple very differently. Instead of a more physical representation like Pope's retelling, this novel takes a more cerebral approach and focuses on the story-telling aspect of the ballad. For this variation, the connection between character and author is explored and becomes representative of the writer's process.

III- THE PERILOUS GARD- A FAERIE CULTURAL STUDY

As stated above, *The Perilous Gard* takes place in the historical era just before the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The politics of the age are more of a fringe concern, and while it drives certain aspects of the plot, it becomes

overshadowed by those of Fairy. In this novel, the Janet character is called Kate Sutton, and her Tam is known as Christopher Heron. Both are of them are of the nobility; Kate is an exiled lady-in-waiting to Princess Elizabeth and Christopher is the younger brother of an advisor to Queen Mary. However, Christopher, because he feels responsible for the disappearance of his niece, starts the novel rejecting the external world while Kate, due to the inference of a younger sister, is forced away. Since Queen Mary is dying, Kate knows that her exile is not permanent while Christopher intends for his to only end with his death. This slight variation in their circumstances allows Kate to function within their relationship as a link to Elizabethan society. However, without the addition of the nature-worshiping Fairy Folk civilization, the similarities between their situations would have kept them apart.

Indeed, unlike the Ballad itself, the Fairy Folk take a much more active role in the development of this novel's plot. Thus, the description of the structure and norms of this social group are invaluable in a discussion of those relationships which develop within their confines.As John Stephens states, "A capacity to move attention from the local to the global requires not only an understanding of a particular ecosystem but a willingness to think beyond oneself and one's own immediate environment and interests" (209). In other words, to understand the broader implications of a social condition, one must first describe how the primary community functions and then impartially discuss what the significance of this set-up is. In the case of the Fairies, this involves an in-depth look at the communal indicators of this fictional society.

With the original Tam and Janet, the Fairies are a fringe threat – something with limited contextual interaction with the characters, but who still poses a danger. The circumstances of both his position within the Fairy Court and how he must be rescued are told to Janet (and the audience) rather than being shown through words. This distances the reader from the action significantly and the very lack of interaction gives the Fairies the appropriate otherworldly aura. However, because of both the length of a novel and the contemporary looking-behind-curtain urge, the natural distance of the language does not function effectively away from the ballad structure. To compensate, Pope constructs an almost-possible Fairy society. Though their potions and herbal remedies are magical in their application, their nature-centered religious rituals, and underground civilization carry a level of historic realism. British holiday traditions have often displayed an element of the arcane. A man made of leaves (The Green Man) is pitched over a cliff into the sea, for example. Men made of straw are thrown into the bonfire on Bonfire Day. It is not much

of a leap of logic to imagine a society dependent upon fiery human sacrifices like the teind-payer.

Furthermore, the nature aspect of the Fairy Folk becomes even more of a symbol as one examines the trappings of their social status. The expectations of their society are opposite of the Elizabethans. Their communal position is indicated by the naturalness of their possessions and not materialism. "Gold for the maids, and wood for the masters and one bronze bowl for the King of the land, at his death time" (Pope 164). Gold often correlates with affluence, and yet here, wood is the most precious element. Furthermore, the wood bowl lacks adornment while the golden bowls have handles "…shaped like animal heads: geese and asses and swine" (154). Taken with the first quotation, 'the masters' believe that civilization needs no ornate decoration; it simply exists within the natural order. The food that fills the bowl also highlights this point.The old adage that "you are what you eat" labels these differences of culture as the binary of materialism and simplicity. While the Fairy Folk eat "… only a handful of boiled grain, like a fragmentary, sodden with milk and a little honey" (151), the maids are fed "[heaps of] some rich dark meat in a sauce that smelt delectable of wine and sweet herbs" (154). Like Daniel in the Biblical story of Daniel and the Princes of Babylon (Daniel 1), the Fairy Folk view the consumption of 'unnaturally' favored meat as sacrilegious because it denotes an animalistic behavior. This is verified in the maids' actions. "They flung themselves on the bowls with little cries of delight, tossing away the spoons, snatching, gobbling, slavering as they tore at the meat with their fingers and stuffed great chunks of it into their mouths" (154). They do not act like civilized creatures but gluttonous beasts without thought or manners as evidenced by their 'tossing away the spoons' (a symbol of decorum) and adjectival words for eating. There remains no sense of society or community but what is overridden by selfishness. In this society, materialism correlates with an animalistic nature, and this kind of disposition lacks the capability to understand reality. Indeed, they are too weak mentally to handle life underground – the ultimate way to commune with nature. Thus, the maids are drugged into situation unawareness, clothed in the skins of animals and left grunting in the dark at the end of the day.

The undercurrent of this civilization is the weight. The Fairy Folk view their connection to nature is the most important aspect of their lives. They eat grains (a naturally occurring food), they use wooden utensils and wear greens and browns (what scholar Martha P. Hixon calls "the color of nature and new growth" (*Tam Lin* 73)).Nature is often associated with freedom or, at least, a

lack of social restrictions. Conversely, this is not the case here. To join the society of the Fairy Folk even as a drugged maid is to simply exchange one set of norms for a more ritualistic set of rules. The dark edge of this existence is very readily apparent. Beyond the slave labor, this culture is dependent upon literal human sacrifice. Every seven years, they must have a young human throw themselves onto the fire. Most societies have their necessary black secrets, but they either remain unacknowledged or are rationalized away. The Fairy Folk are no exception. "All power comes from life, and when that life is low in the land and the people, they must take it from one who has it, adding his strength to their own, or perish. That is the law which the gods have laid on us, and they themselves cannot alter it" (208).

For them, a teind is an act of transference. During times of draft or famine, the life energy of the world – both natural and social – is lacking. To fill that emptiness, they believe that they can take the life of a person and distribute it to the world. They are aware of the cost and the blackness of the act, but it is "…the law [which] …they themselves cannot alter." This awareness presents itself as the constant weight of "…the tons and tons of actual earth and stone lying above her, closing down on her, shutting her in. It was like some suffocating dream of being buried alive, or rather it was like the moment of awakening from that dream to find that it was true" (160). Though they are used to the pressure, the Fairy Folk have moments of weakness. They stumble or collapse under the weight; however, they view it as the personal price they pay for maintaining their way of life.

For Kate and Christopher, these idiosyncrasies – the weight, the drugging of the maids, the food bowl social markers - serve as physical reminders of their transitory states. Psychoanalysts would state that this is a natural element of story-telling; the external world acts as a magnifying glass, illuminating the characters' personalities. However, these indicators are social constants for the Fairy Folk. All meals are conducted the same way. Every seven years, there will come a teind. Rather than viewing these aspects of the world-building as bringing forth hidden personal depths, it is signaling how well these characters are assimilating to their new social circumstances. Christopher and Kate are both outsiders to the Fairy culture; however, one has a greater chance of 'fitting in' than the other. This opportunity of integration works in direct contrast to what binds this couple together: rural ambitions.

Christopher is waffling between death and the manner but is not a recognized member of the community.Like the maids and the masters, his social position is indicated by his food and utensils. He is fed in a bronze bowl. As an

unnatural metal, this clearly broadcasts to the Fairy Folk that he is not one of them. However, he is fed the same food as the masters: grain mixed with milk and honey. This places him in a position of greater public value than the maids because he was given the more socially acceptable victuals. This discrepancy between the bowl's material and its fare represents his isolation. He is no longer considered a part of Elizabethan society in the eyes of the Fairy Folk, and yet he is also not part of their civilization. His lack of social interaction is to be expected because,by their social standards, he is already dead. For the nine weeks before Halloween, he is separated from everyone, and is prepared (or brainwashed) into throwing himself into the fire:

> The 'death service' was what they called it long ago when the King of the land did it. To their way of thinking, he *was* dead from the moment he entered this place, or at least, couldn't be treated as if he were even in the world any longer. Everyone was strictly forbidden to touch him, and nobody was allowed to speak to him except the Guardian of the Well (172).

The Guardian of the Well functions as the death figure of the novel and his strongest skill lies in his ethereal persuasion. Language plays a large part of the socialization process. Through it, the members of a community not only recognize other members but also develop their own social identity. As Christopher's only socially acceptable contact, the Guardian seeks to develop a strong enough bond that Christopher will identify with his position and enact his collectively assigned duty: to die. Unfortunately,(from the Fairy Folk's perspective), the Guardian is not his only social contact.

After she is drafted into the Fairy Folk society as a maid, Kate makes a point of maintaining her upper-class Elizabethan dignity. First, she refused to be drugged, and defies the Lady (or Queen) by telling her "…why should your land be any more dreadful to me than it is too you?" (137) By laying down this gantlet, Kate is effectively declaring her sensibilities as equal to the greatest of the Fairy Folk. She will not be a wilting maiden, and though she feels the weight, she endures it on her own.Second, while the other maids ate like animals, she remembers her manners. "She picked up her silver spoon and began to eat: slowly and with the attention he her manners" (155). She is not only declaring to herself that she is different from the other maids, but also to her Fairy masters. It is these beginnings that convince them to begin teaching her their ways. Yet, though she is moving up in this new world, she still maintains a connection to her old life. Though she functions as Christopher's

tie to the upper world, she is also keeping her old way of life fresh in her mind through their strange conversations.

Rather than the romantic drivel that is often associated with the heroic couple, Christopher and Kate's discussions are remarkably unsentimental. Indeed, the conversations between Kate and Christopher are characterized not by words of love but by practical statements about draining fields and "Manure, good plain dung. You take those water meadows at the manor …" (185). Christopher even goes on to describe their relationship in similar terms. "You know how it is with me, Kate. I've been going to waste all my life, like the manor. It's not bad land, but it's too heavy and if the dead water backs up in it – "(279). The fact that this scene is enacted during a marriage proposal brings the lack of romanticism into sharper focus. Nonetheless, because the manor is the main focal point of most of their interactions, it represents their ambition to make a place for themselves in the upper 'human' world. Indeed, draining fields, the manor itself, and dunging are all indicators of a rural society. They require action and manpower; in short, they necessitate both life and social position. It is these concerns which hold Christopher within this world as Janet held Tam.

The tend scene functions as a more intense variation of these preliminary debates between farming techniques and Christopher's death service. Even though Christopher clearly loves to talk about his dreams for the manor, it is a struggle to maintain his focus during his existential preparation for death. In essence, the Fairy Folk do not simply want him to die, but to give up being himself. "Think. Will you keep the strength of your body, the force of your will, the power of your mind, the courage of your heart, or will you give them up to us, and be nothing?" (237) To truly become a sacrifice, there must be no part of Christopher left. Even what he wears during his final ritual becomes symbolic of what he must throw away in order to fulfill his role within this society. Christopher is decked out in gold and rubies to the point that he is even wearing a golden mask. As stated earlier, gold is not cherished by the culture of the Fairy Folk. Instead, it is symbolic of the materialism and lack of refinement of the Elizabethan society. During the final stage of the tend ritual, Christopher must throw away his clothes and jewelry and become "nothing." This act is not only practical (fire + gold = a messy body) but also symbolic of throwing away his last connection to his former life. Without Kate's constant reminder of his ambitions, Christopher might not have thought twice about tossing it all away. However, because they had, he is "…rigid as if [he] were locked in the grip of two equal and opposing forces, contending together, neither able to break free

of the other" (243). These two opposing forces are conflicting social expectations. On the one hand are his social wants (i.e. his rural ambitions which includes marriage) and the other is his social duty (i.e. to sacrifice himself for the betterment of others). These are natural conflicts; what people want is not always what people should have. Still, in this case, it is a crippling struggle because one's biological imperative includes a lack of enthusiasm for death. Ironically, it is another biological imperative that snaps him out of his internal stalemate: food.

Throughout Christopher and Kate's conversations, food has been a re-occurring theme. This fits into the aesthetic symbol of the manor for what is a manor house but a gentry farm? And what is the point of a farm if not for sustenance? Yet, what is more, interesting about this final tempting of Christopher is that the Fairy Folk encourage appearances which defy their established social norms to win his cooperation. They suggest that he is dressed in "gold and precious things like one of the gods" (246). This encourages him to consider himself above present company when, in reality, gold has been an indicator of the lowest social caste. This slip of the tongue harkens back to the essentials of the original ballad. Tam is only free to leave after he turns into something culturally repugnant to the Fairies- a cold iron rod (Child 170). Here, they are simply stating something false – that gold indicates godliness to them. Like Janet, Kate is the one who dives into the truth of the matter by telling Christopher that he looks "… like a piece of gilded gingerbread, that's what you look like, one of those cakes they sell at the fair!" (246). This act of deception illustrates the final moral of the novel; whether for good or ill, defying social conventions (even unintentionally) causes them to dissolve.

IV- FIRE AND HEMLOCK – THE AUTHOR/CHARACTER DYNAMIC

In Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock*, the heroic couple Polly Whittaker and Thomas Lynn, unlike Christopher and Kate, is characterized by the cerebral rather than the physical. They met at a funeral when Polly is ten and Tom is a youngish man. There, they tell stories about themselves in which Tom is a hero called Tan Coul and Polly is his assistant called Hero. Though it can be argued that story-telling is an internal practice, it functions within society on an external level. Whether through writing or speech, telling is synonymous with sharing, and it is during this process that social groups are established. In the case of Polly and Tom, it is what forms their connection as a couple.

The writing process is unique to each writer, and can involve some very personal steps. However, there are certain aspects of the process that are foundational. First, they must brainstorm for ideas and story narratives. Second, they need to research similar stories and concepts. Next, they begin to tell the tale, which includes editing and critiques. Finally, they let go and work towards bringing it out into the world (i.e. publication). The relationship between Tom and Polly follows this basic pattern. At the funeral, they set out the parameters of their story. They choose names, decide on their general purpose (to become heroes), and establish their home life as Thomas Piper (ironmonger) and his assistant. Over the course of years, Tom sends Polly 'necessary' reading material (books like a collection of fairy tales and the *Three Musketeers*) and shares further ideas for stories and characters. As Polly becomes more and more involved with writing down her tales, Tom gives her feedback (sometimes harshly), but encourages her to dig deeper into her story's possibilities like a professional editor. This progression of their relationship becomes more significant as they move towards the final, foundational stage: letting it go. Jones explores both the stagnation of the coveted work and the freedom of its release into the wider world. Unlike Pope's novel, Jones is much subtle in her adaptation. Not only does this lead to a wildly different solution in the finale but also in her handling of the fantastic.

In Jones's opinion, reality and the fantastic are not mutually exclusive; instead, the imagination augments the mundane and clarifies life situations."Fantasy is very important part of how your mind works. People trot out the truism that man is a tool-making animal, but nobody pauses to think that before a caveman could make a stone ax or obsidian arrowhead, he had to imagine it first" (*Answers* 131). She further elucidates that imagination and "matters that dealt with in fairy tales or myths (magic)" are "functions of the right lobe of the brain" (129). The significance of this lies in the problem-solving processes of the human mind. A human, most particularly an author, exists on multiple planes of awareness. On the standard level of 'reality,' people live their lives and deal with normal issues. The realm of the imagination happens nearly simultaneously with reality. It helps them calculate probabilities of success on mad ventures, and to think ahead in the middle of a conversation. For authors, this helps them live several lifetimes as their characters during their one. In actuality, it is the magic functions of the brain that keep society evolving.

In *Fire and Hemlock*, Jones gives these right and left operations new names: the Now Here of reality and the Nowhere of the imagination. They

appear on the side of two spinning vases in front of Hunsdon House, or the home base of the fairies of this novel. In reality, each vase simply reads as "Nowhere," but as they turn, their words shift around to read several different phrases: Nowhere, Now Here, and Here Now. In the time it takes them to spin, the planes of awareness have changed even in this small way. Martha P. Hixon established the purview of creative planes of existence in her essay entitled "The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Dimensions and their Interplay in *Fire and Hemlock*" by stating emphatically that "[the] sphere of the creative imagination in the novel is "Nowhere," the place where seemingly magical things can happen, whereas the ordinary and everyday is "Now Here'" (100). Like with her theory of problem-solving creativity and the real world, these two planes of existence happen so closely together at the same moment that they are almost indistinguishable. This theory is demonstrated early on in the novel as Tom and Polly gazed at a dry pool:

> For just a flickering part of a second, some trick of the light filled the pool deep with transparent water. The sun made bright, curved wrinkles on the bottom, and the leaves, Polly could have sworn, instead of rolling on the bottom, were, just for an instant, floating, green and growing. Then the sunbeam traveled on, and there was just a dry oblong of concrete again (22).

The act of seeing beyond the standard expectations is a function of Nowhere, and yet in a blink, Now Here reasserts itself. In this way, Jones comments on authors (heroes) as people who flicker between these areas of perception. Polly even reaffirms this by saying directly after this incident, "Heroes do see things like that" (22). In this way, Jones suggests that this state of dual being is not just universal but natural.

Nowhere is where Tom and Polly meet, but it is Now Here where he prepares her for their meetings. He does this by sending her a great many books of fantasy and literature, and then commenting on her writing progress. The writing of fiction is naturally intertextual; no story grows up out of nothing. What constitutes texts is not simply literature, but also photographs, music, and other indicators of time and signification. Moreover, what constitutes intertextuality is that "the texts referring to each other illuminate each other" (Yamazaki 113). The significance of a single contributing text cannot overshadow the power/meaning of the itinerary texts as a whole. Thus, the work of balancing texts and creativity is the author's main challenge; the act of taking too much from any one text or too little causes the whole novel to lose credibility. Some of Tom's harshest criticism to Polly came after she read *Lord*

of the Rings, and suddenly Tan and Hero were searching for an evil ring instead of questing for something more unique. "No, it is not a ring. You stole that from Tolkien. Use your own ideas" (192). *Use your own ideas* suggests that there is, in fact, an original idea. Still, it has to be said that it is only the configuration of old ideas that is new or fresh, and it is this intertextuality that represents the Social Conversation of fictional interpretation.

For Tom and Polly, this level of intertextuality is not simply to improve Polly's skills as a writer but to also show her the reality of their own situation. Tom, like all the other variations of Tam Lin, is still intended to be a tithe to hell. His death will allow another fairy- The Queen's consort - to renew his life. Unlike Tam, he cannot tell her directly about it. To make up for this lack, he sends her those novels and stories which can shed light on his situation. Unfortunately, stories are subject to interpretation and are therefore unreliable for conveying such specific information as Polly was sure to tell Tom once she found out. "Well, you should have told me! I can't help if you don't tell me anything, can I?' 'I sent you enough books about it!' 'That's not the sa- '" (368). The truth was that as long as she remembered him long as Polly remembers him and writes stories about him – holds onto to him mentally- he is safe. The trouble is that she cannot hoard him like a dragon over gold; he is not hers but is a part of Nowhere. Thus, he belongs to the world of readers. At the moment she tries to keep him to herself, Polly loses her ability to write about him at all. She forgets him, and the stories she already wrote about him were lost.

This is represented in the novel as the changed tales within the book *Tales of Nowhere*. Originally, this was a collection of tales told by her characters: Tan Coul, Tan Thare, Tan Hanivar, and Tan Audel. These characters have special abilities and have helped Polly as Hero with her hero business. Years later (and at the beginning of the novel proper), this same book's tales are different than she remembered. This discrepancy reveals two things. One, those authors carry inside them two sets of memories: one of the real world and one figuring her imagined lives. Two, that if she had forgotten any part of either lifetime, then "… it was because of something dreadful she had done herself" (5). Her act of possessive forgetting (which it takes nearly the entire book to remember) causes both a personal loss and a social one. Though she lost connection to her characters, it is her readers who suffer unknowingly because they will never meet them at all.

Indeed, if an author stops writing about a character without seeking publication for what they have completed, is it not like the story disappears into

nothing – or hell? In the world of authors, there are boxes of unfinished stories. In all ways that matter, their characters are dead or lost. However, those who succeed in the writing game also lose control of their characters. They are now in the realm of the readers, who will have their own ideas of what things mean or what holds significance. This is the case of Polly and Tom. The harder they try to control the story or keep it for themselves, the faster they find it slipping from their fingers.

Unlike most Tam Lin variations, it is not the act of hanging on that rescues Tom. Instead, Polly must do the opposite. In the final scene, Tom and Mr. Leroy (the Queen's consort) fight for the right to not be the tithe, and it is during this scene that Polly realizes that she has to let Tom go emotionally. "So the only way to win is to lose, I'll have to lose" (413). The more Polly tries to hang onto Tom, the quicker she pulls him down into nothingness. He cannot grow with that weight. It is in the hands of readers that stories gain fresh, renewable life. It is through their interest and interpretation that academics, scholars and fans find the shifting significance of a layered text, and broaden the perspectives of later readers. However, this does not mean that Polly and Tom must part ways forever. She is still his author, and he her character. There is alwaysNowhere – the place of new stories. Polly summed it up perfectly when she said, "If two people can't get together anywhere- "(420), then it must be Nowhere. Diana Wynne Jones confirms this in her essay entitled "The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey," by saying that, "…though a relationship was possible between Polly and Tom, such a relationship is only likely to be maintained through continuing repeated small acts of heroism from both" (98). These acts of heroism can only amount to future situations of growth and stories freely shared with the community.

V-   CONCLUSION – SUMMATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Polly and Tom, Christopher and Kate, and Tam and Janet are all couples who are defined by the plot. For Tam and Janet, it is their status as an expecting couple that allows Tam to reconnect with the human world and defeat the Fairy Queen. Kate tethers Christopher to Elizabethan society by reminding him of rural progression and social disorder. Polly and Tom explored the land of social imagination –Nowhere- and found that one can only hold onto stories that one let's go. All of these heroic couples use their connection to each other to achieve those social expectations that would bring them the most happiness. However, do all heroic couples function this way or only those of the 'fairy tale'

persuasion? Only the literature can tell. Still, are we not all products of external factors? It has been a proven fact that communal culture – families, regional backgrounds, social expectations – have a strong effect on the development of an individual, and this correlation can only be reinforced by those things that represent contemporary culture values: the stories themselves.

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"Under the Spell" of Non-Sense[5]: Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* as a Counter-Narrative and the Poetics of Making Sense of a Senseless World.

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The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical [if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted], and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine (Conrad 8).

Abstract:*Diana Abu-Jaber's Crescent (2003) provides a picture of the postmodern struggle with identity conflicts, especially among Arabs and Arab Americans in the twenty-first century. It could even amount to the status of a reference text as to the dilemmatic query involvingthe crisis of sense. Crescent approaches the crisis of sense from a conceptual and ideological position whichdemystifies the myth around the missionary discourse that America sets out to accomplish. The novel additionally reflects upon a cultural psychological understanding of the considered dilemma by intriguing the characters' perception of what defines an Arab American identity in the turn of the twenty-first century. In examining some aspects of sense and nonsense in Crescent, I argue that this text embodies a senseless world which it also tries to balance through the revelation of the contradictions enveloped in the U. S. support of*

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[5] My subtitle is in part borrowed from Diana Abu-Jaber, *Crescent* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003): (295). The image also lends itself to the loss even of academic figures in the novel, such as Han and Aziz, to nonsense to the extent of giving in to superstition.

state violence in the name of democracy as well as the invalidity of negative dogmas against Arabs. As a counter-narrative, Crescenttransmogrifies a world under the spell of nonsense into a sensual experience as a way to cast away the obsession with exile.

Keywords: *Crescent, sense, non-sense, civilizing miss*ion, exile.

1. Introduction:

In English letters, the crisis of sense does evoke a multitude of dimensions and unfold onto myriad vantage points. Speaking of a crisis, we refer to "a turning point," "a radical change of status in a person's life," "a decisive moment in a literary plot," "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending," "one with a highly undesirable outcome," also "a situation that has reached a critical phase". Aligned with the term sense, the notion crisis restricts the range of descriptions above to critical or controversial moments of undecidability or instability at the levels of "sensation, feeling, mechanism of perception [and] meaning" (*Webster's*). As such, the crisis of sense could have a psychological load and entail states of irrationality and angst as much as it may suggest a certain ontological absence, loss or lack of purpose in life. Altogether, the concept could also encompass a condition of non-meaning, evoking whatsoever is generative of emptiness, devoid of reference and, consequently, invalid. As the crisis of sense takes in similar conditions of vacancy, nonsense or meaninglessness, it is even attributable to traces of failure, conflict or disintegration in establishing centers of reference, comprehending one's circumstances and making sense of one's identity and existence. Currently, all these implications are re-announced as a marker of the twenty-first-century literature, hence, the urgency to revisit the complexity of this notion, its literary representation sand repercussions.

At least from modern to postmodern English literature, the crisis of sense or meaning, evoked interchangeably in this essay, becomes inseparable from the quest for meaning in life.As one modern literary instance, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* suggests the crucial principle of deciphering meaning in the

quest for life which offers itself up as the ultimate preoccupation of the high and the low, from the seaman to the literary man. At the onset of the essay, the prefatory passage, taken from the same novel, goes beyond reinforcing a universal hunger for meaningfulness, to a challenging distinction between simple and complex levels of producing meaning in the folds of a story. In tandem with the appeal to this question,the current example of Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* (2003) provides a picture of the postmodern struggle with identity conflicts, especially among Arabs and Arab Americans in the twenty-first century, and could even amount to the status of a reference text as to this dilemmatic query.

Throughout *Crescent*, the crisis of sense is not solely that which is conceptual and ideological, disruptive of the balance in the missionary discourse that America sets out to accomplish, but also a cultural psychological one, since it intrigues the characters' perception of what defines an Arab American identity in the turn of the twenty-first century. Peopled by characters, the majority of whom are either intellectual or have something to do with the intellect, *Crescent* provides the right framework for a discussion of the crisis of sense. There are, at least, four intellectual figures in this novel that could be said to function as the triggering forces in giving the considered crisis further prominence. These include Sirine's Uncle, Hanif and Aziz, all of them Arab university professors in Los Angeles and Nathan, an American student of Sociology.

Nevertheless, the crisis of sense is not just endemic to the orbit of academia. That is why, even Sirine, the female protagonist and a chef in a Middle-Eastern restaurant in L.A., takes part in consolidating decisive controversies in the plot and restoring meaning to certain concepts. On the whole, the crises are intrinsically related to discerning one's identity as an American with an Iraqi heritage, a query sharpened with the venture to discuss politics by attempting to dig deep in the notion of the United States as an exporter of justice to the world and question its dominant perception of the Arab as a terrorist. For the Arab American, what brings this ideological crisis to the fore is the fact of inhabiting an in-between world, not often a blessing, because

it also suggests not being "wholly one thing or another" i.e., in a way, "situated somewhere between Arab and American cultures---never quite rooted in either, always constrained by both" (Majaj, "Boundaries" 79).

Through a study of some aspects of sense and nonsense in *Crescent*, this article argues that this textembodies a senseless world which it also tries to balance with diverse strategies. Part of recording such a dark vision are the contradictions enveloped in the U. S. support of state violence in the name of democracy as well as the invalidity of negative dogmas against Arabs. In tandem with the conceptual/ideological crisis, the exile stands out as an existential trait of the identity crisis, given its identification with loss and a shadowy existence. However, the task to which Abu-Jaber puts herself is more intractable than transmitting the prevalent undecidability in meaning, because it also "helps make sense of the senselessness of our days" (Orfalea 117). As a counter-narrative, her book transmogrifies a world under the spell of nonsense into a sensual experience by seeking spiritual and physical feeding to cast away a nonsensical spell.

To the extent that the crisis of sense in *Crescent* stretches out to engulf conceptual, ideological and identity axes, "Under the Spell of Non-Sense" willinterpret the crisis of sense in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* while calling upon some specific particulars of theoretical works by Arab Americans. In the first place, "Master versus Counter-narratives" will study the features that make the characters' world lack an essential valuable or also stable meaning, by scrutinizing discursive distortions in American politics and culture. In the second place, "Paradise Lost" tries torender the intricate crisis of sense for the exile. The section entitled "Paradise Regained: On Feeding Sense" turns our attention to the counter-strategies that Abu-Jaber implements to better understand the Arab American experience by considering the profuse role of the culinary in fostering a sense of direction. I will also dissect memory and its capacity to escape a death-in-life orbit and allow a full grasp of a whole self.

2. Master Versus Counter-Narratives:

By itself, the significant publication of *Crescent* almost two years after September 11th heralds the beginning of a global crisis for Arabs and Arab Americans. The turn of the twenty-first century is ideologically related to the controversies about American democracy as opposed to Arab terrorism. Describing the amalgam of these crises, Peter McLaren refers to the entry of"a realityzone already captured by its opposite: unreality. It is the world where nobody really wanted to venture. It is the world where order has given way to disorder, where reason has given way to unreason, where reality is compromised by truth, where guilt is presumed over innocence" and where "[p]ublic school teachers across the country eagerly prepare new courses on the glory of Western civilization, elevating the United States to its shining pinnacle" (149). His statement undermines the common sense agenda of Americanism, in turn, challenged throughout *Crescent* with a meticulous focus on the inconsistencies emanating from an imperial democracy.

A love-story in essence, *Crescent* enfolds a secondary plot whose foundation is questioning the exemplary image of the U. S. role in international pacifism.[6]It digresses into the American propagandist claim of re-establishing stability in the Middle East, reconceived as a rhetoric as devoid of its original or intended meaning as slogans like "manifest destiny", "the white man's burden" and the "civilizing mission" (Hamouda 288). This is achieved by showing that the embargoes, following the First Gulf War and aimed to punish the Iraqi regime for attempting to annex Kuwait, are no less disastrous than "the trope of war-as-a-lesson" which consists in teaching the native "how to behave" and acting "as schoolmaster" to an "unruly pupil" (MacDonald 27). With regard to the anti-humanitarian realities behind the U.S. hegemonic policy towards Iraq, including diseases and refugees resulting from the embargoes, any claim of reinstating order in the region loses its apparent implications and turns out be no more than a superficial empty variation on a real imperial project (Abu-Jaber169, 288).

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[6] For a detailed analysis of the romantic features in this novel, see my recent paper entitled "Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*:A Political Satire within a Love Story in Disguise".

In wagering on the lives of the Iraqi civilians and children and playing on "political and economic doctrines" such as free economy, globalization and democratization, regularly "sustained by militarism", the economic sanctions on Iraq, which are endorsed by the U.S., unravel an explicit American desire to domesticate Iraq as a subject country (Hamouda 383). *Crescent* suggests that they fall under what Glenn E. Perry terms "Imperial Democratization", meaning the fact of "hiding a struggle for domination –even 'deceiving oneself' –'behind the mask of political ideology' (i.e., 'pretexts and false fronts') that make one's goals 'psychologically and morally acceptable' and thus provide 'weapons in the struggle for power'" (56).[7] Hence, if there is something that logically explains U.S. interventionism in the Middle East it is the fact of dovetailing mythmaking and propagandistic mottoes with warfare for the sakes of domination and supremacy.[8]

Apart from dismissing the U.S. announced intentions as mere illogical pretexts disguising pure self-interested motivations, we can decipher another side of embodying the ideological-conceptual crisis in *Crescent* by looking at the more recent "war on terror" (Hamouda 288).As it is pointed out by the Arab American feminist Joanna Kadi, there is a strong affinity between politics and the validity of such descriptions as Arab terrorism:

> As Arabs, like other people of color in this racist society, our race is simultaneously emphasized and ignored. For long periods of time, no one can remember that Arabs even exist. This is the case no matter how many times non-Arabs are reminded of our presence. Of course, this forgetfulness changes once there is another 'crisis' in the Middle East. Crisis: A by-product of past and current colonialism. During crises, Arabs can be reassured we exist as a distinct racial group. We will remember it, in the dark of night and the light of day. We will feel the effects of the social construction of 'the Arabs' that has cast us as enemy, other, fanatical terrorist, crazy Muslim. (Sic xvi)

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[7] Perry quotes Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations: The Struggle for power and peace,* 7th ed., revised by Kenneth W. Thompson and W. David Clinton (Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2006): 97-100.

[8] See an interesting discussion by Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb who explain that the "intervention of the United States in the Gulf crisis, apart from its obligations as a member of the Security Council, rested on three grounds," among them, the protection of "its own national interests in the Gulf region", the U.S. "commitments to a number of countries" and, last, the endeavor to defend "Western (Christian) values" (252).

The passage is quoted at length, for its propensity to trigger an important controversial weakness in the American rationale, understanding, usage and equation of Arabness and terrorism, in the sense that the latter does not always have strong grounds as long as it is the most contingent on both the world state of affairs and the East / West dialogues or their absence.

There are hints in *Crescent* that the current war on terror in the U.S. often amounts to a racist rhetoric that legitimates a harassing surveillance of Arabs and Arab Americans at the expense of the Civil Rights' achievements (Hamouda 272). The novel is keen on showing that the intruding gaze of the C.I.A. agents, who become a complementary segment of its general scene, turns state surveillance into amere nuisance to ordinary immigrants (Abu-Jaber18). For instance, it goes deeper than establishing that everything about the overwhelming feeling of being scrutinized seems to unfold back to as "the Arab disease"; it's where "you keep thinking the C.I.A. is following you around" (Abu-Jaber116). Instead, *Crescent* prompts us to grapple the extent to which even the love intimations between the protagonists become subjected to a haunting, surveying gaze of a malicious intruder (Abu-Jaber114-7, 155-6). It is also in the name of the war on terror that surveillance becomes, for the Arab immigrant, associated with destabilizing effects which range from putting in practice the official stigmatization of the Arab as a terrorist to foregrounding "the loneliness of the Arab" (Abu-Jaber19). We can infer that such aspectsput the civil rights of the Arab American at stake, thus, reflecting another crisis of sense inside the backbone of the American constitution.

Through a noticeable scrutiny of the attribute terrorist in *Crescent*, it is necessary to mention that Abu-Jaber goes profound than this in questioning the underlying assumptions enveloped in the American discourse of terrorism. At least four characters in the novel, including Sirine, Nathan, Aziz and Rana, attempt to make sense of the expression Arab terrorist and, more importantly, find out its link to reality. With respect to Sirine, the narrator stresses her failed efforts to verify the meaningfulness of the involved catchphrase, for, sometimes, "she used to scan the room and imagine the word *terrorist*. But her gaze ran over the faces and all that came back to her were words like *lonely*, and

young" (sic,Abu-Jaber 19). The implication of her reflection does not simply question terrorism as a token of Arabness but, additionally, stresses its unreal exaggeration i.e., the fact that it is not always grounded in reality. In consequence, the inexistence of pertinent or concrete tracesforthis signifier transfigures the whole ideology into one governed by the biased essence of stereotypes.

In the same context, Aziz, the Iraqi poet and a visiting lecturer in L.A., allows us to get a better hold of the illusory aspect of the questionable signifier. In the middle of a crucial discussion during Thanksgiving, Aziz notes, "'[t]hey think we're all terrorists anyway.'" Victor, an assistant of the chef in Um-Nadia's café retorts, "'[w]ho's 'they''", commenting, "'*I* don't think that.'" In full humor, Aziz answers, "[i]f you and I were out shopping at the mall do you think any of the white guys there could tell the difference between us? They'd think you were one of my terrorist buddies" (Abu-Jaber197). The short exchange, especially through its last statement, serves as reinforcement of the word terrorist as part and parcel of a whole system of stereotyping quite prevalent throughout the history of minorities in the U.S. Despite Victor's opposition, its scrutiny adjoins the expression terrorist to a semantic field of racial discrimination, as it is further suggested by Aziz's distribution of pronouns that extends the scope of the word terrorist to describe non-whites, deflected to the bottom line of racial classification and turned into an interchangeable category with 'terrorist'. Ironically, the word terrorist acquires the definitional capacity of a bias and, thus, reinforces the reformulation of this notion as another pretext for legitimating discrimination.

In view of all these attempts to contemplate the rationale for Arab terrorism and grapple with its meaning, nothing perfectly illustrates the deficit in the word terrorist as a signifier of being Arab than the outcome of Nathan's search for its signification in the heart of the Middle East. As an American amateur of photography, Nathan not only consolidates the nonsensical essence of this tag but, also unravels the role of media in giving this word a sense of reality that it does by no means possess. The American amateur of photography

provides a chronicle of his own struggle with comprehending this concept which I will quote at length:

> '[W]hen I was twenty-one, I didn't know about the world at all. But I had this idea about cowboys and Indians and submarine commanders and Russian spies. I used to be unhappy because I thought that all the bad guys were already caught and there wasn't much excitement left in the world. And then one day I went to see *Black Sunday*. You know—the one with Bruce Dern where the terrorists take over the Goodyear Blimp? But I came home thinking, oh, good, there's still terrorists!

> 'So I thought of that as my mission. I mean, don't we all want to have missions? I started dreaming of going to someplace like Lebanon or Iraq and hunting down terrorists […] You know, like James Bond? […] I had this thought about going over to the Middle East and uncovering terrorist spies. I would take their photos and send them to the C.I.A. or some place.' (Sic,Abu-Jaber 252-53)

Told as part of a speech that Nathan delivers on the occasion of his photograph exhibition in Dynamo Church (Abu-Jaber250), the passage explains how much the word terrorist is media-based. It demonstrates the construction of this notion through mass media such as James Bond's movies. The term terrorist also retains an aspect of vagueness as long as Nathan associates it with what is termed as the American mission in the world which gets us back to its double or ambivalent quintessence.

From illusion, Nathan passes on to disillusionment. In fact, what brings him down-to-earth is the reality-proof to which he subjects his interiorized biases. His ultimate visit of the Middle East is evidence of how the American movies are misleading, pointing out the untrue mythical, also propagandistic side about the claim of the American mission in the world. By providing a counter-narrative to the master narrative, it also reinforces that the absence of reference is equal to the absence of meaning. Nathan relates "And When I finally got there, you know, to the Middle East, I traveled through all these different countries, and this amazing thing happened—the people there were

really nice to me," adding, "I felt like I'd finally found something real. Like I'd regained my senses," shortly followed by "I never found my terrorist, though, unless […] it was me" (Abu-Jaber253). Right here, nobody can overlook Nathan's realization of the wide gap between what is common sense and what is real. It is this very gap between truth and reality that begets an equivalent chasm in his initial comprehension of terrorism. We should also be able to capture the irony of the closing statement about never grasping his "'terrorist, though, unless […] it was me'" (Abu-Jaber253). This acknowledgment of the impossibility of a referential meaning draws our attention to the idea that Nathan, instead of contributing to consolidating a distorted representation of Arabs according to a familiar western tradition, ends up disfiguring his proper image as a villain par excellence.

3. Paradise Lost:

Apart from providing a commentary on the negotiation of pivotal referential crises of sense, that lend themselves to certain recurrent catchphrases, *Crescent* prompts us to look at identity issues which are incorporated within a similar critical trajectory. In effect, the crises that the Arab and Arab American characters endeavor to comprehend, Abu-Jaber's narrative demonstrates, do not only or always pertain to specific notions or ideologies, that is solely encompassed in political and historical interpretations, but principally internal, if not existential. To investigate the overlapping process of such experiences, I intend to examine in close Hanif's struggle to decipher the interior clash inhabiting the exiled self, without losing sight of other minor exiled characters. I will focus on the inner workings of a character to which Sirine's uncle refers as someone who "needs someone to show him how to live in this country and how to let go of the other" (Abu-Jaber47). What is noticeable about this personality is its striking awareness of veering towards a dilemma state of mind abounding with meaninglessness and intricate quandaries. Further, I will comment, with some briefness, on other instances of the encroachment of nonsense on the perception of one's alienated existence.

Hanif's sensibility to exile as an ambivalent predicament provides us with a telling example of the cultural crisis of disconnection from one's roots. In fact,

only, at first, does exile, for him, emerge as the alternative to free expression, security and survival. While still in President Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Han dreams of "a new place, away from the new president, as far away as the other side of the world, a place where he will no longer have to look at his brother and sister not-sleeping, where he will not have to count his heartbeats, his breaths, the pulse in his eyelids" (Abu-Jaber14). Apart from representing an opportunity to escape persecution, exile also sounds Han's single occasion to escape his guilt-ridden conscience for endangering the life of his two siblings and the togetherness of his family. Unexpectedly, however, the fact of being forced to leave Iraq and live in England and, lately, in Los Angeles allows him to grasp firmly the ironies that could be enfolded in the alternative of exile as a synonym of dislocation and alienation.

To Han, what marks the emergent crisis of sense is the re-conception of his exile from Iraq as being indivisible from losing his sense of direction. The note he leaves to Sirine before his sudden resignation points out "'Things are broken. The world is broken'" (Abu-Jaber296). Somewhere in the novel, Han reconfigures exile as

> a dim, gray room, full of sounds and shadows, but there's nothing real or actual inside of it. You're constantly thinking that you see old dreams. You go up to people, certain that they're members of your family, and when you get close their faces melt away into total strangers'. Or sometimes you just forget this is America and not Iraq. Everything that you were—every sight, sound, taste, memory, all of that has been wiped away. You forget everything you thought you knew. (Abu-Jaber162)

These contemplations best reflect the dark world of non-meaning and ghostly presences that bounds Han's fractured sense of self throughout the novel and best manifests itself through an ever-wandering "soulful ache" (Tepper 24).

The losses that accompany Han's first-hand experience of imposed immigration range from the physical contact with the homeland to the religious scope. In truth, his enforced journey to the west becomes almost conditioned with a certain loss of faith embodied through the fact of cutting with praying

(Abu-Jaber71). Out of practice, Han turns the prayer beads into mere relics of his Iraqi identity as a Moslem. Thus, his first reply to Sirine's question "do you believe that your religion---that Islam---defines who you are?" is only the blank vague statement: "'For me, it's more complicated than that. I've heard of people defining themselves according to their work or religion or family. But I pretty much think I define myself by an absence'" (Abu-Jaber161). Even his later clarification, "I don't believe in a specific notion of God. But I do believe in social constructions, notions of allegiance, cultural identity….," does not reveal the portrait of a person who still sees meaning in his religious identity as a Moslem (Abu-Jaber162). For this reason, he soon lapses from spirituality to the only meaningful void that overwhelms his sense of being, by drawing exile as the broadest truth in his life:

> The fact of exile is bigger than everything else in my life. Leaving my country was like---I don't know---like part of my body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part---I'm haunted by myself. I don't know---does any of that make any sense? It's as if I'm trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here. (Abu-Jaber162)

In this sense, the only thing that Han ends up with from an experience of exile is uprootedness fused with an absurdist consciousness of non-existence, worse an existence in shadows, to which he becomes starkly enlightened.

The most illustrative figure of exile reconceived as overwhelming self-alienation, rather than safety, is engulfed in the image of inhabiting the world of the down-and-out which is quite common on American pavements. Han says to Sirine:

> Sometimes when I see some of those homeless people on the street—you know, the ones walking around talking to the air, shuffling around, an old torn-up clothes—sometimes I think I've never felt so close to anyone as those people. They know what it feels like—they live in between worlds so they're not really anywhere. Exiled from them. (Abu-Jaber162)

Due to this state of non-belonging and instability, Han starts even to be skeptical of his work ethics, including his passion for translation. Describing the

tasks he exercises in class with students, he affirms, "[h]alf the time I don't know what I'm saying. I throw out some thoughts and then hope one or two of them sticks. It's all words to me" (Abu-Jaber93). The citation is the best indicative that arbitrariness and meaninglessness turn out solid tokens of cultural displacement and get impregnated with a strong sense of paradise lost to the extent of verging on devouring Han's academic principles.

Nevertheless, Han is not the only character in the novel that inhabits this world of non-meaning but, instead shares it together with two other characters, Sirine and Nathan. An orphan since age nine when her parents, emergency care personnel for the American Red Cross, were murdered in a raid in Africa, Sirine, at thirty-nine years, experiences a condition of symbolical exile (Abu-Jaber50). "What Han says reminds her of a sense that she's had---about both knowing and notknowing something. She often has the feeling of missing something and not quite understanding what it is that she's missing" (Abu-Jaber62). Critic Robin E. Field makes an important suggestion, upon mentioning the effect of the absence of Sirine's parents both on "her subsequent relationships with men" and "her sense of who she is as an Iraqi-American" (Abu-Jaber216). Indeed, similarly to Han, Sirine could not be definite about what faith she has, particularly, when she ventures to reply "I suppose I don't actually have one [religion]," adjoining, "I mean, my parents didn't, so…" (Abu-Jaber171). Letting her sentence trail off, echoing Han's in a way, she only comments "Well, I believe in lots of things" (Abu-Jaber171). When such a statement occurs in a workshop on Women in Islam it renders best Sirine's dilemma.

As a striking feature of Sirine's internal clash, the passage about her sensitivity to the failure of language to make any sense and console Nathan for his circumstances is quite evocative of a complex crisis. After listening to Nathan's traumatic adventures in Iraq, ranging from the execution of his beloved (Han's sister) to his consequent displacement, Sirine has reached an inference similar to the one it crossed her mind upon learning of her parents' death. She wishes

she knew how to say something wise or consoling to him, something that wouldn't sound frightened or awkward. But then she remembers the time after her parents' death when people would approach her and try to explain her loss to her; they said things that were supposed to cure her of her sadness, but that had no effect at all. And she knew then, even when she was nine years old, that there was no wise or consoling thing to say. There were only certain helpful kinds of silences, and some were better than others. (Abu-Jaber88-9)

On both occasions, the only truth which is perceptible to Sirine is the fact of being failed or defeated by verbal language, which represents, in itself, the peak of the crisis of sense in the novel.

In Nathan's context, we should remind ourselves that his crisis of sense goes deeper than interrogating the ambiguity and even the unintelligibility of certain notions in order to engulf his sense of who he is as an American. When he speaks of himself he refers to an "overgrown student in search of a life, may be" (54) and, shortly, comments "I'm made out of powder" (Abu-Jaber55). Sirine compares him to "a monk—sunken cheeks, hungry lunar shadow eyes, a body inhabited by an old spirit" (Abu-Jaber329). The simile suggests a state of death-in-life, equally perceptible in Nathan's shots which are symbolic of a world close to a wasteland and reach the onlooker as "gray dreams, full of accusation and a lingering sense of emptiness" (Abu-Jaber253). These shots make sense only in the perspective of a person separated from his beloved due to a death execution and an essential civilizational cultural clash. Beyond this, the pictures convey but disfiguration,emptiness and absence.[9]

4.Paradise Regained: On Feeding Sense:

It should be noticed that the literary world spun by Abu-Jaber is never utterly nonsensical. Instead, her representation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as much deprived of consistency, transparency and short of intelligibility is, equally, suggestive of hope in regaining some sense in life. It

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[9] Due to the space restriction, it is not possible to analyze another dimension about the predominance of non-sense in Abu-Jaber's work,that is, the omnipresence of superstition as a cogent motif.

even traces itineraries of how to go beyond these ontological crises, instead of letting them lead to self-defeat and absurdity. These strategies range from nurturing oneself with food and art to reconciling with one's homeland and cultural roots.

Crescent identifies a tactile view of the world as a significant means of making peace with oneself, the world around us and its system of signification. As a matter of fact, if there is something that saves Sirine from a desperate awareness of the contradictions around her as strikingly as Hanif it is the staying power that she is able to derive from cooking to others or eating together with them. Her concentration on taking care of this skill and forging it brings us back to Carolyn Korsmeyer's view that "the intimacy of eating is part of what knits together those who eat---the mutual trust presumed, the social equality of those who sit down together, and the shared tastes and pleasures of the table" (187). Critics Lorraine Mercer and Linda Strom emphasize the pertinence of food in bridging "the gap that may look like chaos and add[ing] structure to the narrative" (39).[10] In such a way, feeding and eating are given a strong potential of establishing meaningfulness.

From Sirine's perspective, as long as she cooks and nurses her tactile expertise she exists, figures her sense of being and, even, turns what sounds nonsensical into something meaningful. Food is an epitome of patience and, even more, of existence, since "she was also born with an abiding sense of patience, an ability to live deeply and purely inside her own body, to stop thinking, to work, and to simply exist inside the simplest actions, like chopping an onion or stirring a pot" (Abu-Jaber19). Suffice it to scrutinize Sirine's ability to grasp the life, the love and the richness that could be enveloped inside a forkful of sweet potatoes into her mouth:

> The potatoes are soft as velvet, the gravy satiny. It is as if she can taste
> the life inside all those ingredients: the stem that the cranberries grew on,

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[10]Likewise, Abu-Jaber affirms that, in her family, "meals were always the place where things really got hashed out. That was where we found out who each other was" (Field 217). That is why, food is depicted as a pivotal dynamic in *Crescent*, departing from the principle "that if you want to work spirituality, or if you have a sense of it of any kind, one of the best ways to go about it is to take care of yourself. Take care of your physical being, so that the spiritual being will also be brightened and nurtured" (Field224-25).

the earth inside the bread, even the warm blood that was once inside the turkey. It comes back to her, the small secret that was always hers, for years, the only truth she seemed to possess—that food was better than love: surer, truer, more satisfying and enriching. As long as she could lose herself in the rhythms of peeling an onion, she was complete and whole. And as long as she could cook she would be loved. (Abu-Jaber194)

From the taste, she can identify the essential ingredients with precision. Her philosophy is that "food should taste like where it came from. I mean good food especially. You can sort of trace it back. You know, so the best butter tastes a little like pastures and flowers, that sort of stuff. Things show their origins" (Abu-Jaber69). Even when Aziz asks to "consider the difference between the first and third person in poetry" in relation to "'the difference between looking at a person and looking through their eyes'", Sirine picks up on his analogy saying, "'that's how I feel about eating'" (Abu-Jaber196). She explains that "'tasting a piece of bread that someone bought is like looking at that person; but tasting a piece of bread that they baked is like looking out of their eyes'" (Abu-Jaber196-7).

In Sirine's eyes, "cooking becomes agency: when all else fails in her life when she is confronted with uncertainty, confusion, and identity conflict, she goes to the kitchen and cooks herself and her history into existence" (Mercer and Strom 40). With every withering interest in feeding herself or others, Sirine fails to get hold of her life, that is, fails to recuperate an understanding of the world. As long as she does not yield herself to concocting different dishes she loses every other stamina, among them, the ability to establish meanings in her life. It is related that one year after the unexpected departure of Hanif and, in the course of resuming her creativity as a chef, "Sirine is starting to feel like she can breathe again without wanting to cry. Mostly she feels the neutrality of absence—neither happy nor sad, apart from sudden surges of feeling that lick through her, quick and electric as nerve synapses. Only when she cooks, in those moments of stirring and tasting, does she feel fully restored to herself" (Abu-Jaber340). It takes her only stirring, or another simple action, to regain wholeness. Right here, only through cooking does Sirine forge a strong ability

to bear Han's absence of Hanif and await him with a mixture of despair and hope.

Crescent fosters the yoke of the crucial importance of physical feeding to spiritual feeding by contrasting Sirine and Han's incongruent responses to the tactile. While Sirine "tastes everything edible, studies the new flavors, tests the shock of them; and she learns, every time she tastes, about balance and composition, addition and subtraction", Hanif simply "watches, eyeing the strange foods. When she offers him a taste, he closes his eyes and shakes his head" (Abu-Jaber185-6). The novel insists on this divergence as much as it points out the influence of Sirine's awareness of the communicative secret in feeding on enhancing Han's journey from nonsense to sense. Nobody loses sight of their collaborative making of baklava, a sweet cake based on almonds and other fruits (Abu-Jaber59-61). For a while, Sirine draws Han from his impending sense of exile towards unforgettable sharing and pleasure. Similar episodes allow us to always keep in mind that Sirine sees food as "a contact language---a medium to translate experience and create a meaningful world," as a synonym "with love, prayer, creativity, and healing" and uses it "for translation, to connect and communicate with everyone around her" (Mercer and Strom 40).

In tandem with this reading, Han's growth from a stark state of emptiness to a meaningful existence is, to a large scale, fashioned by his recollections of Iraq and its landmarks. Nobody misses how remembering the homeland and its grandeur enhances self-reconciliation and expresses a continuing struggle for some sense of the exile, for a feeling of being safely at home. In "Arab American Literature and the Politics of Memory", Lisa Suhair Majaj explains that,

> [m]emory plays a familiar role in the assertion of identity by members of ethnic and minority groups; family stories frequently ground ethnic identification, and the popularized search for 'roots' is often articulated as 'remembering who you are' […] Memory functions on both a cultural and a personal level to establish narratives of origin and belonging; myths of peoplehood, like memories of childhood, situate the subject and make

agency possible. It is thus no surprise that Arab American literature turns repeatedly to memory to explore, assert, critique, and negotiate ethnic identity. (266)

If there is something that still relates Han to a meaningful world it is his ability to breathe life into his relationship with his family. As he renders it, "for a moment, I forgot where I was. I forgot that this America. I was on the banks of the Tigris. I could see the sun through my eyelids. My sister was about to call me in to eat. It's like the light broke for me and brought it all back and then I had to return to this place" (Abu-Jaber187). With every act of remembering, Han goes through a sense of rebirth and restores his childhood in Iraq, despite the scare of an utter loss of his present life to the past. He suggests that "sometimes when I start remembering … sometimes I'm afraid I won't be able to stop" (Abu-Jaber188). As implied, what meanings memory could re-construct for the exile turns out insufficient as a guarantee of wholeness.

As a result of this incompleteness, Han's recuperation of an authentic sense of his Iraqi identity becomes associated with an inevitable return back to Iraq. The affirmation that "it's like there's some part of me that can't quite grasp the thought of never returning. I have to keep reminding myself. It's so hard to imagine" explains that visiting the homeland is the only and one prerequisite of wholeness (Abu-Jaber62). In a letter to Sirine, Han writes: "I'm driven by the prospect of return: my country won't let go of me—it's filled me up. You know that. And a certain fear—an emotional fear—has suddenly lifted and freed me" (Abu-Jaber312). Thus, when Han cuts with inaction and ventures to re-enter Iraq he expresses the scared of losing the last thread that could re-establish his grasp over his identity as an Iraqi, that is the possibility of not seeing his mentally-disturbed mother before her death. This audacious act shows the thin affinity between sense and nonsense, given the folly of the homecoming despite the strong probability of a death execution.

5. Conclusion:

As I have tried to show in my reading into some aspects of sense and nonsense through Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*, the considered narrative offers solid convenient

contextual triggers for investigating the crisis of sense. In parallel, its immediate academic environment adds a complex challenge, essentially, to the overarching identity crises embodied in the novel. Among these challenges are the multifaceted controversies, extending from the lack of identification when certain notions cease to signify or lose their foundational aspects of reference and meaningfulness, to the features of opposition between an original meaning and the abuses made out of it. In this last case, reality does not just belie certain conceptions but, additionally re-identifies their emanation from illusions. As such, the crisis of sense in *Crescent* can only make sense in the plural form, rather than the singular.

Likewise, this literary approach of sense and non-sense alerts us to Abu-Jaber's attempts to make sense of the twenty-first-century crises for the Arab American by sending out a hopeful note. Her book denounces the disastrous complicity inherent in current political discourses while countering the inconsistencies and disfigurations of the master-narrative with "a simple, human story about love and fear and jealousy that can transcend culture and have an immediacy that will speak to a lot of different people" (Field 216). Hence, even the incorporation of a complex ideological background does not undercut "a vision of life that, while haunted by past suffering and loss, holds out hope for the future" (Mercer and Strom 46). By bringing to the fore the communicative up-building of remembering and eating, I have also pointed out that when verbal language fails to determine transparent meanings other means of signification take over to re-establish our sense of direction and foster the stamina to regain meanings with the cultivation of sense and care for the self.

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TEĐUĐU ZA: A Music and Ritual of the Northern Ewe of Ghana

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Abstract : *The belief in music and ritual as two cultural components that satisfy specific needs and purposes in African societies cannot be underrated especially when one examines the social, political, economic and religious activities of the people. Indigenous religious inclinations of Africans have shaped them to perceive festivals as embodiments of music and rituals that are publicly performed to mark important landmarks in their lives. A harvest festival that fosters a close bond between the chiefs and people of northern Eweland in the Volta Region of Ghana and their objects of worship is teɖuɖu za (yam festival celebration) This paper examines the historical and geographical backgrounds of northern Ewes, their teɖuɖu za and finally explains why music and ritual performances in this harvest festival are strongly perceived as imperative to ensuring unity, solidarity and a total well-being of the people.*

Keywords: Indigenous religion, music, northern Ewes, ritual, *teɖuɖu za*.

I. Introduction

The sustenance of festival celebrations to date among Africans is quite dependent on strong and deeply rooted religious beliefs of a people. As an inherited cultural legacy that provides solutions to their daily problems, Africans for this reason, see no reason or need to ever abandon festival celebrations because they attribute the day to day administration of the state partly to the presence, guidance and blessings of the spirits of the deities and ancestors. A non-celebration of festivals, therefore, is believed to trigger the wrath and punishment from the spirits of the gods.

A common but important traditional music and ritual that northern Ewes consider very religious and thus, accord it a communal patronisation is the *teɖuɖu za*. Like their neighbours of other indigenous Ghanaian or African societies, Modupe (1998:150) further explains the significance of indigenous African festival celebrations that "they illustrate among other things historical

events, harvesting of crops and appeasement to various gods for protection against enemies, evil forces or epidemic diseases". In an attempt to access a stronger and formidable fellowship that can be renewed or adjusted, northern Ewes see music and dance performance as a component of a successful ritual in festivals to the gods for physical and spiritual protection. Parrinder (1949:41), for this reason, opines:

> No one who has visited a scene of public worship in Africa can be in doubt that one of the attributes of the gods is that they are music-loving gods. The most common situation in which they manifest themselves is the musical situation in which music which affects them is performed. They descend to the people through their human media and participate in the drama of worship.

Corroborating the point above, Mbiti (1991:141), states that there are many occasions when festivals add to the grandeur of both personal and communal rituals; among these festival types are planting, harvesting, hunting and fishing festivals. Dzide (2000:99) examines the festivals of Eweland and states: "there is no northern Ewe town or village that does not celebrate at least one annual festival. Apart from the celebration of festival types like the *gligbagba za* (wall-breaking festival) *sasadu za* and *danyibakaka za* (migration commemoration festivals), the commonest and perhaps the most important of all the festivals celebrated by northern Ewes is the *teɖuɖu za*.

Mamattah (1976:65) examines the historical background of Ewes and states that from Southern Nigeria, they migrated first to Ketu or Oyo in Nigeria and later moved to Dahomey (Benin Republic) before finally settling at Ŋɔtsie in the Republic of Togo. Historically, Northern Ewes were part of a major bloc of Ewes believed to have migrated from *Ŋɔtsie* (sometimes spelt Nuatja, Nuatia or Nouatche), a settlement area that lies about 6^0 30' N and 15^0 E on the Lome-Atakpame road and about 112km from Lome, the capital of Togo (Daketsey, 1979:1). On the migration of Northern Ewes, Amenumey (1997) states that "by the end of the 17[th]century, the people left *Ŋɔtsie,* their ancestral home, in small kin groups such as families and clans and travelled in different directions towards the Volta River and camped temporarily at a number of places before finally settling at present in relatively peaceful and small autonomous communities or homelands".

A close look at northern Ewe languages shows that beside Ewe being the main language of communication, a closer look at the language patterns of the

area shows variations that exist in the *FIA FIA GBE* (non-Ewe speaking) areas which are occupied by pockets of Guan, Buem and Akan speaking ethnic groups which are referred to in Ewe as *FIA Fiala Wo*. These *fiafialawo* have their own languages but in most cases, speak Ewe as a second language. Some Guan-speaking settlements include Akpafu, Avatime, Bowiri, Likpe, Logba, Lolobi, Nkonya, Nyangbo, Santrokofi and Tafi. The Buem speaking groups are located at Jasikan and its adjoining settlements like Baglo, Teteman, Kute, and Okadjakrom. Going further north, one can find pockets of Akan speaking groups of settlers at Ahamansu, Apesokubi, Breweniase, Dapaa, Kadjebi, Papase, Pampawie, and Worawora.

Commenting on the geographical location of the people, Agbodeka (2000:1-4) delineates northern Eweland as bounded to the east by the Republic of Togo, to the West by the Volta Lake, to the north by Jasikan and Krachi Districts and to the south by Aŋlɔ, North and South Toŋu, Akatsi, Avenɔ and Ketu Districts. Northern Eweland as a substantial part of Volta Region has a total area of 20,344 kilometres. Out of the region's total land size, the people are currently located in seven administrative districts: Ho, Agortime-Ziɔfe Adaklu, Kpandu, Hohoe, Kpeve and South Dayi which occupy 4,900.4 square kilometres, representing about 20% of the Volta Region and 1.72% of Ghana's total land size.

For purposes of commonality in indigenous cultural practices, this paper would focus on the celebration of *teɖuɖu za* in some traditional areas in the Ho, North and South Dayi, Kpando and Hohoe Districts. The festival celebration takes place mainly in the months of August/September through December in the Ho, Peki, Awudome, Anfoega, Kpando, Hohoe and Leklebi traditional areas.

II. What is *Teɖuɖu za*?

Teɖuɖu za is a yam harvest festival celebrated by northern Ewe societies which are predominantly subsistence farming communities. As a customary obligation, the first harvest of new tubers of yam is offered through the chiefs as gifts to the traditional stools, spirits of the gods and ancestors to express the people's joy and gratitude for a bumper harvest of this food crop at the end of their farming season. *Teɖuɖu za,* according to Dzide (2000:100):

> .....is a harvest festival during which communal feasting between the gods and men take place. The celebration represents public affirmation by the people of oneness with their hierarchy of gods, ancestors and heroes. It is also a time for the rededication of the people to their chiefs. The festival

creates an opportunity for solutions of family and community squabbles and misunderstandings.

The cultural significance of food being celebrated by ethnic groups in Ghana satisfies many reasons. In *teɖuɖu za* for example, the first harvest of new tubers of yam from the farm is considered sacred. For this reason, not until the chief and his elders usher in new yams by first performing rituals to the gods, traditional stools and spirits of the ancestors by feeding them with new yams, no farmer has the right to bring fresh yams home for consumption. This is done as a public declaration by the people of oneness with their state deities and ancestors as the spiritual forces believed to have promoted the growth and bountiful harvest of yam.

A personal investigation that I carried out from (May 22-28, 2015) about the origin of yam festival in the Ho, Kpando, Peki and Hohoe traditional areas reveals that despite the lack of written records to support their claim, *teɖuɖu za* in northern Eweland is believed to have originated from *Ɖɔtsie,* the last centre of dispersion of Ewes as a result of the tyrannical rule of Agorkoli, the king under whom they served before migrating some four centuries ago to their present areas of permanent settlement in the northern sector of Volta Region.

Like their northern neighbours, Nukunya (1997:106) traces the origin of festivals of the southern Ewes and states that "the origin of their festivals are deeply rooted in the history, tradition and culture of *Hogbe*, a name associated with *Ɖɔtsie*, their ancestral home located in central Togo. Among these festivals which are considered as music and ritual are: *Hogbetsotso* of the people of Aŋlɔga, *Tɔtsogbe* of the Sokpoe traditional area in the South Tɔŋu district and *Hogbeza*, an annual festival celebration of the people of Avenɔ traditional area"

What, therefore, is a ritual? A rite or a ritual can be explained as a prescribed form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. Ritual as part of northern Ewe *teɖuɖu za* can best be described in the words of Mbiti (1991:131) as a means of communicating something of religious significance, through word, symbol and action to the gods or powers that rule their destiny. The ritual word is powerful since it is spoken in seriousness and humility, and repeated every time that ritual is performed. In the African context, Mead (1973:87).also explains what a ritual stands for:

A ritual deals with relationships, either between a single individual and the supernatural, or among a group of individuals who share things together, and there is something about sharing that makes it ritual, including its extra degree of intensity, due to the fact that its behavioural pattern is contact between the secular and the sacred.

Amlor (2011:11) in an article;"*Oguaa Fetu afahye*: A music and ritual of the people of Cape Coast in Ghana" explains why *Fante* citizens of Cape Coast, an old coastal historical town attach importance to first feeding their gods, and ancestral stools with (*etɔ*), mashed yam before the ban on eating fresh yam is lifted. According to him, "the gods and spirits of the ancestors and the traditional stools are fed with the first fruits of their harvests from both the land and the sea, because they are perceived as gifts from the gods and the ancestors".

Mbiti emphasises the importance of first fruits gathered at the end of harvest seasons in many African societies and explains that they are considered 'holy or sacred' because they open up the way for the ripening of the fields and the harvest. He further adds: "the rituals take away any dangers that could be incurred in eating the new harvest. This idea may be thought of as "cooling off" the crops, or blessing the harvest, tasting the food or taking away the bitterness. Rituals are like religious signals to the people that they may now safely eat the fruit of their labour, because by blessing the first fruits, the whole harvest is sanctified or ritually cleansed for human consumption" (1991:135-136).

Teɖuɖu za has two main ritual components: private and public. While the private aspect covers rituals associated with the gods which are sacred, a public ritual, on the other hand, focuses on social and family unity that warrants the participation of every citizen. The private or sacred rituals include *nubabla* (tying of herbal leaves), *gbɔmekpɔkplɔ* (sweeping of the town) and *tetsrolɔlɔ* (gathering of yam peels). Two main public ritual performances in *teɖuɖu za* which customarily warrant obligatory participation of every individual citizen of the land are the *teɖugbe* (main festival day) and *dutakpeza* (state durbar) which crowns the festival celebration.

Preparations towards the *teɖuɖu za* commences on the first day with the performance of *nubabla* rituals that are aimed at drawing the entire society closer to nature. Special leaves believed to have high magical potency are selected and blessed. A mixture of corn flour, palm oil, broken raw eggs, blood

and feathers of a slaughtered fowl are sprinkled on the special leaves and tied together. The symbolism in tying the leaves is to disarm and weaken the power of all evil forces during the celebration. In a procession accompanied by the sound of *afaga* (state gong), the *trɔnua* and *trɔsiawo* (traditional priests and priestesses), are escorted by some elders, and they move throughout the community and sprinkle ritual water to drive away malevolent forces such as plague, pestilence, drought and flood. The *gbɔmekpɔkplɔ* ritual comes after the *nubabla* ritual the following day.

Gbɔmekpɔkplɔ, therefore, is a ritual in which all the communities are spiritually swept clean to prevent evil forces and diseases from attacking the people. According to the natives, *gbɔmekpɔkplɔ* ritual involves the use of two calabashes; one contains ordinary water and the other contains a mixture of water, palm wine and two bundles of herbs. In addition, *blikpo*; a fresh shoot of a palm branch about three feet long, has a loop at one end and two live creatures; a frog and a month old chick tied to the other end to symbolize a 'ritual broom' The *trɔnuga* shouts an onomatopoeic word signal, *haa..hoo* to which the crowd bursts out into a simultaneous response by repeating the words after him. This word is repeated three times and the crowd marches in a procession along the main road through the town after the priest who drags the symbolic broom on the ground as they move along. As the procession, continues, he dips *afla*, a ritual plant into a large calabash filled with water and sprinkles it in all directions for every household to be touched by the sacred water. A town crier goes ahead to warn people to put out all lights. If a light of any kind is seen in the direction to which the priests move, stones are thrown at it as a warning for it to be put out to avoid the wrath of the gods.

The procession through the streets of the communities continues until it stops at a heap of wood ash and charcoal dumped by the women on the main road at the outskirts of the town. The chief priest now leaves the ritual broom with the creatures tied to it, now completely dead on the heap. The death of the creatures during the ritual cleansing symbolizes the peoples' resistance to death. The *trɔnuga* finally prays to the gods for the entire community to be well protected from any evil attack and, as well, prevent malevolent forces from overstepping the ritual broom to enter the town. The idea of maintaining good health is always a major concern for every society in the world, and in the pursuit of this ambition, citizens of northern Eweland perform rituals that are directed to the super powers on which they depend for help, blessing, protection

and removal of evil spirits that affect their homes, animals and crops. As emphasis on the interrelation of music and ritual activities
of most Ghanaian societies, Aziaku (2009:230) stresses:

> Prayer moves with songs and they give a captivating message to the people by indicating the strong power of the spirits which can shape their physical and spiritual needs. Africans, therefore, hold the view that the practice of music associated with humanity dates from primordial time and its use in different contextual situations either on individual or community basis has a high psychological impact which makes them believe that "music is life" and can never be done away with.

Music, therefore, depending on the context within which it is used in contemporary Africa, is what Ihekweazu (1985) describes as "a tool that the African employs to understand his/her past, and contribute to the shaping of his/her present and the future, express and document him/herself; his/her feelings, hopes, disappointments, sufferings and joy". The need for ritual performances in *teɖuɖu za* can also be explained in terms of the people's total dependence and protection that are perceived as merits which are ascribed to the powers of those in the spiritual realm. This is the reason why the society frowns on ignorance of these values and responsibilities because the people believe that they do not only render a citizen 'foreign', but also, a misfit in the society. In addition sacrifice as part of rituals of worship in *teɖuɖu za*, is meant to feed the deities regularly because they (deities) are part of the daily, weekly or annual worship that is inseparably linked with them. In other words, Nukunya (1997:90) states: "sacrifices are offered to pacify the gods, traditional stools and ancestral spirits as a means of removing or stopping a looming danger believed to be punishment for disobedience or some strife against the gods. Sacrifices are also gifts to the sacred in the form of thanks or ritual meal offerings to pave way for reconciling the people with one another, or with the spirits of the gods and ancestors".

The *gbɔmekpɔkplɔ* ritual performance officially permits entry of 'new of fresh yam' into the town on the third day which is the main *teɖugbe* (festival celebration day). The fresh tubers of yam are harvested and carried home by women, teenage boys and girls. A few metres away from home, the load carriers are welcomed by children amidst singing and jubilation. In the early hours of the morning, all heads and family members reunite to settle all disagreements and other family troubles. This is followed by the preparation of a ritual meal of 'plain' and 'red' mashed yam, by the *trɔnuawo*. While the white or plain

mashed yam is never mixed with any type of oil, the 'red yam' is so called because it is mashed and mixed with palm oil and are both offered to the spirits of the deities and ancestors of the land to partake of first.

Since a strong belief of the people, is that these spirit powers are closely linked with the major transitional stages of their human existence, a person, or a communal group; family, clan, village, or society, expresses gratitude or appeals directly to these spiritual forces in such situations through a medium such as a traditional priest/priestess or a spirit diviner/healer. After these super-human spirits are fed, the entire palace of the *fiaga* (paramount chief) together with the ancestral stools, are sprinkled with both white and red mashed yam to declare the *teɖuɖu za* open to the public. This activity in effect symbolises abundant food not only for the harvesters but also for invited friends and the entire society. The celebration is climaxed by communal family feasts in which every household prepares yam *fufu,* (a Ghanaian delicacy prepared from pounded yam, cassava, cocoyam or plantain) and the sound and rhythm of the pounding is heard all over the community.

To round off the festivities, a grand *dutakpeza* (state durbar) is held on a Sunday. The procession atmosphere to the durbar ground becomes charged with the poetry of songs, rhythmical phrases of instruments and dance gestures. There is a notable array of royal regalia which include *fiavuwo* (court drums), *apakawo* (palanquins), *fiazikpuiwo* (stools), *tsiami-tikplɔwo* (linguist staffs), *atamkayiwo* (state swords); all symbolising the status and power of the chiefs and the philosophy of the people. Other properties, some of which are cosmetics of all kinds like rich beads, jewellery and well-packed bundles of women's clothes (both local and foreign) are neatly arranged in brass pans that are carried by teenage girls and shown to the public. At the durbar ground, libation is poured by the traditional priests and priestesses The rites of planting and harvesting of yam and other work activities which take place on the farm are dramatized by the priests(esses), farmers' associations and cultural troupes through singing, drumming and dancing. After the dance-drama, the chief and his sub-chiefs, seated in state, receive homage from their subjects. This is followed by greetings and speeches by chiefs and important dignitaries invited to come and grace the occasion.

After activities undertaken in the state durbar are over, *tetsrolɔlɔ* ritual is performed to symbolically remove from the towns or communities, peels of new yam consumed during the festival period as a sign that marks the end of the

teḍuḍu za. This activity actually takes place eight days after the festival day. Though this ritual symbolically ends the celebration, the use of yam as a staple food continues until the beginning of the next sowing season that commences in early March.

A contemporary feature which has now emerged in northern Eweland is crowning the festival celebration with Christian and Moslem religious worship. Thanksgiving services are therefore held in the churches and mosques by the citizenry, to express their joy and gratitude to God/Allah, for granting them a fruitful and a successful *teḍuḍu za.*

III. Music and dance in *teḍuḍu za*

Music and dance cut across the entire socio-cultural foundation of African societies; hence, festival celebrations are regarded as religious events in which worship of the gods never lacks music making. Music as part of rituals performed during festivals is considered as a critical component of worship because Africans believe that music and rituals enhance and validate easy access or contact with all the spirit powers that are responsible for their total well-being. Similarly, Gyedu-Asamoah (2003:4) expresses why Africans to date cling to music and ritual performances to supernatural forces in their lives and work activities: "there is a deep sense that the human being is weak, impure or sinful and stands in need of transcendent power. The belief that people could enter into relationship with powerful and benevolent powers and thereby receive protection from evil forces is prevalent in African socio-religious life and popular discourse". In his investigation into the socio-cultural functions of music in indigenous worship of Ewes in the Volta Region of Ghana, Amlor (2009) comments:

> Most traditional Ewe societies believe that the universe is constituted of benevolent and malevolent spirits and supernatural problems require supernatural interventions. They, therefore, seek solutions to their physical and spiritual problems through ritual performances which incorporate music making in the festival, puberty and funeral celebrations. Music and rituals are therefore perceived as the quickest means through which easy contact or communion with their spirit beings are possible.

To validate the point above, Nketia (1962), stresses: "there is the need to know more about indigenous religious life, its music, its modes of thought,

beliefs and norms. It is only when we know the above that we can resist the temptation of allowing ourselves to be carried away from the knowledge of the past". Like most festival celebrations in Ghana or Africa, *teɖuɖu za* is an action-packed event and expressed through verbal, musical, dance and body gestures geared towards proper ritual communication. Among a plethora of indigenous musical types performed in this harvest festival, a major one that by custom, involves the participation of every celebrant is *agbleha* dance-drumming. The folks put a high religious premium on this folk occupational music because of the belief that its non-performance denies the farmers and the entire society of ritual blessings which can trigger untold hardship in their health and work activities in subsequent farming seasons.

In defining and tracing the origin of this folk genre, the term *agblehawo,* which is a short form of *agbledehawo,* literally means 'farming songs', and it is derived from two Ewe words, *agbledede* (farming) and *hawo* (songs). By definition, *agblehawo* are a type of work songs that are sung by farmers as an accompaniment to their work activities in order to motivate them to boost productivity and ensure their welfare and survival; when performed at home, they serve other specific purposes. Communal performance of *agblehawo* reaches its climax on the day of the state durbar. The procession atmosphere to the durbar ground becomes charged with   poetry of songs, rhythmical throbbing of drums and other instruments and varied dance movements. This is followed by prayers, animal sacrifice and pouring of libation by the *trɔnuawo* for the protection of the people.

The organisation and performance of *agbleha* dance-drumming involve performers who are mostly adult male and female subsistence farmers as well the youth who form the bulk of the work force in these traditional societies. The stages of ritual performance in this festival largely determine the selection and use of songs. Kaemmer (1993:69), thus, writes: "music and dance are a very important part of the ritual ceremony because they frequently mark the stages of the ritual". In an interview with Francis Kyereme, a farmer and *agbleha* performer on (May 15, 2015) at Kpando about why this folk music is vital in *teɖuɖu za,* he explained:

> It is our strong belief that the role(s) played by *agblehawo* that have religious themes, do not only express gratitude to the gods and ancestral spirits; but also, a means to fellowship with them. It is the people's belief that failure to carry out this cultural obligation could invoke the wrath of

the gods, negate the potency of the rituals in *teɖuɖu za* and cause hardship in the form of diseases, drought, poor harvest, and death of citizens.

After the ritual, the priests(esses), as mentioned earlier, enact rites of planting and harvesting of yam as a tribute to the super powers and deceased farmers through music, dance and drama. They sing and dance to the tunes of religious *agblehawo* which recount farmers' joy, death, burial and funeral rites of their *ameyinugbeawo* (deceased farmers). The songs praise hardworking farmers who are either alive or dead for contributing to the development of their societies in the form of providing abundant food for the people and assisting in putting up community schools, roads, or clinics. The songs also help in controlling emotions/group behaviour and maintaining a state of normalcy for those alive.

The *agbleha* below with the title; ***Mele wodzi zɔm la ɖaŋ' me*** (I am threading over them with caution), recounts the loss of some illustrious sons and daughters who were farmers.

Example 1: An *agbleha* recounting the loss of relatives who were farmers.

//:*Mele wo dzi zɔm loo*://   //:I am threading over them://
　　Ameveviewo le to me   Important relatives are lying underground
　　Mele wodzi zɔm l'a   I am threading over them

Aɖaŋu me, l'a daŋu me	With caution, with caution

Since the celebration borders so much on yam harvest and other farm products at the end of the farming season, *agblehawo* are featured in both private and communal ritual activities of the people. In the private or sacred ritual activities which include prayers, sacrifices and pouring of libation, the people move in a procession during the *gbɔmekpɔkplɔ* rituals and sprinkle every household with ritual water amidst *agbleha* dance-drumming. Here the songs performed focus on petition relating to the people's care and protection by their spirit powers. In addition, the songs do not only approve cordial interrelation that strengthens social bonds between the celebrants, priestly groups and their guardian spirits only, but also warn or punish those whose actions are considered detrimental to the success of the celebration. These responsibilities and fear of punishment from the gods have infused into the people a sense of discipline, unity and devotion to their religious activities. It is therefore not surprising to see that to date; music and dance are deeply embedded in ritual performances in other Ghanaian festivals like the *Odwira,* a ritual of stool cleansing and purification of the land by the Akan and *Homowɔ,* a harvest festival celebration of the Ga of Accra, the capital of Ghana.

During the *dutakpeza*, farmers enact through music, dance and drama, difficulties they face like an outbreak of bush fire, snake bite, accidental infliction of cutlass wounds on themselves and ways they take to contain such problems or difficulties. Participation in the durbar thus, offers the celebrants a platform through music, dance and drama to exhibit what Khamalwa (2012:65) describes as "breaking down social and moral barriers, allowing people to act out often suppressed emotions, transport the celebrants to a higher plane and liberate them from the usual socially approved selective words and actions sanctioned by society" According to the people, music, dance and drama in *teɖuɖu za* arouse feelings or emotions that stir and facilitate direct participation of the spirits of the deities in their moral, material and spiritual lives.

One can clearly realise from the actions and emotions of the celebrants during music and dance sessions what Khamalwa describes as "communication is enhanced and made more effective, as one or several people say or do different things simultaneously in a harmonious way that appeals to multiple senses". Turner (1969) corroborates the point above and states: "the individuals blend their individual uniqueness with that of others and they draw inspiration and

courage from the fact that they are not alone; solidarity and a common destiny create a sense of identity, which he calls communitas". Buencosenjo (2011:1), complements the points made by Khamalwa and Turner in this way:

> Music and dance are close conceptual cousins and as part of rituals, especially, the multi-sensorial types affirm participants' experience of their material and transcendent worlds. There is the need to enter a realm of understanding them as capable of defining and negotiating the contradictions, differences and promoting human solidarity.

The hardship and other work-related problems which the people encounter during the farming season finally give way to joy and jubilation during the *teɖuɖu za*. As a festivity that avails them a forum to relax and make merry, they sing songs (both local and foreign) in a call and response form, with themes highlighting assistance from the Supreme Being, the gods and ancestors such as:

i. gratitude praise, love and adoration for sustaining their lives
ii. joy of reaping bumper food harvest
iii. protection from sickness, evil spirits, enemies and natural disasters like flood
iv. reshaping of unhappy destinies

The text of an *agbleha* below expresses the peoples' gratitude to the Supreme Being, the gods and ancestors for granting them good health, abundant rain, soil fertility and a bumper crop harvest: *Aɖaase* (Thank you Almighty God):

Example 2: An *agbleha* expressing gratitude for a bumper food crop harvest.

//:Aɖaase, aɖaase://	//:Thank you, thank you://
Nunamela, aɖaase	One who offers gifts, thank you.
Aɖaase, aɖaase	Thank you, thank you
Mawuga, aɖaase	Almighty God, thank you
Aɖaase, aɖaase	Thank you, thank you
Gbledelawofofo, aɖaase loo!	Father of farmers, thank you
Aɖaase, aɖaase	Thank you, thank you

Since culture is dynamic, it is worth mentioning a contemporary feature that has now characterized *teɖuɖu za:* the use of varieties of musical genres to satisfy both ceremonial and recreational musical tastes of all celebrants. Musical types such as highlife, hip-life, reggae, rap, gospel and brass band music are now performed alongside the indigenous types like *agblehawo*, *bɔbɔɔbɔ, gbolo, agblɔvu,* and *adevu* as a way of fostering communal participation and social cohesion among all the participants. In this regard, the celebrants do not consider themselves as people with different social and ethnic backgrounds, status, religions and colours but rather a big family of one people. The joy in this collective participation has revived, attracted and increased youth participation in *teɖuɖu za* from one community to the other and from all walks of life. In this vein, Idolor (2007:16) asserts:

> In Africa, while the core of indigenous musical practice continues, the synthetic and entirely foreign forms also exist simultaneously to satisfy the diverse musical tastes of the pluralist society. Sometimes, entertainment based music is performed along with other non-music activities. In other situations where there is a sequence of activities, like in religious festivals, entertainment music is performed to provide the listener (individual or audience), gregariousness which ensures quite a lasting relationship.

All these activities stimulate the psyche of the participants especially the natives to settle family and community disputes in order to expunge all evils and misfortunes of a passing year. Similar to contemporary issues that form part

and parcel of *Fetu afahye*, a harvest festival of the people of Cape Coast, Amlor (2011:27) cites the case of corporate bodies like Vodafone, Tigo and Airtel (mobile network service providers) who now form part of this celebration, give publicity to the celebration by sponsoring *teɖuɖu za* musical jingles and messages in the electronic and print media and thus whip up curiosity, interest and desire of a whole lot of visitors from all over the world to be part of the celebration as participant observers. These bodies at times collaborate with media houses like the radio and television stations in the country and organise state dances to crown "Miss *Teɖuɖu za*", a beauty contest for young and talented ladies from the area. A remarkable aspect of this event includes the performance of indigenous and contemporary African music. The contestants are not only tested on their depth of knowledge about indigenous musical types that abound in Ghana or Africa but are also asked to play the musical instruments and perform some of the dances as well. These corporate groups also now channel their energy and music into peaceful self-help projects among which are; construction of community infrastructure such as schools, health posts and roads at no cost. The festival organizers also invite traditional and corporate bodies to come and educate the youth on topical issues; puberty rites and family planning in order to prevent teenage pregnancy and also avoid contracting HIV/AIDS disease which to date, has no known medical cure.

An in-depth study of northern Ewe songs shows that they are not absolutely considered on grounds of elements like melody, polyphony, intervals and rhythm that constitute it. Song texts and poetry, referred to as *hakpanyawo*, play crucial roles. The song texts are therefore a combination of poetry and musical expression with coded messages that are embedded in vital historical facts and socio-cultural teachings which help the listener to know and understand the aesthetic values, history, philosophy and cultural life of a people. Merriam (1964), commenting on song texts and human behaviour, states: "one of the most obvious sources of understanding human behaviour in connection with music is the song text. The text of course, is language behaviour rather than music sound, but they are integral parts of music, and there is clear-cut evidence that language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse". Similarly, Nketia (1974:189) asserts:

> The treatment of a song as a form of speech utterances arises not only from the stylistic considerations or from the consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music; it is also an avenue of verbal

communication, a medium for creative verbal expression which can reflect both personal and social experiences".

The celebrants also believe that the songs sung during the *teɖuɖuza* help them to understand their past, shape the present and face farming activities in the future with confidence. The celebration also offers them the opportunity to express through songs and dance gestures, their feelings, hopes, disappointments, sufferings and joy encountered during farming to the public. As stated by Mbiti (1991:143), "religious and social values are repeated and renewed through communal participation in activities like music, dance, drama and oral communication". Furthermore, it is a strong northern Ewe indigenous belief that song texts, to a large extent help in achieving social control and cohesion, addressing topical issues, praising hard work, ridiculing lazy farmers, showing gratitude and fostering a close bond between the people and the Supreme Being, the gods and ancestral spirits. The song texts also highlight the pride and joy of citizens who work hard and gain good economic status, and urge others to follow suit.

In contrast to songs that emphasise hard work in the society, an alternative text of an *agbleha* cited below with the title; ***D'agble naɖu loo!*** (Cultivate a food crop farm to enable you eat!), allegorically ridicules lazy youngsters who hardly know the difference between food crops like yam and cassava because they shun farming and do not feed their families but rather, they loiter from one drinking bar to the other in the community boozing.

//:*Dagble naɖu loo!*://	//:Cultivate a food crop farm to enable you eat!://
Miatɔa kankoawoee!	Fellow young folks!
Dagble, nanyi dokuiwo,	Cultivate a food crop farm to sustain your life
Nɔvi! dagble, naɖu loo!	Folks! Cultivate a food crop farm to enable you to eat!

It is interesting to note that almost all the performing groups in this festival celebration sing songs that centre on love, unity and patriotism. Songs under this category cut across different types of love, ranging from social love, communal love, filial love, parental love to erotic love. Numerous as the aspects of love may be, the basic underlying factor that runs through these songs is the

concern for the well-being of the object of one's love which can be one's blood brother or sister, spouse, friend, society, country and humanity on the whole. One can clearly observe that places, where songs of love abound in Ewe communal activities, peace, unity and solidarity, wields the citizens as one people with a common destiny. The themes also strengthen ties and eventually create peaceful co-existence of the people.

Ɣeɖuɖu (dance performance) as a non-verbal communication satisfies both ritual and non-ritual purposes in African socio-cultural activities. Ɣeɖuɖu in the African context is readily seen as a running commentary on the social life of the people. Radcliffe Brown (1952) describes dance as "the state of elation in which the feeling of increased self-importance in the dancer engenders in him a feeling of geniality and goodwill towards his companions".

Dance movements which are largely dictated by instrumental rhythms of various dances in *teɖuɖuza,* serve a complex diversity of social purposes: emotional satisfaction which impacts deeply on the citizens, enhancement of communication, body movements and the use of gestures. The dance forms may be linear, circular, serpentine, or columns of two or more rows and involve the use of the hips, intricate and gliding footsteps that move and alternate from side to side with the arms swinging in the direction of the alternating footsteps. There is also fast rotation, ripples of the body, contraction and release, as well as variations in dynamics levels and use of space. Three dance forms are identifiable in *teɖuɖu za*: solo dance in which an individual executes basic styles of dance alone and the form in which two, three or four individuals take turns in the dance arena. There is also communal dance which is executed in unorganised order and thus, allowing room for individual styles and dance movements. Akuna (2008:1) examines the role(s) of Ghanaian dances and states:

> .....dance as a psychological form of behaviour is speculated to help in conditioning the emotional state of individual members (of given societies), by helping to build their personal self-worth, the cathartic and therapeutic function of dance is linked to this behaviour, since certain experience of dance performance can help to purge negative feelings and emotion of both performers and spectators

One can clearly notice in this contemporary era that there are changing trends in many African societies which are not the making of the people but rather, the

product of external socio-cultural pressures that have emerged and impacted on the people through Western and Arab education, religion, technology and modernity. While this paper does not aim at condemning foreign cultural influences, it rather suggests that there should be the need for adoption of only aspects that can enhance and project African cultural identity or values. In this direction, Amlor (2011:28) cautions:

> Traditional/opinion leaders, clans and family heads, government and personnel in the print/electronic media, composers/arrangers, researchers and performers should be mindful of African values and consequently protect them. If the aim of the mass media (both audio and video) for example, is to inform, educate and entertain, the bulk of items that constitute their programmes should reflect on the environment in which the listeners and viewers live. This would enable them to know the essence, understand and take pride in their cultural heritage.

IV. Conclusion

The *teḑuḑu za* of northern Ewes, is an annual yam harvest festival celebration which takes place mainly in the months of August/September through December in the Ho, Peki, Awudome, Anfoega, Kpando, Hohoe and Leklebi traditional areas that can be located in the Ho, North and South Dayi, Kpando and Hohoe Districts of the Volta Region of Ghana. It is a period when the first harvest of new tubers of yam are prepared as a ritual meal by chiefs and their elders to feed the gods, traditional stools and spirits of their ancestors. Not until this rite is performed, no farmer has the right to bring fresh yams home for consumption. This ritual is a public affirmation by the people of oneness with the hierarchy of their gods and ancestors who are believed to be the spiritual forces behind the growth and bountiful harvest of yam. The celebration is also seen as an opportunity that provides solutions to their intrinsic psychological and emotional problems raise hopes, clears doubts about mysteries that centre on the cosmology, the purpose of existence, fortunes/misfortunes, death and life after death. Apart from the indigenous music genres that are featured, contemporary musical types such as highlife, reggae, gospel songs and brass band music are also performed during *teḑuḑu za* to satisfy the musical tastes of all the participants and thereby foster unity and co-existence among them. Idolor (2007:14) in the light of the above, comments: "in examining social factors that subject Africans to music making; desire for cultural identity,

didactic function, entertainment, integrative and religious essence are given emphasis". Similarly, Nketia (1966:20) concludes:

> A village that has no organized music or neglects community singing, drumming and dancing are said to be dead. Music making is, therefore, an index of a living community and a measure of the degree of social cohesion among its respective units.

The government and policy makers in the educational sector in Ghana, as well as other African countries, should, therefore, be conscious of the fact that majority of students turned out from the basic schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities would serve as future leaders in African societies; hence, the study of African indigenous knowledge including the performing arts as a basis for a Ghanaian or African-oriented educational curriculum is very critical.

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The Implications of Western Decision Making Practices and their Effect on the Future of Civilization?

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt examine decision making which has affected Western education namely the United Kingdom, USA and attributed to neoliberalism and its contribution to other nations' educational policy. In addition, the data will show that this nineteenth century's equivalent of economic liberalism laissez faire, is affecting both the academics and students way of life inclusive of the future of civilization. "The great fact to remember is that the trend of civilization itself is forever upward:" (Roosevelt & Peabody, 1945). The data will also illustrate how society has become less civilized, notably changes of interaction between people. It will be shown how the late twentieth century reintroduction of neoliberalism is unhelpful in this century as it was misplaced in the late 1980s. For academics and educational practitioners alike, does duty mean to nurture the future populous who could evolve civilization to go forever upward or to see if the model of capitalism infringed or impeded teaching practice thus hindering experienced educators and respective teaching institutions globally, and importantly, the student body... the societal future. The aim is to answer the question; if this cycle was unhelpful due the pejorative neoliberalism? This paper will measure the facts to establish if new international legislation be adopted, so business has no direct intervention in academic affairs and indeed its management, whereby the Government, Institutional Stakeholders and Parent Governors presently have a say over teaching policy or to decide if professors, lecturers, and teachers alike, have either Students or indeed Consumers in their classrooms and lecture auditoria, dominated by the enforcement of IT placed upon the students therefore diminishing their basic cognitive or mental skill sets, and pre-examination standards.

Keywords - *Neoliberalism, Capitalism, Generation Change, Ethics in Education,   Policy, Future .*

I. INTRODUCTION

Having observed schools, universities and the students, civilization is being effected by the lack of graduate ability via having discipline problems within the social skill sets and poor mental academic ability. In short, the student of today and of this generation, are far removed from the basic academic knowledge and its application, from their predecessors a generation ago.
These issues, are endangering the existence as a progressive intellectual and more evidently an evolving race of *Homo sapiens.* It is clear that a vast majority of both school and university graduates lack the ability to manage the basics; from arithmetic times-tables to life threatening on-the-spot leadership decisions. The removal of school discipline which differs from a generation ago, has been the main issue. "Court decisions and federal laws have turned principals into psycho babbling bureaucrats. How can kids respect them?" (Hymowitz, 2000). Since the late 1980s until the present day, neoliberalism's eco-political model has covertly labeled education, and its institutions as businesses, with the students being consumers under the cloak of Non Profit Organizations.

Evidence has continually displayed that parents and students alike, override decisions by practicing teaching faculty, owing to the students are now customers for the board of governors or its administrators. A commentator once uttered: "American education is being deliberately destroyed - But why?" (Potash M, 2012). There has not been any conclusive study to investigate why graduates and other humans are becoming weaker? -even the genetic argument did not hold any validity. One study suggests that "Human Beings Are Getting Dumber". (Kim, 2012) yet again, without sufficient empirical evidence. The main limitation to redress this issue is due to Government legislation and of course the fiscal elements involved neoliberalism. In this study, the aim was to achieve awareness to the administrators in both the UK and USA be that change ought to be the priority, or for a better phrase; to be a reversal of current administrative dominance practices in education: To return traditional education from today's materialistic practice. Reversing the trend is necessary to correct the policies within secondary education.

II. METHOD

The premise of this investigation was uncover how much the student populous has changed compared to the nineteen-eighties school age generation.

This was in various capacities as university chairperson in two countries, supervising students of secondary levels and to freshman-sophomore students at three universities: Lebanon, Turkey, and secondary schools visited in the United Kingdom, Europe and further East.. Student Age Criteria Evaluated: 08 years – 26 years. Completed over a thirteen year timeframe inclusive of having worked in fourteen countries within education. Analysing data from both the United Kingdom and the USA. Questionnaires were used inclusive of online opinion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results also show that the multi-national companies in London, disturbingly are not certain how to determine a new potential employee's grades at university and to correlate them with their entry qualifications or criteria. The numbers do not add-up for these blue-chip institutions as the bar has continually been in free-fall for years, to accommodate high levels of registrations at UK universities, thus keep the profitability on fiscal track commensurate to any given corporation.

For state education, Neoliberalism was incorporated in the late eighties, hence the radical unproven reforms which turned these state entities into fee paying institutions, offsetting the cost of a debt ridden government. Today in the City of London, HR departments in the financial district, (unsurprisingly) do not simply trust the products which leave Higher Education in other words; the graduates. Some companies employ entry examinations both in-house and online for new potential recruits, prior to being considered for further evaluation or interview. Other companies have even adopted the "Poshness Test" simply because these aforementioned candidates are so weak in: speaking with a good English articulation, spelling and grammar, mental arithmetic skills and general demeanor. Consequently "Students will no longer need a minimum of three Bs at A level and a 2:1 degree to work at Ernst & Young, known as EY, because the firm wants to create "a level playing field". Instead, it will use online tests to assess applicants' potential." (Elison, 2015)
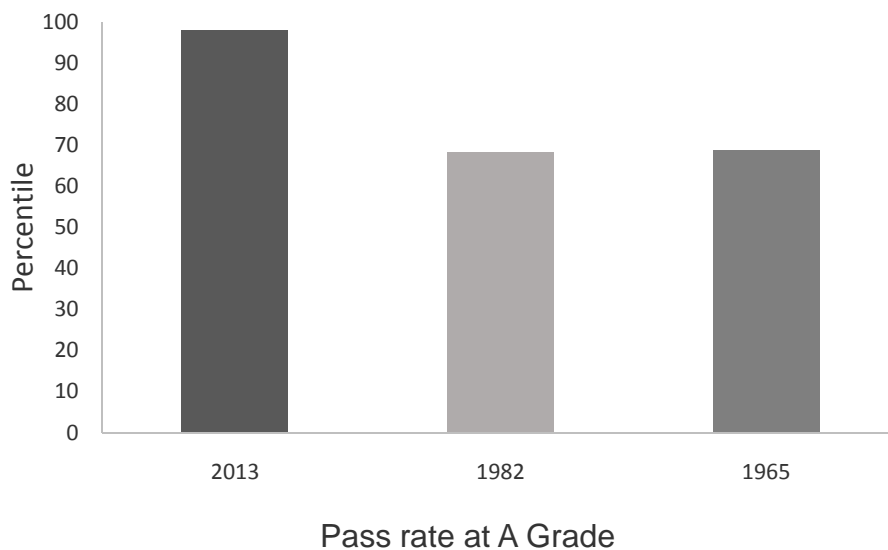
Clearly the research will show that both academe and the general public were aware of the failings within the late nineteen-ninety's neo-political economic agenda. In fact, this also led to the lackluster liberal teaching

training practices which had only exacerbated the situation for students, who were already under the stress factors of funding their respective higher education major courses.

The universities' engineering departments in the UK are so underwhelmed with student registrations, owing to two noteworthy factors: a) Secondary education's lack of producing good science and mathematics students. b) A student's lack of interest in these technical subjects. This correlates with the advent of information technology dominating the classroom and its learning framework. Examinations themselves were made easier to show the students' pass rates had increased nationally. However, beginning from the source of the various issues one must commence from the secondary school mechanism and the changes due to commercial activities that had and has made the students commodities or consumers. Since the early nineteen eighties certain liberal reforms coupled with a government's vision for a US "Reaganesque and the UK's "Thatcherite" form of privatization, free trade or capitalism in all sectors of industry, unfortunately education was not spared from this neo-business culture. In fact, the data has shown how neoliberalism had manipulated the secondary school university examinations (Advanced Levels: A-Levels) to an extent, that the data became ambiguous or unexplainable. If we were to refer to the UK's university entrance examinations qualification of Advanced Levels (A-Levels) the increase in pass rates at A 'Grade has exploded from 1982 to 2013.

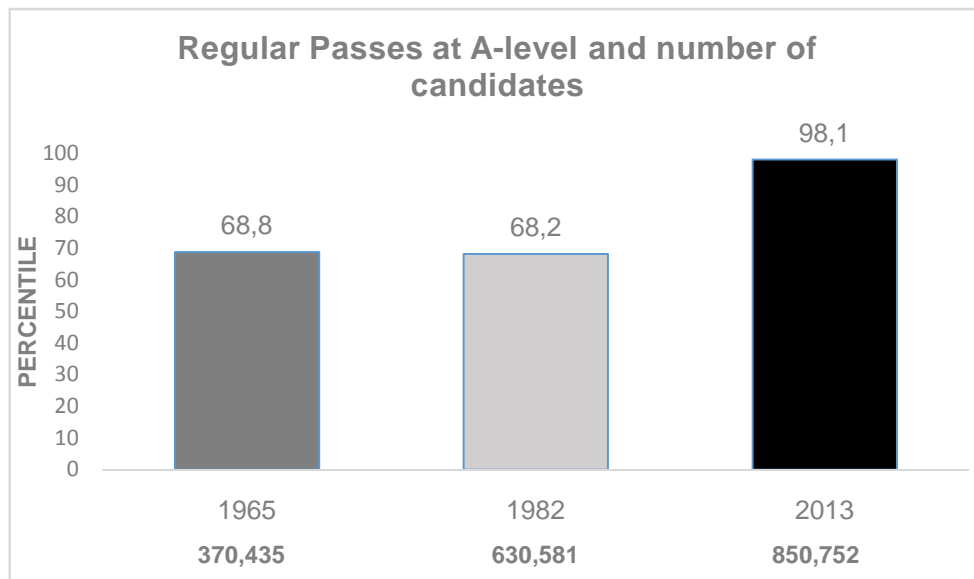Refer to figure 1.

Figure 1

Pass rate at A Grade

Note: The data compliments of the source: Joint Council for Qualifications UK, (JCQ)

The data clearly portrays a substantial increase in A Grades from the nineteen-eighties to 2013. However, the data also showed that there was a consistent rate of passing at A Grade in these examinations year on year from 1965 to 1982. There was nothing really ambiguous until completing the century until entering the twenty-first.

The data really becomes interesting after delving into the years and grades achieved by students of the generations. If the concentration on other variables were to be analyzed; such as how many students in the UK passed not with A Grades but with only standard passes, this ought to be in correlation to how many candidates took the examination from 1965 to 2013 as well. This shown in figure 2
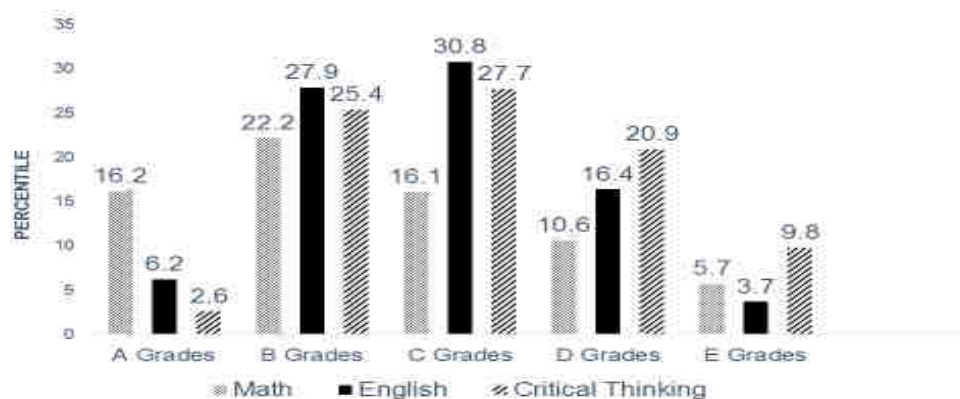
Figure 2

Note: Below each of the years and respective students who sat this exam (JCQ)

The graphic shows from 1965 to 1982 that irrespective in student generational increase of 260,146 the pass rate (PR) was again consistent as were the A Grades from the sample previously over the same period analyzed. Yet again, there was an inconsistency inclusive of ambiguity that if the generational numbers of students had increased, it would not have guaranteed that the data should reflect the increase of passing students; as in this case. How could the PR have risen in the last 31 years and also achieved a 29.9 percentile gain in passing students, compared to a 68 percentile stability pattern in both 1965 and 1982. Moreover, with over 220,171 students' increase who had sat the examination, the performance levels had remained consistent and deemed unquestionable.
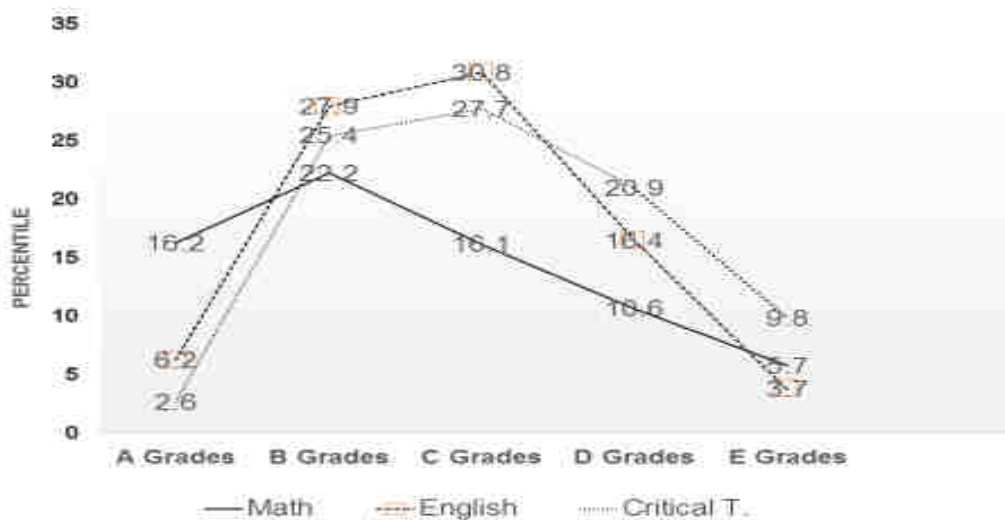
What was more revealing in the figures released by JCQ in 2013, were the actual results published with the disbursement pattern for three major subjects in the curriculum, namely: Critical Thinking, Mathematics and English Language. Refer to figure 3

Figure 3.　　　A-level results for Math, English and Critical Thinking in 2013

Note: Curve mainly achieving a B to D grade achievement
As there was a 98.1 percent overall PR in 2013 compared to the average 68.5 percentile for the past two generations in the UK. It is seen that this high rate of passes cloaked the overall picture of success in major academic courses and examinations at this pre-university level.

Figure 4   Arc of achievement model analysis

Note: A-E Grades with the three core subjects in 2013
The statistics clearly display that the United Kingdom is very much a below average D, C, B grade country, where it comes to students of university entry in major academic subjects.

This evidence also illustrates that the universities were not the cause of depreciating standards, however it was the contributing policies from the secondary system of schooling, manipulated by distorted national grades via both government and sadly commercial globalization modality. This is not only a product of Britain now, embryonically, it was exported to the UK from the USA and then onto developing nations.

Other research also suggests that the results at A-level and a higher AS-Level are not really positive in core relation: "The results show that predicting future 'value added' performance from past trends is unreliable. The implications of these findings for notions of 'continuous improvement' are discussed as well as their consequences for further research on institutional improvement." Even the so-called poverty verses affluence angle cannot be used as a premise as it was previously. How intellect was continually achieved with certitude in the less affluent former East Germany during the cold war? Just an example. An illustration of the widening business controlled education issues depicted in this paper can be determined by such citations mentioned below, and could be used as a premise:

"What is education for? Is it to earn money only? Now it seems that the quality of education is deteriorating at a rapid rate. Education is oriented now not towards creating good human beings/citizens but mainly towards mere materialistic prosperity. As a result, we are confronted with a weakening of the social system across the world. Values are no longer considered for quality education- they have become redundant. Conflicts and violence are increasing on a continuous basis. Education has become an unethical business today. Question papers are sold before an examination. Mushroom growth of universities by using money power is rampant around the world. Beautiful buildings are constructed (as it is easy) to attract students without having dedicated faculties. Now the trend is to sell good names for education establishments to recruit students with high capitalization fees. Such organizers of education have only one motive, which is only to grab more money at the cost of quality education." (Das, 2010, paraphrased for grammatical coherence)

Conclusion

If we were to continue at the rate values mentioned in this paper we could see an uncertain future not only within the West, but also globally owing

to the signs are there already. As plagiarism from the student body has manifested itself as the norm, we could only attribute this to the ill-discipline within education, and the psych-somatic nature of the students perceived notion that Higher Education is a right not a privilege, unlike within the 1950's to the late 1970's generations, they saw obtaining a place at university was a both a life-changing event and immense in privilege.

One solution is to sharpen the "Bell Curve" in Secondary (K-12) education inclusive of a complete return to a disciplined environment. All forms of student evaluation must be more controlled within a core subject's grading policy. Secondly, as the evidence portrayed within this text has identified that the current mandatory examinations to enter university, are deficient in degrees of difficulty and are not clear indicators of K-12 students' overall academic and social wellness abilities. The reliance on Information technology in tuition, has drifted so much out of control in a child's learning, it has nearly taken-over both educational policy and societal reasoning. The extent of this, is that a student's mental or self-reasoning skill sets in problem solving are being impaired. In my estimation, in one further generation's time in the year 2030 and beyond, the graduates of that epoch would solely be dependent on the IT gadgetry at their deposal to acquire basic data such as geographical (world's capital cities) and so-called metal arithmetic calculations, instead of using raw brain power in the knowledge based memory process, insofar of becoming a dumber race of homo sapiens.

It only could be perceived that we could only see a depreciation of our civilization due to the lack of social interaction and mental discipline in various guises inclusive of our interpretation for general knowledge. Finally, what are the dangers of a devolution in our civilization? If we were to focus and have emphasis on key decision makers of the future: Politicians, Judges, Physicians, Military Officers, School Teachers and the Ministries of Education, we could imagine how much thought would be attributed to a change in ethics, and morality, then our inability to question critical reasoning would be at stake. The increase in crime demographically, and greed within the stock market which led to the recent crash, are just some of the variables that are present within society. Merely paying for an education within a "profit gain apparatus", type

institution, should neither be a guarantee for graduation nor a pass of a subject. Currently, there are poor decision makers including school teacher graduates out there. Change ought to be implemented as soon as possible and must be initiated from primary school level through to K-12 grading. As for the developing nations, they take credence from the Western states, they have in fact mimicked developed countries to modernise their respective educational apparatus. This being inclusive of bad teaching practices and advice or consultancy prescribed to the ministries of education notably in overseas developing countries. This has been surprising considering these are failed Western ideologies that would hinder rather than aid educational development.

In addition, university professors ought to undertake teacher methodology courses as mandatory prior to the teaching of their undergraduates. If the suggestions mentioned were not to be implemented by the year 2020, then our children and their generation's future, would be very bleak and no way to redeem the situation. However, if changes were to be countenanced by the respective authorities in Western States, society would not feel the effect for at least a generation, this is due to the new students of an improved education system, would need time to graduate both primary and secondary grades for us to see the results. Moreover, when these said graduates become parents in their own right, the full extent in society and potential leaders, would be more evident as well as uncertain.

We as a civilization, would need thirty years more to witness the outcome if governments were to manifest a decision now. Business influence on any educational institution must be capped to non-majority control by new government legislation, this includes school owners if being private. This would consequently retain education and its core quality as priority, -not profitability as the sole entity. Thus education professionals preside over all academic decisions without unnecessary hindrance and contradiction. Teachers would not be too fearful of losing their position as they are today, due to the teacher funding spreadsheet. As for teacher retention in the public school system "Too many will quit permanently because they are fed up. Their ambition and self-respect will take them into business or other professions…they leave behind an increasing proportion of tired time-servers." Barbara B.T.; O'Brien, L (2002). A supermarket is a business and the product are the goods sold, so how can a school be a business? Are the students the same as products or are the parents consumers? There is an urgency to conduct this form of school reformation. Graduates are seen as a pool of the future, however they are not being taken

seriously by employers, bad CV's being drafted with numerous errors in their native language. The philosophy for overall education should be simple: it is not that institutions should be selling education to the students and parents alike, but to sell what the students can do with that knowledge for themselves in the end…This paper was neither designed to castigate, censure nor admonish business within educational institutions, but the mere dominance of its decision making practices being a disconnect from a school's academic governance, ought to be investigated and revised, where both parties could possibly work together. Minus education and its students, there would be no business in the first place. Even the authors of certain publications

use speculation and notate the issues in education, but do not comment on the root or simply do not wish to admit the cause and effect scenari fearing the Austrian school "de la théorie économique du laissez-faire à la politique.. IT gadgetry should only be a tool for students, thus bring their respective mental agility more into play, and state funded education inclusive of Higher Education per se, must return to aid the less wealthy, to re-address the balance in societal need –especially in the UK. Why the aforementioned? It is simple, students must have determination –especially in the West. Countries within the Indian sub-continent and South Eastern Asia possess highly motivated students emanating from a majority less affluent social system. In the West, if we were to pay tuition for our children, we would always expect them to be a success irrespective if they were to be spoilt and less motivated. This blame for a student's failure would be apportioned to the educators not to the administrators that outnumber academic staff in the first instance. For an "Old School" modus of classroom discipline to be returned, is not beyond the imagination. A return to a non-liberal form of student peer-control, ought to be also adopted by legislation, to return a pupil's respect to the teacher whence the previous generations came. Governments need to be more responsible for educational funding and who would be allocated to lead private sectored schools and institutions. Shirking responsibilities like education and medicine then outsourcing them to the private sector, has been proven to be an unaffordable policy for the masses and devolution for student development in the face of a spreadsheet's profitability.

Finally, being reminded that thoughtless decisions of our historical past, and their unfortunate applications, had manifested into conflict subsequently destroying nations… Surely it is what we could do as a civilization that would, and indeed define us as an intelligent species.

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