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Diversity and Identity in socio-cultural dynamics

PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

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Volume I

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ESSAYS, PRESENTATIONS, REVIEWS

RESEARCH PAPERS

Identity (Re)Construction and Cultural Tensions in Leila Aboulela's Minaret: Fixity, Flexibility, Variability

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Abstract

Leila Aboulela's novel Minaret is a kind of recovery and discovery of identity in a space different from that of the root – the homeland. For Aboulela, identity is not ever fixed and stable, it, rather, metamorphoses and transmutes under the effect of new spaces. The challenge, the Minaret's characters have, is dialogically related to the external circumstances that undermine their choices. Najwa, the protagonist of the novel, experiences bouts of negative reactions that push her to live in reclusion. Having chosen to wear the veil (Hidjab), in a society, which demonizes it and considers it as regressive, she has found a way out and become her own.

Keywords: *Minaret, Leila Aboulela, Postcolonialism Discourse, Identity Reconstruction.*

Introduction

In this global Western culture, Immigrant writers try to challenge the uniqueness of Western discourse by abrogating and appropriating the colonizer's language and challenging the centrality of discourse within their novels. Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* is a good example of such appropriation. This modest article tries to delve within the novel and see the extent to which Aboulela succeeds to establish this new mode of expression and the manner she decenters the center and uses a new discourse, which recreates an identity that harmonizes between the relics of the old and the ingredients of the new.

Postcolonialism: Between Race and Culture

Adoption of the colonizer's language has become an alternative, which allows the post-colonial writers to escape the hegemony of Eurocentrism and

"authenticate" the language use by centering the margin and marginalizing the center. In the words of Ashcroft et al.:

> *[The] notions of centrality and the "authentic" were themselves necessarily questioned, challenged, and finally abrogated.… Cultural practices can return to some "pure" and unsullied cultural condition, and that such practices themselves, such as the use of vernacular terms or grammatical forms in English literature, can embody such an authenticity.* (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002, p. 40)

Establishing a new discourse, different from the metropolitan language, is revisiting the language and reshuffling it so that it fits what the postcolonial writer wants to communicate. This new language practice is "alimented" with the postcolonial life, its culture and everyday experiences. Subsequently, the language gets a new discourse and becomes the center and marginalizes its metropolitan use and practice. In the words of Ashcroft et al.:

> *In writing out of the condition of "Otherness," postcolonial texts assert the complex of intersecting "peripheries" as the actual substance of experience. But the struggle which this assertion entails – the "re-placement" of the post-colonial text – is focused in their attempt to control the processes of writing.* (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002, p. 77)

Such process of controlling the text's artistry is a tool and a potential power to subvert the over dominating discourse imposed by the cultural predicament of the colonizer.

The acts of abrogating and appropriating the language of the center are in themselves revalorizing it and gauging it through a new cultural referent and new linguistic embedment. Writers restructure, or transplant, the diversity of culture and ethnic and domesticate it. In a way, they hybridize it. It is an original, yet, it is not. It fuses both the "I" and the "Other", "the Colonizer" and "the Colonized," "the Eurocentric" and the "Eurocentred," "the Subject" and the "Object". So, language dimension has extended beyond its cultural cradle and linguistic formulation. Such transformation has specified the language of the colonizer to the colonized writers. It is adapted to represent more the cultural bath of the marginalized than the center.

The subversion of imperial language is a way to decolonize the mind of the colonized and conceptualize a new discourse for the colonizer, which makes the European reader understand, through his language, the specificities of otherness, which are natural and made different because of race, belief and mode of being. That is, there is a variety of cultures in the world, and no culture is ever disposed to degrade the other. In this context, the critic Terry Eagleton (1980) points out that:

> *The Other is what allows me to address myself to it by evading me; I speak from where I am not, from the place of the Other (the entire network of significations) that-most obviously in the verbal slip.* (p. 156)

Eagleton extends further claiming that the ideology forces language to serve the writer. It, thus, becomes a tool of propaganda of the center more than a tool that tries to be too near to the "reality" of the colonized. He writes:

> *If ideology lays claim to an oppressive plentitude of meaning, then textuality is at hand to reveal its hidden places of "castration"; if ideology assumes a secure hierarchy of meanings, organized around some privileged set of transcendental signifiers that close it upon itself, then textuality will show how one signifier merely displaces, redoubles, and stands in for another in a potentially infinite chain that can be arrested only by violence.* (Eagleton, 1980, p. 149)

In the same vein, Arif Dirlikpp acknowledges that there is a strong trace, or clerics, of the post colonial in the other's text. He writes:

> *The generalization of the postcolonial has resulted also in the generalization of the problematics of ethnicity and race above all other questions. The meaning and politics of postcoloniality have been transformed as postcolonial criticism has suppressed important elements that earlier structured the concept of the postcolonial.* (Dirlikpp, 2001, p. 9)

Literature and the Representation of the "Other"

Literature is a space where realities, of both the subject and the object, the "I" and the "Other," are, directly or indirectly, revealed. Out of the fabrics of the literary constituencies, the reader can imagine and re-imagine, guess and perceive, interpret and conceive the meaning, or meanings, the text folds within its entrails. Voices at the center and voices at the margin can be heard. The reader has only to listen to them. He could restore the senses and sensibilities of characters, who populate the text, and investigate their insights, which are quelled by the dominating voice of the subject – the Eurocentric "I". Such signification could be known through the elusive suggestiveness of words the other utters, and the manner he behaves, or made to behave, by the subject, the European. Kerstin W. Shands (2008) states that:

> *[Postcolonial literature] enables us to listen to and participate in a cross-cultural and multi-voiced dialogue. Introducing new aesthetic norms and modes of appraisal and challenging notions of English exclusiveness, postcolonial writers are laying bare submerged histories, bringing minority interests and ethnic diversities to the forefront, and reconfiguring cultural forms and ways of life previously relegated to the periphery.* (p. 13)

Though literature is the product of the author's self and identity, it is, nonetheless, bathed within the culture of this author. It literaturizes culture and encodes its specificity as diverse, authentic to itself, referential to its place and time. Øyunn Hestetun (2008) claims that:

> *The stories of others may offer evidence of the ways in which we – as humans – construct our world through our narratives, our stories, our fictions. Narrative constitutes, in other words, in itself a way in which humans make sense of the world and the human condition.* (pp. 45-46)

The Orient, the other, is seen through the Eurocentric eye as a place of mystery, fantasy, extavegence and exoticism. It is highly exaggerated and romanticized as a place of uncommon cultural traditions. But beyond such illusion, it is seen as regressive and naturally "savage" and needs to be civilized. Kerstin W. Shands (2008) points out that:

> *Even though some orientalist accounts were admiring and even romanticizing, the orient was usually described as less developed, civilized, and rational, as a negative mirror image reflecting the self-described positivities of the occident.* (p. 6)

Andrew Gibson explains further such subversive judgement the "I"/the Logo-European when attempting any explanation of the Other's literary production. He points out "the oddity and the incompatibility, from one cultural perspective, of value-systems that are apparently congruent enough from another" (1999, p. 198).

Such dichotomized inequality makes the East backward and regressive and the West civilized and progressive. Thus, the East cannot remain as such. It rather needs help and education by the West. In other words, the West is the mirror of civilization and the referent that gauges the extent to which the East is civilized. Such binary opposition features the literature of the West and makes it a reference to the other, who is made to ignore his race and civilization. Edward Said (1979) claims that:

> *The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.* (p. 1)

This style of thought, or artistic representation, is a kind of discourse made by the West to create, through European culture/referent, an Orient thoroughly different from them and, yet, he replies colonization for the sake of culture and civilization. But what is paradoxical with this logocentric view of the West is that they do not consider themselves as others, who are geographically and culturally

different from other peoples. Said (1979) maintains that: "As much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West." (p. 5)

So, diversity in/of artistic representation is dialogically related to the diversity of culture and linguistic practices. Therefore, the constituents of identity, as race, ethnic, dress, belief, moral values, etc., have become parameters to gauge and assess the postcolonial writer's artistic production.

Leila Aboulela and the Dilemma of Representation in Minaret

In *Minaret*, Lelia Aboulila seems to reproduce some of her insights that represent her past events and reminiscences that have been haunting her all along her life. She was not satisfied with the life she spent in Sudan, where everything was mapped up and where any objection or rejection seemed to be a transgression to the already established rules of patriarchy. Right at the first pages of the novel, she draws our attention to the restricted life in Sudan, her birthplace. She suggestively writes: "I've come down in the world. I've slid to a place where the ceiling is low and there isn't much room to move." (2005, p. 7)

Aboulela is much concerned with culture and belief in her novels, mainly *Minaret*. She provides us with a dexterous plot of her major thematic concern, Islam, in two different geographies she lived in: Sudan and Britain. The same as herself, her characters are parted between two driving forces: one that keeps them to the first space and location of Sudan, and the other that urges them to adopt, or adapt, their culture in Britain. Hasan Majed (2012) points out that

> *Muslims are always asked to be more western which means, undoubtedly, to be more modern, more civilized and much better human beings. Yet it seems that for some western people it is impossible for Muslims to be accepted as western even if Muslims want to be so.* (p. 64)

The characters of *Minaret* live under the constraints of two different geographical spaces. The former instructs and dictates; the latter seduces and induces for change. The critic Cristina Riaño Alonso (2017) states that:

> *Aboulela's diasporic characters have to confront alienation, but on the other, they are asked to be grateful, to accept the treatment that is given to them and surrender to the system of new spaces – and social structures – they inhabit.* (p. 57)

Speaking about the novel, Susan Taha Al-Karawi (2014) maintains that:

> *In [Minaret], Leila Aboulela provides a contrast to dominant Western discourses on Islam regarding Arab women's experiences and identities. The novel depicts a sympathetic view of immigrant Muslim communities and Islamic lifestyles through*

> *illustrations of the veil and Islam and how the female protagonist, Najwa, goes through stages and transitions characteristic of liminality in order to achieve a hybrid identity that is modern in Western terms, but firmly Muslim through the wearing of the veil.* (p. 256)

The novel reports the life of some protagonists, who are mainly from Muslim world and who are trying to assimilate to the culture of the new geography they live in. It foregrounds differences and difficulties and points out the sense of metamorphoses and changes. Most of the characters of the novel have become what they were not. In the words of Youcef Awad, the plot of *Minaret* centers on "a displaced Arab woman who either chooses to live in Britain in order to pursue higher education and work or is forced to live in Britain as a (self) exile or refugee. The protagonist is cut off from her country of origin for most of the narrative." (2011, p. 42)

The third space that seems to be a niche for immigrants is only a means to dissociate themselves from both the first and the second spaces: the old and the new. But can it be possible to be both and hyphenise two differing cultures? How can one possess the new geographical space and claim it to be his? How can one keep his space's tradition within this new space, which is, in most of the time, different from his own and attest that his is assimilated? How can one fashion an identity out of the relics of the old and the ingredients of the new? Furthermore, is it possible and manageable for mature individuals, whose identities have been already mapped up by their source cultures? In other words, the third space, of H. Bhabha, is only a mirage on parched sand: a space that only exists in art or in one's imagination. The artist finds refuge in the world he creates for himself and by himself. The hyphenated identity, that Awad **(**2011, p. 41) refers to, is only a myth, because the hyphenated individual becomes either intradividual, or a selfless person: either he belongs to himself and, thus, reverts from society, or he belongs to both cultures, but not to himself. This idea of appartedness or / and in-between-ness is pointed out by Aboulela herself in her interview of 2018. Aboulela seems to tell us that she fails to accommodate with both Arabic dialects of her mother and father: she is neither her mother the Egyptian, nor her father, the Sudanese. She, rather, finds herself at ease in English language. She says:

> *I, however, couldn't and so I often spoke as little as possible. What aggravated the problem also was that I "felt" Sudanese and yet my speech was not reflecting that. Among Egyptians, I felt like a fraud, passing as one of them but being an outsider. I think that this was one of the reasons why I gravitated towards expressing myself in English. It was a third language, refreshingly free from the disloyalty of having to choose between my father and my mother's tongues.* (Gabi-Williams, 2018, p. 2)

A closer reading of Aboulela's *Minaret* reveals that there is a paradox: there are two settings and spaces: one foregrounds the Islamic doctrine, the other legitimizes secularization. The first forbids the second; the second accepts the first but through adaptation and renunciation. How can it stand? Is Najwa really happy? Has she really accepted the first in the second, without renouncing? Agnieszka Stanecka points out such uneasiness and difficulty to decide mainly when the mind is mapped up by her culture. She says:

> *The state of insecurity and unstable emotional and financial situation make Najwa search for deeper and more meaningful things in her life. She recognized her identity as blurred, weak and disturbed. In the world of fast cars, determined, well educated women she felt abandoned and lonely.* (Stanecka, 2018, p. 77)

The event that happened to Najwa in the bus illustrates her uneasiness and difficulty to negotiate her integration:

> *Laughter from behind me... I hear footsteps come up behind me, see a blur of denim. He says, You Muslim scum', then the shock of cool liquid on my head and face. I gasp and taste it, Tizer. He goes back to his friends – they are laughing. My chest hurts and I wipe my eyes.* (Aboulela, 2005, p. 126)

The critic Nesrin Koç maintains that "[*Minaret*] narrate[s] the painful state of displacement through foregrounding the binary opposition between the East and the West, to expose how postcolonial subjects longing for belonging negotiate British Muslim identity positions." (2014, p. 9)

The subaltern speaks but differently. He uses the same language of the Subject, but with a special discourse, which is, frequently, suggestive and reflects his identity. Leila Aboulela speaks out of the situation she has been made in both spaces, through language suggestiveness. Her novel, *Minaret*, reflects the dichotomy of two differing attitudes, which are the subsequent outcome of culture and lived experiences. Koç states that:

> *While in Sudan, she [Aboulela] was in a privileged position, thus avoided intriguing remarks about her identity; whereas while in the West, she finds herself in the position of the Orient, just because she is wearing the hijab. The centre freezes Aboulela's identity as the oppressed Oriental female; her westernized upbringing, university education in London hardly ever becomes visible to western eyes.* (2014, p. 20)

But what Koç seems to neglect, or, rather, underestimate, is Aboulela's identity in Sudan. Even if she is in her homeland, she is not herself: the ceiling is low and there isn't much room to move. She is theirs, but not herself. Sudan is a space of security for her, and, thus, she has to restrict herself to the social values

and tradition of society. But being in Europe, Britain, Aboulela has become Leila, herself, without imposed restriction. She only follows personal conviction. In this way, she has, to a certain extent, synthesizes the old and the new. But has she succeeded to be almost free? Or is she more passive and remote due some value conventions imposed by secular society?

Recreating one's homeland in this new geography makes the person face to face with the established conventions and orders of the British culture. Thus, being in the guest land, Aboulela is constrained to engage a relationship, which responds positively to the space she lives in. The migration to the new land is not an identity displacement as far as the moral background of the displaced is preserved. It is, rather, a relocation of one's identity in another space, whose background is different and has some recommendations to follow and conventions to obey. In other words, there could be a clash between both worlds. Two "divided and dislocated" worlds, whose "parts are not continuous or coherent with each other" (Spivak, 1988, p. 276). Speaking about the heroines of Aboulela novels in *The translator* and *Minaret,* Sara A. Al-Asmakh (2009) comments:

> *The heroines of both novels hold to religion in multicultural settings. The heroines are displaced in the land that they migrated to. They feel like strangers in an unfamiliar setting where both of them long for their native land, Sudan. As a result they both try to take advantage of the multicultural setting in Aberdeen and London. They go to the mosque and gather with minorities like them to create a sense of home.* (pp. 1-2)

But this sense of home within the new home-space excludes them more if they don't adapt and rearrange it so that they integrate the conventions of Western society. Though Britain is an open space for all cultures, it, nonetheless, makes of these cultures "Others" within their own space. In the words of Al-Asmakh, there is a perpetual struggle to belong to the majority culture (2009, p. 2).

Creating a home within a home is, somehow, preserving one's origins and race and belief within another home, which is not similar to his, yet, accepts his reclusion in a diasporic world. Christiane Steckenbiller (2013) states that:

> *The dwelling space emerges as a heterogeneous, open, and fluid space that complicates traditional conceptualizations of the home. Home is never ideologically neutral. Closely linked to domesticity and frequently used interchangeably with the private sphere and the household, it is often envisioned as a place of rootedness and safety, the domain of the family and of intimacy.* (pp. 38-39)

Displacement begets either change in the immigrant's identity, by the adoption of some of the values and conventions of the new land, or reclusion

within a free liberal space. People, who come from the ex-colonies, such as Sudan, are under two constraining choices: either they change or they do not. In both cases, they become uneasy and their identity reverberates. Koç points out that: "They [Immigrants] are now trying to define an identity position for themselves as exilic subjects located in the colonial centre." (Koç, 2014, pp. 6-7)

Home creates a sense of belonging; thus, its construction is basically cultural. The latter qualifies one's identity and existence. The sense of home, thus, is more than the external material construction. It is more inner and intrinsic. It is the extension of one's identity. Steckenbiller maintains that:

> *More than a mere physical structure, home is a highly complex concept that can refer to the actual living arrangements, the homeland, the nation, the attachment to a time and place, and the feeling of or longing for "being at home."* (2013, p. 38)

The Veil as a Vehicle of Muslim Culture: Home Belonging

Minaret is a novel of negotiation between two values of two spaces that are different in background and mode of life. Aboulela tries to gauge her origins against a referent, which is liberal and humanistic. Firouz Ameri (2017) maintains that:

> *Significantly, this depiction of the spiritual world of the Muslim characters is offered through the genre of the realist novel, a genre very familiar to western readers. Thus, [the text uses] a familiar vehicle to convey points about Islam that are different to those conveyed by more mainstream representations.* (p. 4)

In the same vein, Susan Taha Al-Karawi (2014) claims that:

> *The veil speaks to the positive, negative, and in-between experiences that Muslim women confront in their continuous effort to shape their identities as modern and respectable women of faith. Whether she wears the veil or not, its presence or absence suggests a dense web of meanings that often change over time. To speak of the veil is to speak of security/insecurity, ambivalence/security, and struggle/comfort.* (p. 256)

In this quote, Al-Karawi argues that the veil (hidjab), in this new space, is no longer imposed on women. The latter are free to act the way they want and according to their own convictions. Najwa's "freedom is associated with doing things that would have been prohibited or at least unacceptable back home" (Fouad Mazloum, 2015, p. 556). Najwa remembers well how it happened in Sudan:

> *It wouldn't be done in Khartoum for a woman to be alone in a restaurant. "I' m in London", I told myself, "I can do what I like, no one can see me".* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 128)

But though Najwa is able to find a place for herself in the West through her own choices, "these choices are far more complex than the simple privileging of Western over Islamic values" (Fouad Mazloum, 2015, p. 559). Though this patriarchal culture is absent in effect, it is ever present in the mind. Najwa's decision to wear the veil is free and is under no pressure or restriction. Probably, she has assessed what she accumulates in her mind as souvenirs and learning of her homeland and decides, finally, that it is better to be veiled and show her need to integrate the new culture, which does not harm since individuals are all bound by some rules and norms that guarantee a peaceful social life in Britain. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) states that there is

> *An awareness of the heterogeneous perspectives on the migration-religion nexus, [which] permits a deeper understanding of the multiple ways in which age, generation and life stage influence, and are influenced by, migratory experiences and religious identity and identification alike.* (p. 155)

But this peaceful social life is only a façade, which hides internally a kind of uneasiness and restlessness. Immigrants see themselves as others and a minority seen from afar by the Euro-logo-centric society. This is a kind of antagonism between accepting one's rootedness to religion, which is comfort and safety and becoming a source of subversion by the external world, which looks at them as regressive and even reactionary in a world, which seeks modernity and progress. In this quicker mutating society, authenticity is no longer a return to one's roots, but rather an embracement of this newness and its multiple services. In the words of Taha Al-Karawi (2014):

> *This religiosity cannot be truly liberatory because it is held hostage by what it perceives as a threat: …its conservatism, its rejection of existential freedom and political responsibility, and its unreflective (or desperate) embrace of an idealized past.* (p. 316)

Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* crystallizes the existing conflicts and challenges between cultures. Though antagonism is a necessary mechanism of change and/or readjustment that notify social dynamism, it, nonetheless, has some negative drawbacks that lie in the exclusion and reclusion of those who resist to its rules and laws. Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan (2016) points out that:

> Minaret *revolts against the racial stereotypes and the deep-rooted conventions about the concept of hijab and harem. The West thinks that both of these concepts mean invisibility and periphery. However, invisibility does not mean absence, but more freedom: Aboulela tries to correct these misconceptions and stereotypes.* (p. 37)

In the first stance of the novel, Najwa, the protagonist, spent a kind of life different from that of London. In Sudan, she lived in a decent family, who belongs to the noble of Sudan; a family that possesses servants and gardeners. Najwa exclaims:

> *I used to take them for granted. I didn't know a lot about them - our succession of Ethiopian maids, houseboys, our gardener - but I must have been close to them, absorbing their ways, so that now, years later and in another continent, I am one of them.* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 129)

In the words of Zidan (2016): "[She] lives in a society where class distinction and good breeding are more important than efficiency." (p. 34)

The hijab (Islamic veil) is considered as an essential part of a chaste good woman in Sudan, mainly in noble families. And so, Najwa should show this engagement and applicability of the dress. But the hijab, that one is constrained to wear in Sudan, is different from the one that Najwa has in Britain: the former is obligatory; the latter is voluntary. Taha Al-Karawi (2014) points out that:

> *Aboulela's work, in showing the rootedness of religion in the lives of many Muslim women, thus fills a gap in Western representations of Muslim women.* (p. 256)

Multicultural society and diversity in background could be a social good when there are some humanistic rules and norms that channel them. The culture of minorities should cope and embrace these new norms imposed by the unity of society. But does humanism succeed to link such differing cultures and make them unite? If yes, how can we explain the labels "minority," "otherness," and the like? Behind the façade of unity, there is a kind of antagonism and internal fear to lose one's culture within these humanistic principles. Losing one's culture and failing to be accepted by the dominating culture place the individual in an uncomfortable space: he is made to live under constraints to (re)contruct a third space, another world in this world. Thus, he excludes himself and lives in reclusion. Al-Asmakh (2009) claims that:

> *The cultural aspects that are presented define the characters and play a major role in their identity formation, and most importantly in their identity crises. Culture determines a person's affiliation to a certain geographical place, certain traditions and norms, and as well as determine certain behaviors. Culture proved to be a main component of one's identity and its loss is a reason for one's identity loss.* (p. 4)

All characters of *Minaret* have metamorphosed. They have become what they were not. The displacement and geographical changes have made them look

at the East through the West, mainly in approaching matters of belief, culture, tradition, norms and even ideologies. Even if some of the characters have stuck to some relics of their beliefs, they have done it through a Western eye, as the case of Anwar and Najwa. This double consciousness of being alienated from spaces, the new and the old, enhances characters to look for a niche and third space to secure them, as the case of Najwa, who has chosen the mosque. Najwa's double consciousness is very significant in this quote:

> *I wanted to pray in the same way that I wanted to sprout wings and fly. There was no point in yearning, was there? No point in stretching out. In my own way, in my own style, I was sliding. First my brother, and now it was my turn to come down in the world.* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 277)

The critic Pankhuri Aggarwal (2018) maintains that

> *In Najwa, Aboulela depicts an independent woman whose faith is not a matter of abstract dogma or empty rituals, but rather a struggle within, between the lures of an individualist consumer culture and the promise of a communitarian religious experience.* (p. 1341)

The critic Nasrin Koç believes that *Minare*t is not an example of failure; it is, rather, an example of integration of the old within the new. She writes:

> *Leila Aboulela's Minaret portrays how faith can be used as a power that eases the trauma of migration, and in fact provides the individual with the sense of belonging and rootedness in the host country, and hence facilitating integration.* (Koç, 2014, p. 14)

But what Koç seems to underestimate, or neglect, is that the characters have been given a restricted choice: either to accept this new space, or to remain an "other". It means to renounce their culture and respond positively to the exigencies of the majority. So, such integration is only a façade, which does, in no way, reflect the insights of these characters. The following quote explains better the uneasiness of Najwa to decide whether to renounce and integrate or to keep safe within religion in this new space:

> *I never know which point of view I support. I find myself agreeing with whoever is speaking or with the one I like best. And I become anxious that someone's feelings will get hurt, or worse take serious offence, as sometimes happens, and stop coming to the mosque.* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 123)

At the end, Najwa decides to stick to her religion. The mosque of Regent's streets is a lighthouse, which guides her and makes her decide over her life. She says: "We never get lost because we can see the minaret of the mosque and head home towards it." (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 319)

The Veil and Selfhood: Veiling vs Invisibility

All the characters of *Minaret* live in perpetual struggle. Such inner/outer conflicting state is very critical since it pushes them to decide upon what to follow and/or how to stick to one's identity and integrate the new world. No doubt, religion is the source of relief, easiness and comfort to characters, mainly Najwa, who suffers integration in the White-white culture.

Being perceived as regressive and hostile for the West, Muslims are seen as others even though they try to improve or "correct" their image for the European. Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan states that:

> *Being an Arab, you are not only deported, but suspected as well. The Arabs should forget their past and look into the future in order to live and coexist in Britain.* (Zidan, 2016, p. 34)

Najwa veiled herself voluntarily. For her, the veil is more than a religious symbol of piety. It is, rather, a means of protection from the negative look of the White-white culture. Veiling liberates her movement, mainly in streets and market places. It is a shield Najwa protects herself with against the modern civilization in Britain. This civilization could be harmful when it comes against her conviction as a Muslim. In other words, the veil secures Najwa's self and makes her comfortable. By wearing it, the external world looks at the dress rather than what is behind the dress — the body.

Najwa's traditional dress is a kind of self autonomy in a world, which is free, yet, conducted by secular rules that could deprive her of being herself. What is very paradoxical with Najwa is her position about the veil. At home when she was in Sudan, the place where the veil is imposed, she did not wear it, but being in Britain she has put it. In other words, she chooses to wear the veil in the absence of constraints. This shows that she wants it in a place, where it is frequently unwanted. In the words of Susan Taha Karawi:

> *Aboulela presents a devout Muslim woman as the protagonist, Najwa, who shows an ever-present awareness of her religious identity. In other words, she knows herself deeply as a Muslim and both consciously and unconsciously live as a Muslim.* (2014, p. 258)

Minaret is a pulpit for Imams (preachers) to give sermons and advice to Muslims in Mosques. In Britain, it has become, mainly for Najwa, a pulpit for freedom and free speech. In the former, she was a listener to what is said and what has to be done. In the latter, she has become an actor, who generates words of humanity and love, mainly with Muslim diaspora: She becomes participant with

them and decides to work with them and for them: she works as a maid in immigrant household.

Najwa is wiser and mature enough compared to her boyfriend Anwar and her daughter Randa. Unlike Anwar and Randa, who are lost within the majority culture losing their own, Najwa has negotiated her state and, to a great extent, reconciled what she is with what she is needed to be. She is her own, yet, she has the sense of belonging to the majority culture. Anwar and Randa are very negative vis-à-vis their culture and have a negative view about the veil. They even claim that the source of regression of the Islamic world is the precepts of Islam. "How can a woman work dressed like that [With black Chador]?", (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 29) she asks Najwa. In the same context, Anwar condemns the veiled women and considers them as regressive and cannot embrace modernity. He says: "We have to go forward not back." (Aboulela, 2005, p. 34) But Najwa looks at the veil otherwise. It is the symbol of one's culture and does not harm its holder:

> *I remembered the girls in Khartoum University wearing hijab and those who covered their hair with White tobes. They never irritated me, did they? I tried to think back and I saw the rows of students praying, the boys in front and the girls at the back. At sunset I would sit and watch them praying. They held me still with their slow movements, the recitation of the Qur'an. I envied them something I didn't have but I didn't know what it was. I didn't have a name for it. Whenever I heard the azan in Khartoum, whenever I heard the Qur'an recited I would feel a bleakness in me and a depth and space would open up, hollow and numb.* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 134)

The veil of Najwa is very significant. It makes a change in her life:

> *I didn't look like myself. Something was removed, streamlined, restrained; something was deflated. And was this real me?* (Aboulela, 2005, p. 245)

She goes further wondering:

> *In the full-length mirror I was another version of myself, regal like my mother, almost mysterious. Perhaps this was attractive in itself, the skill of concealing rather than emphasizing, to restrain rather than to offer.* (Aboulela, 2005 , p. 246)

Najwa's contact and interaction with Muslim women at the Regent's Park Masjid (Mosque) make her re-discover the bounty of Islam. In the words of Abu Sufian: "As time goes, her love and allegiance to Islam increases. She finds peace and solace in her faith in God." (2014, p. 400)

Conclusion

Najwa, the protagonist of Leila Aboulela's novel *Minaret*, has clearly become what she was not. She has got a new identity, which is more inner, very

spiritual and more transcendental. Whether demonized or marginalized by the Euro-centric majority in Britain, she manages to be herself trying to find out a way to her life, in the way she understands it. Aboulela starts her novel by "*Bism Allah Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem" (In The Name of Allah, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful)*. In the name of Allah she starts her story, and by confining herself to God, through pilgrimage to Mekka (Hadj), she ends it. Though her decision to go to Hadj seems, somehow, logical in the sense that she wants to cleanse the sins, she committed when experimenting dynamic life in Sudan and Britain, it seems that she has withdrawn from the feast of life and does no longer need to challenge the logocentrism of her new geography. What is also paradoxical is that she used to be served by Ethiopian in Sudan; now in Britain, she has become a house maid serving others: she serves the minority to which she belongs. Does this mean that she has succeeded to integrate the British society?

Remembrance of her father's home, Sudan, is a kind of reconsideration to her new home. The new can never displace the old: the skies do not change the soul. Her very last lines of the novel suggestively metaphorize the opening lines of the novel.

The novel explores spaces, moments and thoughts of minority characters. It also shows Najwa's commitment to her religion within a secular society, whose morality is moneytheistic backed up with rules and conventions, rather than faith and spirituality.

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Muslims and Party Politics in Ghana: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Analysis

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Abstract

The political participation of Muslims has been dynamic across time and space. While there exist several studies on Islam and politics in Africa and across the globe, studies that address the participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics remain scant. Significantly, the current discourse examines the involvement of Muslims in politics by primarily focusing on the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics. Using a qualitative approach, we have drawn data from a compendium of secondary sources to develop a narrative review that is consistent with the focus of the study. From our findings, it was revealed that while Muslim participation at earlier times of Ghanaian politics could be termed as low, the Fourth Republic has witnessed a relative increase in the participation of Muslims. Specifically, in the Fourth Republic, more Muslims and/or people of Northern descent have received valuable appointment within governments of the two major parties in the country. However, it appears the number of Muslims within the informal sector of politics outweighs that of their counterparts in the formal and/or public political offices in contemporary times; in important portfolios such as the ministries, council of state, parliament and the judiciary, their numbers are unsatisfactory. This occurrence has been orchestrated by a myriad of challenges that hinder their participation. Among other things, it was concluded that to effectively improve upon the active participation of Muslims in politics, there need to be a framework for addressing the status of Muslims that militate against their contributions to political activities in Ghana.

Keywords: *Muslim, party politics, political participation, Ghana, Islam.*

Introduction

Islam impacts politics globally. Indeed, international politics cannot comprehensively flourish without making room to accommodate and relate to Islam. Islamic history has been described as a "complex cultural synthesis centered

in a distinctive religious faith and necessarily set in the framework of a continuing political life" (Denny, 1973, p. 130). Islam is perceived not just as a religion but a political and ideological force. Africa had its first contact with Islam in the 8th century. Eventually, through trade, it spread to various parts of the continent.

Ghana's immediate post-independent political climate till date has been filled with a series of political events and factors that shape the extent and nature of citizens' participation. For instance, in situations where the majority of Ghanaian citizens were dissatisfied with the social and economic policies of the government, the level of participation has been low (Ninsin, 1993).

Direct participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics occurred in 1953 when the country had attained internal autonomy from the colonialists (Kobo, 2010). This was marked by an important development since Muslims normally did not actively participate in politics prior to this. According to Price (1954, p. 108), "Islam which came into prominence on the political scene on 19 September 1953 is a symbol which seems to have taken the rest of the country by surprise, for little attention was paid before that time to the political role of the Muslims". For the first time, Muslims did not only participate in Municipal council elections of 1953, but eventually formed a political party, the Muslim Association Party (M.A.P) in same year (Kobo, 2010).

The direct involvement of Muslims in the country's politics raised lots of controversies that continue to persist till date. The literature argues that while the northern part of Ghana maintained the "underdeveloped" backyard of contemporary Ghana, the change from a colonial to a postcolonial viewpoint further underscored the Muslim minority's "foreign" position in the country (Weiss, 2008). Statistics indicate that as at 2010, Muslims contributed to about 17.6% of Ghana's population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011; Shiraz, 2015). Muslims in Ghana are depicted as minority who have little political and economic influence at the national level (Weiss, 2008). Significantly, it has been reported that while the Muslim community in Ghana envisions and represents itself as an oppressed minority, non-Muslim observers are increasingly concerned about the potential for Muslims to become radicalized (Weiss, 2008). Political activities of the Muslims were therefore a development that marked a unique trend in Ghana's politics.

Several studies exist on the development of Islam and politics in Africa. That notwithstanding, studies that address the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics remain scant. At the end of this discourse, we hope to add to the data on Muslims and politics by focusing primarily on the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics and how same has shaped the political landscape of Ghana.

Also, attention has been paid to the dynamism of Muslims and party politics in Ghana's fourth republic.

The paper attempts to do an in-depth study on these issues. It traces briefly the history of Islam in Africa and modern Ghana in particular. It then examines the involvement of Muslims in politics, political party affiliations and voting patterns within Zongo[1] communities and the challenges of Muslim participation in party politics since the precolonial era. Significantly, the study is guided by the following research questions: What triggered Muslims' engagement in Ghana's politics? How did their involvement impact the political landscape? And what were some of the challenges thereof?

Theorization

Several theories have been adopted to explain political participation across the world. Importantly, the theories of political participation, politics, and religion are used to elucidate the political participation of Muslims in Ghana.

Issues in Political Participation

Participation in politics is essential to democracy and good governance (Dahl, 1971; Dowse and Hughes, 1979; Almond and Verba, 1963). It is a major means by which citizens take part in how their affairs are managed and hold their leaders accountable (Warren, 2002). According to Dowse and Hughes (1979), political participation allows citizens to take part in the selection of rulers and (directly or indirectly) in the creation of public policy. The various ways by which citizens participate can be expressed through voting, seeking information, discussions and contributing financially, attending meetings, holding membership of a political party and competing for public and party office (Riley et al., 2010; Munroe, 2002; Verba et al., 1965).

Participation in politics is considered a virtue and a sense of civic responsibility, especially in democracies. It constitutes the chief means by which citizens affect the social institutions that shape their lives. Through participation,

[1]Both Schildkrout (1978) and Newman (2007) argue that Zongo is used to mean "traveler's camp" or "stop-over" in Hausa and was used by British Colonial Officers to define the areas in which Muslims lived. Williamson (2014) argue that traditionally, the residents of these settlements were Muslims traveling south from Northern Territories either for economic purposes or as hired warriors. Today, Zongos have become a vast network of settlements, and every urban center in Ghana has at least one Zongo. Such communities in Accra include Nima, Madina Zongo, Shukura Zongo, and Fadama in Accra. Those in Kumase include Sawaba, Sabon Zongo and Mossi Zongo."

citizens can exercise control over the institution of the state and the distribution of resources (Ayee, 1991). Participation, therefore, leads to the development of human capabilities, effective decision making and actions. Thus, the maximum utilization of human resources of any political system largely depends on citizen's participation in governance (Ayee, 1991). Participation is a kind of local autonomy that allows for the discovery of different options of exercising choices to be able to manage one's affairs (Ayee, 1991).

The motives or reasons for participation vary. They are largely rational and calculative and cut across economic, sociological, and psychological spheres. Psychologically, participation is driven by the urge to seek gratification, approval of others, and feeling of power and self-worth. Sociologically, participation is influenced by factors such as status, religion, gender, and prestige. Economically, participation is largely the desire for material wellbeing (Dowse & Hughes, 1979). In the case of Muslims, their political participation has been largely influenced by sociological spheres. To a larger extent, religion has played a central role in their political activities in Ghana (Price, 1954).

Citizens' participation in politics is not homogenous. Participation, according to Dowse and Hughes (1979, p. 290) manifests in "many different ways, with different degree of emotional involvement and at different levels of the system". Significantly, the variations in the degree of participation are related to the type of society. Different social settings present individuals with different opportunities for political participation and mold the attitudes of individuals towards politics (Dowse & Hughes, 1979; Almond & Verba, 1963).

Among the various political settings, Almond and Verba (1963) assert that it is in democracies that the role of citizens as participants is significant. Depending on the political system, therefore, participation could be high or low (Dowse & Hughes, 1979; Almond & Verba, 1963). In many instances, people fail to participate due to indifference, exclusion, or incapability. Among these are the uneducated, the inarticulate, the closed-minded, and the isolated (Almond & Verba, 1963; Shiraz, 2015). Other factors that shape participation include time, energy, money and the negative perception of politics as a corrupt and dirty game (Shiraz, 2015).

Similarly, the extent and nature of involvement in politics are also influenced by factors such as social status and education. For instance, whereas people with status within the society are at the political center, most people with lower social status are at the periphery (Dowse & Hughes, 1979). Also, the feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and dissatisfaction with the way one is treated by the political system affects the nature of political participation (Pobee, 1991).

Studies have revealed that when people are not satisfied and are convinced that their lives are in jeopardy, they tend to be active participants in politics (Donovan, 1980). Thus, important, direct, and particular events may mobilize and trigger relatively passive people to participate. The ideal political system is considered the one in which the individual feels obliged to participate, thinks he can participate, and also know how to participate (Almond & Verba, 1963).

In Ghana, there has been varied degrees of political participation. Essentially, the period before the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) and the Fourth Republic which was characterized by instability, corruption, economic mismanagement and human rights violation created an atmosphere of cynicism, alienation and apathy (Dumbe, 2013). The justification and subsequent effort of the PNDC regime to strengthen participation saw the creation of a "new and more democratic base" that resulted in the concept of district assembly characterized by popular election (Ninsin, 1993). This subsequently paved the way for the adoption of democracy ushering in the Fourth Republic.

Participation in Ghanaian politics, both at the local and national level, hinged largely on personalities (UNDP, 2013). Consequently, people have relied on symbolism, sentimental and metaphysical influences to guide their participation. According to UNDP (2013), another factor that has significantly shaped citizen's involvement in national politics is economic gains.

Concerning the nature of participation in Ghana's politics, it has been observed that participation has been shaped by the "prevalence of a definite non-confrontational, submissive and compliant attitude towards authority" (UNDP, 2013). This is confirmed by the situation where most of the people are reluctant to "publicly question, or diverge from an official standpoint" (UNDP, 2013). In addition to this are the factors of traditional customary practices and the legacy of colonialism. The former frowned upon confronting legitimate authority whilst the latter was an authoritarian system that did not breed a democratic culture. The colonial system, heightened and encouraged the undemocratic aspect of the traditional system.

Politics-Religion Interface

Politics

Aristotle has long described the nature of man as political. Thus, politics is inherent to man and man must necessarily thrive within a political community; it is by politics that man can attain the highest good or self-sufficiency. Man, when perfected, according to Aristotle is the best of animals, but when separated from

law and justice, is the worst of all (Strike, 1991). The inherent nature of politics in man and the importance of collective life in ensuring progress has received wider acceptance among scholars. Politics is man's relationship at the aggregate level. It concerns collectivity rather than individual with the aim of ensuring self-sufficiency.

Politics incorporates all of the activities or decisions that affect the lives of people within every society. These include acts of organizing, planning, setting rules, and standards that determine how people relate to one another. It also includes how resources are allocated among competing needs within society (Leftwich & Callinicos, 2004). Politics thus permeates all facets of society. Political scientists are inclined to give special attention to the activities of government and the state and its institutions. Accordingly, issues of public nature, the state, its institutions and the government have become the central focus and concern of politics and political scientists.

Of special concern is how public concerns, needs and interests, reach the government and how state resources are used to address same concerns. It deals essentially with regulations, laws, and justice which are required not just to perfect man but establish a stable order in which progress is possible. The objective of politics, therefore, is to efficiently manage a state or political community to ensure the preservation and safety of lives, peace, prosperity, protection of rights and liberties, and to ensure improvement or progress in the lives of the citizens including their morals. To this end, there is an authority structure and power structure as well as employed methods and strategies to guide the formulation and implementation of policies. Equally significant is how various groups including religious groups and civil society organizations influence the decision-making process, and how in turn, the state and government influence such groups.

Religion

Throughout recorded history, evidence of the existence and functioning of religion has been established. Religion has played a pivotal role in influencing, determining and shaping the behavior of citizens. At the core of religion is a collection of belief and cultural systems that establish perspectives of life to link humanity to spirituality. Religion is accredited with giving its members the feeling of a secure and safe life, hope, or something to look up to. According to Durant and Durant (1968), "to the unhappy, the suffering, the bereaved, the old, it has brought supernatural comfort". Religion is also noted to instill discipline in the youth and confer "meaning and dignity" on the oppressed (Durant & Durant, 1968).

Scholars are of the view that religion regulates societies. According to Napoleon, religion "has kept the poor from murdering the rich" (Durant & Durant, 1968). This perhaps is due to the supernatural hope it offers. Despite the existence of religion, it must be pointed out that, evil and immoral acts have been recorded throughout human history. These include; robbery, violence, greed, dishonesty, war and economic devastation among others. It is however argued that the situation would have been worse without the regulative effect of religious ethics, "priestly exhortation, calming and unifying rituals" (Durant & Durant, 1968).

It is worth pointing out that not everything about religion has been rosy. It has been used at one time or the other for self-serving ends such as the manipulation and control of other people, and advancing the commercial and political interest of groups, individuals, and states. The church at a point in history was managed by men who often proved unfair, corruptible, or extravagant (Durant & Durant, 1968). Consequently, whilst preaching peace, the church has also fueled religious wars.

Politics and Religion

Politics and religion have blended on several occasions. First, both create or establish order and aim for a life worth living. They both promise the fulfillment of expectations; the leaders of both realms use doctrines to justify actions and to cement link to their organizations. These doctrines, in both cases, are vague and subject to different interpretations (Durant & Durant, 1968). Indeed, the view that religion is above the state is not just theoretical; it is one that has found expression in practical politics.

The subjugation of the state to religion could not endure forever. The situation was reversed as the church later became the political tool of the rulers or kings who were ordering the Pope. This was attributed mainly to religious men falling or slouching to fraud and corruption. The relationship of subjugation of religion to politics or state was replaced with secular institutions. Thereafter, more efforts were directed toward the separation of politics from religion.

The concern was with the state staying away from religious supports. State laws thus, became the command of men, with reason and persuasion becoming central to education and civilization rather than religion. The power of the law and government replaced morality and faith in ensuring stability. Currently, the trend is increasingly to split-up government or state from religion. This is not actually to renounce religion. Even in the modern state, religion continues to play a significant role in keeping social order.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted for this study was purely qualitative. The qualitative data was obtained from a compendium of secondary sources. Significantly, the current study used a narrative review approach to discuss the issues surrounding Muslims and political participation in Ghana. The researchers conducted a systematic search in various databases related to the development of Muslim political participation in Africa. We placed emphasis on journal materials that discuss Muslim participation in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

The various online databases consulted were google scholar, web of Science, Elsevier, Jstor, Brill, Wiley, African Online Journals, Taylor and Francis and Emerald Insight. The material searches were done under the following keywords: "history of Islam in Africa and Ghana", "political participation of Muslims in Africa and Ghana", the role of Muslims in Ghanaian Politics", "the contribution of Muslim to Ghana's Fourth Republic" and "Challenges of Muslims in Ghanaian politics".

The results of the searches presented 2070 articles from the various databases. Out of these, 50 were selected at the expense of the others after a skim through the abstracts. The materials selected were in line with discussions on the history of Muslims in Ghana, their political participation, their role in Ghanaian politics and challenges emanating from their participation through time. The criteria for selecting a material was dependent on its publication in English with discussions in line with the objects of the study. As religion is a sensitive subject, all materials that presented biased and discriminatory information were ignored during the selection process.

Aside from journal articles, information was gathered from valuable books and book chapters in line with the aim of the study. Also, the references of selected materials were reviewed to identify other studies worthy of contact. The results of findings from the various sources were analyzed thematically to develop a narrative synthesis that is consistent with the focus of the study. Significantly, earlier and more recent scholarships have been synthesized to corroborate each other.

Islam in Africa and Ghana

Followers of the Prophet Muhammad (570 – 632) can be found across all continents of the world with the largest concentrations in the Middle East where, Islam originated (Hiskett, 1984). In the year 615 BC, Africa received over eighty Muslim men and women who were escaping persecution in Mecca (Hiskett, 1984;

Drekte, 1968). Through diplomacy, Muhammad (SAW) wrote letters inviting the rulers of Egypt, Yemen, Persia, and the Roman governor of Palestine to accept Islam. However, after the demise of the Prophet, Muslim troops entered Egypt and swept through North Africa through conquests and moved down to the ancient Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai. The arrival of Islam in pre-colonial Gold Coast was sanctioned through the efforts of Muslim traders (nomadic groups) and itinerant clerics (Hiskett, 1984; Silverman & Owusu-Ansah, 1989).

Pre-colonial Gold Coast had earlier contacts with Islam during the 14th and 15th centuries through the activities of Muslim traders from the Upper Niger region known as Wangara (Yarse or Dyula) (Levitzion, 1968; Silverman & Owusu-Ansah, 1989). These traders became increasingly involved in the Middle Volta Basin gold and kola trade. Significantly, Muslim merchants set up separate quarters in the then Asante capital of Bono-Manso c.1723 (Levitzion, 1968). The Wangara managed to spread Islam in the interior and extended their trade routes southward in search of new and richer sources of gold.

Islam was firmly established in Ghana by the arrival, later, of Muslims from Hausa Land. The Kingdoms of Dagbon (14th Century), Gonja (17th Century), and Asante (18th Century) all had interaction with Islam and Muslims in one way or the other. Consequently, Muslim settlements were established in coastal towns and villages in the late nineteenth century. In some cities such as Accra, some local inhabitants converted to Islam (Weiss, 2008). In the case of Dagbon, Toha Zie (The red hunter) and his children came into contact with Muslims in Mali and Gurma before the grandson Gbewah set up the first capital at Pusiga (Seebaway, 2011, p. 43).

Chieftaincy institution played a significant role in the spread of Islam. To have a greater political impact, Muslim Chiefs came together in the late 1950s to form the council of Muslim chiefs in Accra (Weiss, 2008). Unlike in the North and Asante, Muslims in the coastal areas were unable to play significant roles in the establishment of traditional institutions. Rather, they isolated themselves, adopted their unique ways of doing things and settled separately from the local people (Pellow, 1984). “Once identified as a Muslim area, no non-Muslim were supposed to live there” (Pellow, 1984).

The advent of colonialism generally affected and destabilized the traditional state of equilibrium that had been established between Muslims and the local authorities, especially in Asante and the Northern part of the country. It took away the prestigious services that Muslims were rendering to traditional authorities such as scribes, accountants and record keepers among others. These functions were

taken over by colonial educated elites and missionaries who introduced western secular education (Austin, 1964).

Direct Involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian Politics

Across the globe, the political participation of Muslims were triggered by a myriad of forces. Beginning as smaller organizations, various conditions influenced the formation of Muslim political parties. In Britain for instance, the educational needs of young Muslims influenced the formation of Muslim organizations (Nielsen, 2010). Most of these organizations were consolidated into the establishment of the Islamic Party of Britain in 1992 (Nielsen, 2010). Despite their formation of political parties, the involvement of Muslims in the formal politics of France, Germany, Netherlands and the United States of America remains low (Haddad & Ricks, 2010; Cesari, 2014; Cinalli & Giugni, 2016).

In Ghana, the formation of the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA) in 1932 paved way for the active and direct participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics (Price, 1954; Pobee, 1991). The GCMA, a nonpolitical association was formed to cater for the welfare, education and general development of the Muslim immigrant community. However, it turned political in 1939 as it became necessary to effectively address the interest of Muslim immigrants. In 1939, the Gold Coast Muslim Association first supported the Mambii (indigenes) party in the Accra Municipal election (Price, 1954). This happened when Muslims felt that there had been unfair distribution of building materials following the damage caused by a severe earthquake in Accra in 1939. In 1942, the GCMA also supported the Accra lawyer, former communist, Pan Africanist and founding member of the West African Youth League, Bankole Awoonor-Renner, who had converted to Islam in about 1940 (Weiss, 2008).

The literature notes that Muslims became active participants of national politics to realize their objective of improving their condition (Price, 1954). Significantly, Pobee (1991) asserts that the economic factor and discrimination against Muslims pushed them to directly engage in national politics. Though they turned to politics, Muslims were not so much concerned with the politics which led them to decision making positions. Rather, they were interested in aspects that paved way for their voices to be heard (Pobee, 1991). The GCMA went into alliance with political parties such as the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), and the Mumbai party at separate times, to pursue its objectives. However, the Muslim association faced an organizational crisis that created disunity and division among its rank and file. Consequently, it

split into two along the lines of the youth and elders. The youth subsequently formed the Muslim Youth Congress (MYC) and aligned themselves with the CPP. The elders of the GCMA, however, adopted an anti-CPP stance.

In 1953, a turn of events in the political activities of the GCMA occurred when it embarked on independent political activity. For the first time, it presented candidates for the municipal elections of 1953 in Accra and Kumase (Kobo, 2010). In 1954, the GCMA transformed into a political party with the name Muslim Association Party (MAP) and maintained its anti-CPP stance (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002). The creation of the Muslims Association Party (MAP) was a move by some influential Muslims who were active in politics to oppose the Convention People's Party (CPP), especially in the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies (Weiss, 2008). It declared its objectives to side with the aged and traditional authority and to ensure the recognition of Muslims' interest in the country (Austin, 1964).

The formation of MAP and its participation in the municipal elections were made possible by the extension of franchise to the immigrant Muslim communities (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Kobo, 2010). To obtain a franchise, a Muslim had to be settled in the country for two or three generations and own a property in the country (Price, 1954). The "law as at that time took no cognizance of foreignness. If a person is a British subject, provided he or she has fulfilled the other qualifications he belongs to the Gold Coast…" (Price, 1954). Importantly, the extension of the franchise was a move in the right direction since most immigrants had vested interests in the country.

Numerous challenges confronted Muslims as they engaged actively and directly in the politics of the country. Religion had featured prominently in the political activities of Muslims in the country (Price, 1954; Austin, 1964; Pobee, 1991). Austin (1964) noted that "in the Zongo areas of the southern towns where Muslim community was strongly grouped, the rallying cry of Islam was used with great effort to enlist support on behalf of a particular candidate". Consequently, the MAP was highly sectarian and fell short of being a national party.

Also, the unity of the Muslims was a challenge. Price (1954) observed that Muslims were divided along ethnic lines and age. There was no one unifying body but multiple contested councils, each representing a specific segment of the Muslim population and typically reflecting either ethnic or factional divisions (Weiss, 2008). As a result, not all Muslims supported MAP. Also, the division was along the lines of French-speaking Zambrama people and the Hausa in Kumase (Austin, 1964).

Furthermore, a general resentment arose from non-Muslims against the involvement of Muslims in politics. The Muslims, who were predominantly immigrants from neighboring West African countries, were generally perceived as aliens or foreigners by some of the locals. As such, they were thought of as having no right to engage in the local politics of the country. In the South, Muslims were regarded as "migrants" and as such could and did not have any political influence (Weiss, 2008). The consequences thereof were a reaction on the part of the Muslims in the form of radicalism (Price, 1954). The political fortune of MAP was seriously affected. Consequently, they lost heavily in the June 1954 elections, even in Muslim communities across the country. Austin (1964) also observed that the activities of MAP were not widespread. Their leaders were also handicapped by their foreign origin and their inadequate grasp of the English language, the official language of communication in the country. As a result, the MAP was compelled to accept outside leaders like Bankole Renner, a former CPP leader, and Kobina Kessie.

The sectarian politics, divisions, and radicalism associated with Muslim politics were considered undesirable. The situation was described by Austin (1964) as the "socialist pre-requisite of the legislation necessary to outlaw parties based on religion, tribalism and racialism". The overriding objective of the then CPP government led by Nkrumah was to establish one nation out of the different ethnicities. Besides, MAP had officially declared itself as an opposition party to the government of Nkrumah. The Kumase branch chairman of MAP for example was on record to have written to the Ashanti pioneer in January 1954 that "a true Muslim can never be friends with CPP. Muslim Association Party (MAP) is prepared to hold the devil by the throat until everybody is free in the country" (Austin, 1964, p. 59).

The anti-CPP stance of MAP attracted a reaction from the CPP government which subsequently introduced the Deportation and Detention Acts (Weiss, 2008; Kobo, 2010). These Acts made it possible to deport and detain some leaders of MAP. Weiss (2008) reveals that the Deportation Act of 1957 caused the deportation of two key members of the MAP; Alhaji Ahmad Baba and Alhaji Uthman Ladan, to Kano in Nigeria. Weiss further states that women also fell victim of the *Deportation Act.* For instance, Madam Goma, who was a petty trader in a Zongo in Kumase and the heads of the Gao (i.e., Songhay) and Mossi

communities in Kumase, Amadu Gao and Amadu Mossi, were deported in addition to several others (Kobo, 2010).[2]

The ultimate and last move that brought about the demise of MAP was the passage of the *Avoidance of Discrimination Act of 1957* by the CPP dominated legislature. In 1954, in the legislature, there were 72 against 14 votes, banning the formation of political parties along religious lines. MAP thus ceased to exist, but Muslim political activities continued. Many Muslims aligned with the Congress Party on 3rd November, 1954 (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2011).

In the post-Nkrumah era, Muslims were split between the two major parties; the Progress Party (PP) led by Busia and the National Alliance of Liberals led by K.A Gbedemah. The political activities of Muslims during this period made interesting revelations. The immigrant Muslim community always identified with the ruling party (Weiss, 2008). This behavior of the immigrant Muslims was attributed to the "alien status" associated with them (Weiss, 2008). The identification with the ruling government found expression through the Imams or the leadership of the Muslims. It has been reported that during the Acheampong regime, Imams openly identified with Acheampong and his union government's idea (Pobee, 1991). Muslim leaders, not only gave their support but justified the verses of the Qur'an to support the idea of the union government. The idea of creating a union government with the Acheampong regime was supported by some Muslim Chiefs and the Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC).

The general assessment of Muslims' involvement in the national politics of the country is that, rather than advancing their interest, politics has had a damaging effect on them. Accordingly, the chiefs, elders and leaders of the Muslim community organized a press conference to eschew party politics (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2015). They reemphasized their support for the union government to devoid themselves of political parties (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2015). However, it was noted that as the Union Government's concept was not an idea that was accepted by all, and as Acheampong himself did not tolerate any criticism of the government, it became difficult for anyone associated with it to claim a non-partisan status. Notwithstanding the stance of Muslim leaders to eschew party politics, politics and party-political activities continued to reflect in all Muslim organizations. Organizations such as the Muslim Council and Muslim Scout Association were all infiltrated by political party officials and activities.

[2] Amadu Mossi was the Mossi Chief of Kumase and Amadu Gao was the Chief of Malians in Kumase.

As it stands, it will be difficult to claim that any particular party is for or against Muslims. Starting from the early days of political party formation, the major political traditions, the United Party (UP) and the CPP both had Muslims playing leading roles. Importantly, Muslims have actively participated in the politics of the Fourth republic in diverse ways. Political parties in Ghana, especially, the two major parties, New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), have made conscious efforts to influence and attract a significant number of votes from Zongo communities. Weiss (2008) argues that Muslim voters gained the attention of the NPP and the NDC in the 2000 and 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Globally, Muslims always align themselves with political parties that make policies to favour them (Drekte, 1968; Nielson, 2010; Al-Momani et al., 2010). In France and Britain, the literature argues that during the 1990s, Muslims saw conservative governments as obstacles to their involvement in politics (Nielson, 2010). Concerning Britain, Muslims have regarded the administration and policies of the Labour government as much friendlier (Nielson, 2010). In Australia too, earlier findings suggest that Muslims mostly vote for the Labor Party –whose policy favour migrant Muslims in the country (Al-Momani et al., 2010).

Similarly, it appears that Zongo communities (particularly those in Accra and Kumase)[3] are strongholds of the NDC (Drekte, 1968). This is confirmed by the number of votes they accrue during general elections. A number of reasons have been identified to explain the tendency above. There has been a growing anti-NPP sentiments stemming from the *Alien's Compliance Order of 1960,* which was implemented by the then Prime Minister; Professor Kofi Abrefa Busia and his Progress Party (PP) Administration. This had detrimental effects on non-indigenous Muslims. During the 2000 election, the NDC blamed the NPP for being anti-Northern, anti-migrant and anti-Muslim, thus playing on the memories of the Hausa and Yoruba minority of the Busia government's expulsion order of 1969 (Weiss, 2008). Also, it was alleged that during the 2008 election campaign, the NPP threatened to deport Zongo people if they won; this dissuaded most Zongo people against voting for the NPP (Kobo, 2010).

Perceptions that the U.P traditions unfavored strangers and non-indigenous people against the open-door policies of the CPP -which allowed many people

[3] Notwithstading the above, it appears the Tamale Zongo is different. In the previous election results, evidence suggest that the Zongo communities in Tamale usually vote massively for the NPP; it has thus been termed as a stronghold of the NPP due to the Tijaniyya link.

from neighboring countries to migrate to Ghana in large numbers in search for greener pastures- greatly affected the participation of Muslims (Kobo, 2010). There used to be a joke in Tamale in the 1960s where a Yoruba victim of the repatriation order was overheard saying:

Mu mun the PP Party Papa,
PP Party Papa,
Ashe PP party Party Banza.

To wit:

We said PP Good Party,
PP Good Party,
Not knowing PP is a Bad Party.

The NDC, especially in the first election of the fourth republic in 1992, used the *Aliens Compliance Order* as a campaign strategy to win votes from Zongo communities (Kobo, 2010). The Muslims' affinity with the NDC has also been attributed to the rational political behavior of how better off or less well off one or a group will be under a party that wins the election (Hanretta, 2011). It has been reported that the government of J.J. Rawlings, the founder of NDC, has been the only administration since the First Republic that brought significant development to Muslims and the Northern region in general (Dumbe, 2013). The NDC, under Rawlings, is accredited with the two major holidays granted to Muslims on their two major festive days Eid-ul Adha and Eid-ul Fitr (Dumbe, 2013).

The perception that the NDC is a party for Muslims and Zongos (which is not wholly true) has been prevalent in contemporary era. Previous election results show that certain Muslim dominated communities usually vote for the NDC. This perception seems to be consolidated by the Ayawaso and Asawasi constituencies in Accra and Kumase respectively where Dr. Mustapha Ahmad and Alhaj Muntaka Ahmad have always won the seat for the NDC. However, the performance of Sheikh I. C. Quaye as the parliamentary candidate representing the NPP in the Ayawaso west constituency challenges that perception (Weiss, 2008). Knowing that such perceptions can affect their fortunes in an election where numbers matter a lot, the NPP has done a lot to erase the perception that it is not for Zongo people or Muslims in general (Weiss, 2008).

Strategically, the role of Alhaj Aliu Mahama as vice-president to John Agyekum Kuffuor for eight years [from 2001-2008] and the appointment of Dr. Bawumia to partner Akuffo Addo in the 2012, 2016 and 2020 elections appear that, at the highest level of power, the NPP has also shown more commitment to

Muslims and Zongo people. Within the NDC itself, the party's executive has been assigning the position of the running mate (of the presidential candidate) to a Muslim or a person of northern descent. From this, it can be inferred that the above arrangement influenced the NDC's decision to nominate Martin Amidu – who was not a Muslim but one who had a Northern descent – as the running mate for Professor Mills in the run-up to the 2000 presidential election.

This demand subsequently has come to shape the contest of who becomes the running mate of the two major parties. In the NPP too, the party has been using Muslims or persons of Northern descent to negate the NDC's accusations of merely being a vehicle for Asante hegemony (Weiss, 2008). Currently, a conscious effort is made by the two major parties to get either a Muslim or a northerner as a running mate to the flag bearer or the presidential candidate. The NDC under the leadership of Attah Mills appointed John Mahama, a person of Northern descent and close affinity to Muslims, as the running mate. Subsequently, with the demise of Attah Mills, Mahama became the president and contested the subsequent elections as the incumbent president.

It may be argued that the NDC are the pioneers in recognizing and giving a lot of opportunities to people from Zongo: Importantly, the late Alhaji Yahaya who was an unlettered person became an MP for Nima; the late Dr. Farouq Braimah, a Yoruba man, became a Minister; Alhaji Iddrisu Mahama was Minister of Defense (1996-2000) under the presidency of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Issifu Ali became the Chairman of the NDC before the year 2000 and Hudu Yahya was also appointed as the General Secretary of the NDC before 2000.

Significantly, while the prominent Muslim presence in party politics was mostly by people who were indigenes of Ghana, it was the NDC who gave prominence to non-indigenous Ghanaian Muslims to serve at various levels of government (Dumbe, 2013). Similarly, the NPP has tried to cancel out this comparative advantage by having the Nasara Club (victory club) to improve the support base of the NPP in the Zongos (Nugent, 2001).[4] As the equation stands now, all the major parties including the CPP, PPP and PNC have some Muslim representation and membership which is strategically good for Ghana as a nation and Muslims as a community. It must be pointed out that some of these measures have paid off especially for the NPP. Currently, evidence from the 2016 elections shows significant NPP support groups within the Muslim dominated communities.

[4] The Nasara Club is made up of the inhabitants of the Zongos and are believed to be ardent supporters of the NDC.

The prevailing situation in Ghanaian party politics is that there are Muslims in every party and every Zongo community; you would find people belonging to different political parties and even in the so-called strongholds of some parties. This indicates that there are always dissenting voices who vote differently from the majority. Moreover, the two strongest parties in Ghana, the NDC and the NPP have all formed governments with a sizeable Muslim presence in the Fourth Republic.

Muslims Involvement beyond Political Parties: Challenges in Contemporary Times

In Ghana, under the Fourth Republic, Muslims have participated at various levels of politics; they vote, become members of political parties, occupy public office and become members of the legislature and the executive among others (Ansah-Kobi, 1993). The presence of Muslims in these areas has been uneven. Whereas their participation at the lower levels – such as voting, campaigning and attending rallies – has been quite high and significant (Al-Momani, 2010), the same cannot be said of their participation at the higher levels such as membership of the legislature, executive and the judiciary (Shiraz, 2015). The reasons for this has been associated with the limited resources for participation available to Muslim communities, especially among the immigrant Muslims in the Zongos (Shiraz, 2015). These include formal education, financial resources, a feeling of confidence, and political efficacy (Shiraz, 2015).

Essentially, education among Muslims in the country especially in Muslim-dominated communities or Zongos has been the traditional Arabic education (Skinner, 2013). This type of education renders graduates dysfunctional or nonfunctional in the formal sectors of the economy and politics. Their form of education tends to restrict Muslims from active and effective participation in large sectors of the economy including national politics (Skinner, 2013).

Aside from education, financial resources also affect the extent of involvement of a person or a group in politics. Muslim dominated communities have been associated with slums and poverty. Price (1954) described the Muslims in Zongos as “hewers and drawers of water”. The dominant economic activities within these communities include butchery, sewing, embroidery and petty trading among others (Kobo, 2010; Asuming-Bediako et al., 2018). Consequently, the majority of Muslim communities lack the kind of people or groups with the economic muscles capable of influencing politics significantly.

At the higher level of politics, the participation of Muslims continues to breed concern. At these levels, the number of Muslims in notable institutions such

as parliament, executive, judiciary and council of state have been quite low (Ansah-Kobi, 1993). For instance, the first and second parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana recorded about 34 and 30 Muslim parliamentarians respectively. This constituted about 17% and 15% of the total membership of the House (Dumbe, 2013). It must be pointed out that, almost all the Muslim parliamentarian won their seats from Muslim dominated areas. In the judiciary, Muslim influence is felt in personalities such as Nuhu Billa, S. Dramani and the judicial secretary, Justice Sulley Nasurudeeen Ghadegbe of the court of appeal and justice Mustapha (Political Desk Report, 2020).

The question of low participation of Muslims in higher offices of politics appears to be international. As at 2010, no known Muslim had occupied the highest office or had been elected as a senator in Australia since the commencement of her federation (Al-Momani et al., 2010). Concerning the United States of America, Muslims have continually been urged to participate fully in the affairs of the highest level of political participation due to the pluralistic nature of their country (Haddad & Ricks, 2010).

For the first time in the history of the country, Issifu Omoro Tanko Amadu, a Muslim was appointed by the President, Nana Akuffo Addo to the Supreme Court (The Presidency, 2020). This appointment has attracted the attention of the Muslim community as both the spokesperson of the Chief Imam and the Coalition of Muslims Organisations Ghana (COMOG) officially thanked the President for the appointment (Political Desk Report, 2020). In the case of the media, often described as the fourth estate of the realm, Muslims' presence is felt in activities relating to TV and radio programmes. In Islamic programs such as Islam in focus and Aqeedah among others, issues including those of politics and society that affect the Muslim communities are discussed (Pontzen, 2018). Currently, there are Muslim owned radio stations such as Marhaba in Accra, Zuria and Alpha in Kumase. These radio stations discuss political issues that affect Muslims directly both at the national and local levels (Pontzen, 2018). Worth stating are Islamic newspapers such as the Muslim Searchlight, the Fountain; even though defunct. The editor of the Fountain, enumerated the objectives of the paper to include, projecting Islam and Muslims by serving as a political mouthpiece for Muslims (Samwini, 2006).

Currently, after over twenty years of multi-party democracy, significant improvements have been recorded in the political activities of Muslims. The turn out during voting at presidential and parliamentary elections has significantly increased (Shiraz, 2015). The situation is explained by the current trend in educational pursuit of Muslims (Nielsen, 2010; Skinner, 2013; Moritz et al., 2018).

In Britain, the educational needs of young Muslims have spurred the formation of pro-Muslim organizations seeking to redress the nature and quality of education within the public space (Nielsen, 2010).

In Ghana, Muslims have now largely embraced western-style secular education; most of the traditional Arabic Schools have now been absorbed into the Islamic Education Project (IEP), whilst the Arabic and English schools have also been absorbed into the Islamic Education Service and placed under the Ghana Education Service (GES) (Skinner, 2013). Consequently, an appreciable number of Muslims are now being produced with improved awareness, education and skills to engage in the administration of the state. That notwithstanding, Muslim womens' participation continue to remain low (Shiraz, 2015).

Conclusion

Muslim participation in Ghanaian politics has transitioned through varied degrees. At the onset of their participation, the initial intention of Muslims for participating in politics was to influence policy to address the concerns of Muslims. In 1953, Muslims formed the MAP as a tool to have their interest advanced. Importantly, they sought to pursue the same agenda but within a larger framework and at all levels of participation.

At the inception of the Fourth Republic, the participation of Muslims at higher levels of politics has increased relatively. More Muslims and/or people of Northern descent have received valuable appointments within government. Nevertheless, it has been reported that the numbers of Muslims in public political offices remain scant; in important positions such as ministerial positions, membership of the council of state, parliament and the judiciary, their numbers are unsatisfactory. Aside John Dramani Mahama, who is of Northern descent, no Muslim has had the opportunity to lead the country as a President.

Irrespective of their numbers, Muslims' contribution to politics, law and other political avenues for the management of the country cannot be overlooked. Muslims in ruling parties and other opposition parties did and continue to make input into the overall calculus of decisions that determine the direction and course of their various parties. At the grass-root level, where Muslim presence is significantly felt, the pressure is brought to bear on the government to attend to the needs of the people.

The findings revealed that even though the perception is that the NDC appeals more to people from Zongo, the NPP has also given special portfolios including vice-presidential positions to people who are associated with Zongos.

Currently, there is a significant recognition for Muslims and increased access to educational and recreational facilities, such as the recent modern sports facilities that are built in Zongos under the Zongo Development Fund. The Muslim festive occasions have assumed a new dimension with the constant visit of the presidents and other top government officials to address Muslim gatherings. The ministers and parliamentarians who are Muslims have become avenues for lobbying on behalf of Muslims.

In contemporary era, the participation of Muslims has been fraught with myriad of challenges. To that extent, we deduce that any meaningful progress of Muslims in the politics of the country has to consider the need to tolerate divergent views or to coexist peacefully with opponents; the need to address apathy that is associated with immigrant Muslims who still owe allegiance to their countries of origin and hence remain indifferent and do not feel obliged to participate; the need to deal with the predominantly impoverished status of Muslims that has militated against their ability to contribute significantly to political party activities and the need to deal with the division and unhealthy rivalry among Muslims, orchestrated partly by some materialistic politicians who employ the practice of divide and rule.

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Re-Shaping Identities in Don Delillo's *Falling Man*

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Abstract

As a trauma novel, Don DeLillo's "Falling Man" deals with the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, revealing the effects that such an event had not only on people who were directly affected, but also on the nation itself. Exposed to a dreadful tragedy, most of the characters become victims whose experiences of time, self and the world were disrupted. The personal and collective consciousness was painfully injured causing an emotional anguish that led to great changes in the community's sense of identity. The present paper intends to illustrate the iconic relationship between traumatic memory and narrative memory as a basis for the re-enactment, repetition and symbolization to become substitutes for a "frozen" identity in the intention of restoring the traumatized self and to function as psychological and literary strategies.

Keywords: *identity, memory, 9/11, trauma fiction.*

General Reflections upon Trauma Fiction

Before referring to trauma fiction it is needed to introduce the concept of trauma as it is defined and characterized by psychology. As it is already known, trauma may be described as a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that unfortunately has disrupted the previous manner in which an individual generates his or her own sense of self and the standard by which the same individual evaluates society. According to Cathy Caruth, the structure of trauma represents a disruption of personal history or temporality. Usually, the traumatic event is not fully assimilated at the time it happens, the person trying to delay the painful experience which makes it unavailable in the normal way to memory and interpretation; but, after a period of latency the events return more intrusively (Caruth, 1995, p. 151). From the psychological point of view, trauma comprises an experience which overwhelms the individual who is no longer able to fully understand and react. The impossibility of dealing with such an event blocks the individual's relationship with his or her own self, changing his or her identity.

It may seem a paradox, or at least a contradiction, to relate the term trauma to what is generally understood by fiction. Since trauma resists not only language but also any form of representation, it cannot be narrated in fiction. Even so, there are few ways of considering the relation between trauma and fiction possible. Ann Whitehead admits that trauma theory has provided new paths of conceptualizing trauma so that it could become one of the important themes for the novelists (Whitehead, 2004, p. 9). At the same time, it has also shifted attention away from the question of what is remembered to why and how it is remembered.[1]

According to trauma theory, the disruption of the individual's identity caused by a traumatic event may serve as a basis for a larger argument which sustains that identity is shaped by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. In order to assimilate the traumatic experience the individual needs to recreate or to abstract through narrative recollections the event; but, accepting the fact that the traumatic experience precludes knowledge and representation, the process of remembrance becomes an approximate account of the past. In the act of recollection there could be noticed a striking paradox: although the re-enactments of the traumatic event are literal and even precise they still remain largely unavailable to conscious recall and control. The capability of recovering the traumatic past is tied up with the inability to have access to it[2] (Caruth, 1995, p. 152). The responses to traumatic experiences are different, from the division of consciousness to the cognitive chaos. They may also be regarded as inherent features of traumatic memory. From the psychological perspective, the traumatic experience may divide the individual's identity and his or her connections to a larger context which consists of important social values that definitely influence the recollections and the reconfiguration of the self. The separation from the self and from society together with all the ways re-shaping the individual's identity, or the attempts of re-shaping it, were transformed into a metaphor used for describing the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of the self and the change of consciousness caused by the trauma experience (Caruth, 1995, pp. 150-151).

The fictional representation of trauma experiences comes in the form of narratives which are meant to show the disruptions between the individual and his

[1] Regarding the boundaries between trauma and fiction, the Holocaust literature could be an important example, since the Holocaust fiction, which is based on extensive historical research and documentation, has been delimitated from the Holocaust testimony, which is more a subject of the distortions of individual and collective memory (Whitehead, 2004, p. 30).

[2] Most of times, the traumatic event returns in a very precise form in nightmares and flashbacks and, at the same time, it is accompanied by amnesia. The connection between the precise recollection and the lack or elision of memory can only be approximated.

or her self and between the self and the others. Because of these two perspectives, trauma fiction contains two types of literary narratives. First, there are the psychic trauma novels which intend to capture the effect of suffering on the mind of the individual and secondly there are the cultural trauma novels[3] which focus on the consequences of the traumatic events. While the former is a narrative representation of a wound inflicted upon the mind that breaks the individual's experience of time, self and the world, the latter represents a wound on a group sharing the common consciousness as a whole (Caruth, 1996, pp. 3-4). In both cases the identity is disrupted and it needs reintegration and reaffirmation or, in other words, it needs to be re-shaped.

Traumatic Memory and Narrative Memory

The process of recollecting the past always involves full access to memory. Considering the fact that traumatic experiences tend to avoid being remembered, it becomes imperative for the individual and/or for the community to find valid ways of accessing the past. Thus, it is obvious that trauma requires integration of the traumatic event into the individual or collective memory both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure. Generally speaking, trauma[4] is more complex than it is known, mainly because of its public nature, although mass denial may take place at some stage in the process of dealing with traumatic collective experiences.

The past could be remembered in different ways. There are different forms of dealing with traumatic experiences of the past, but the most important ones are those which involve the traumatic memory and the narrative memory. It is necessary to make a difference between the two manners of recollecting the past. According to psychoanalysis, the traumatized person's task is to translate traumatic memory into narrative memory with the help of a specialist (Caruth, 1995, p. 143). The access to traumatic memory is difficult mostly because the

[3] Cultural trauma affects the members of a community in the moments when they feel as being subjected to traumatic events which have affected their group conscious future identity. As a result of exposing the whole community to a traumatic event, the common sense of identity shared by all the members may be either disrupted or solidified.

[4] When dealing with trauma it is necessary to take into account its sense, which in Greek has the meaning of wound, originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its larger sense (including the psychiatric literature), the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind, which is embodied in the form of an event that is experienced too soon and unexpected and therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly in the survivors' reactions.

survivors usually suffer of post-traumatic stress which is defined as a delayed response that takes the form of repeated nightmares, hallucinations, flashbacks, somatic reactions, behaviours stemming from the event and general numbing (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1995, p. 173). All these forms of individual reactions to the traumatic experience are unwanted and even unrecalled intrusions of the past into the present which explains the person's need of delaying or refusal. These ways of intrusion could be triggered automatically by anything: a sound or a sight, a smell or similar situations. They seem to take possession of the individual and to hold him or her under control. In the process of recollecting the traumatic event, the individual reclaims the painful experience. The attempt to obtain access to a traumatic history is beyond the pathology of individual suffering. It means dealing with the reality of a history[5] that is in crisis and it can only be perceived in un-assimilable forms. The act of refusing such experience may be considered rather a way of gaining access to knowledge that has not yet attained the form of narrative memory than an act of denial of knowing the past (Caruth, 1995, p. 155). In its active resistance to knowledge, this refusal opens the space for testimony which is now able to communicate and to reveal the reality that lies beyond what is already understood. The individual refusal of understanding what had happened may also be seen as a creative act: the blindness was in fact nothing than a vital condition of creation (Lanzmann, 1990, p. 279).

The process of accessing the traumatic memory usually ends with the act of transforming the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the traumatic event to become a story, to be verbalized and communicated; in other words, to be integrated into the individual's own knowledge of the past and in other's knowledge of their history too. At the same time, this act of transformation could lose the precision that characterizes the traumatic act of recalling.

From the psychoanalysis perspective, narrative memory represents the conscious attempt of relating the traumatic events, translating them into the form of a story that, most of times, contains a beginning, a development and an ending.[6] The difference between traumatic memory and narrative memory is given by the degree of consciousness and control which the traumatic event can be remembered with (Caruth, 1995, p. 143).

[5] As Cathy Caruth has stated, history may speak through the individual or through the community. History itself reveals its traumatic experience in the voice of a person or in a voice of a nation. Its own suffering is not only a site of its disruption but the locus of wisdom. (Caruth, 1995, p. 156)

[6] It was already known that the human psychology has an essentially narrative structure.

Using the narrative memory, traumatic events could be revealed and transposed into literary forms, some of them as a form of healing, some of them as a form of literary way of remembering.

Psychic Trauma in 9/11 Literature

As a historic event, 9/11 changed the way people perceive and understand the world. The tragic legacy of these events as the attacks and the events which followed is considerable. What happened then has refigured the whole culture. In his writings, Richard Gray describes these events as defining elements in the contemporary structure of feeling (Gray, 2009, p. 129). The abbreviations of 9/11 are fully and easily understood and considered by Mark Redfield as "a blank little scar around which nationalist energies could be marshaled" (Redfield, 2009, p. 1). Unfortunately, it was these nationalist energies that shaped the post 9/11 literature, media and cinema.

The shock of the hijacked planes flying into the Twin Towers still continues to haunt the present, defining 9/11 as a historical moment. Most of the responses[7] to the traumatic event have changed from the immediate days to the months and years that followed the attacks, which shows that individuals and communities need time to fully understand the importance of the event. At first, the responses were the survivor' or eyewitnesses' reports that provided information containing empirical evidence of the tragic event. Later some of the fiction writers were asked to give their own interpretation on the meaning of what had recently happened. Their accounts, written in the self-consciously register, were mixing journalism with memoire. Although these writings were not very objective, their importance is huge because they were contributing to the act of shaping the discourses of the tragedy. Thus, a complex narrative has emerged generating a new and contemporary literature of terror which gradually has developed a politics and poetics of representation.

The majority of the books published after the tragic event and constructed on the survivors' and eyewitnesses' accounts emphasised the commitment to relying upon the individual testimonies. It is the case of Dwyer and Flynn's *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive inside the Twin Towers* (2005) which is focusing mostly on the accounts of those involved in the events. This journalistic work reflects the contemporary media's reliance on immediate reactions to new

[7] Most of the first responses to the 9/11 event differ in form and tone from some of the later versions.

stories but, at the same time, it informs of the experiences that were watched on TV and Internet those days (Randall, 2011, pp. 3-4).

One of the most representative text published at that time (2004) was the *9/11 Commission Report* which appeared after two years of investigation. As Craig Warren considered, although the report is a government document, it gave a historical context and provided a helpful starting point for the themes that have dominated the literature of terror.

> *By standing beyond the generic conventions of both popular literature and bureaucratic prose, the Report at once invited and challenged classification. It demanded the reader train their interpretative powers not only on the accessible language of the commissioners but also on the wounds behind that language. In American literary history, few bestsellers have required so much of the reader, or illustrated so clearly the public hunger for literature as a means of shaping national identity.* (Warren, 2007, p. 534)

Described as a means of shaping the national identity, that hunger for literature, described by Craig Warren, was fulfilled by many works of fiction. Unfortunately, realistic fiction failed to represent such a resonant and historically significant event, but there were other forms that succeeded. These were, in fact, attempts to understand the meaning of the tragic event and to assimilate it into the realm of representation. The 9/11 literature comes into being as a commemorative fiction, developing a particular theme: the disparity between those lived experiences of the people actually involved in the tragic event and the experiences of the people watching the same event. The early literary responses[8] contained poems and plays written in haste. It took some time for the 9/11 attacks to appear in literary fiction. For example one of the first books of fiction published was Béigbéder's *Windows on the World* which appeared in 2004. Later, more writers started to focus on the event among them there should be mentioned McEwan, Martin Amis[9] and Don De Lillo.

When these writers first tried to represent in a literary manner the attacks of 9/11, they focused mainly in psychic trauma and the domestic, disregarding the political and the cultural consequences of the tragic and traumatic event. It is the case of novels like: *The Writing on the Wall* (2004) by Lynn Sharon Schwartz, *Windows on the World* (2004) by Frédéric Béigbéder, *Extremely Loud and*

[8] As iconographical responses, there should be mentioned the graphic novel and commix too.

[9] For Amis, fiction itself was under attack and he suggested that writers should consider a change in occupation, mostly because he understood war as being between the individual voices of writers and the voice of the crowd. This opposition is characterized by Amis as intrinsic to literature. Despite Amis' assertion, the writers do not write about what is going on but about the impact that those events have on their characters.

Incredibly Close (2005) by Jonathan Sofran Foer, *The Good Priest's Son* (2005) by Reynolds Price, *The Emperor's Children* (2006) by Claire Messud, *The Whole World Over* (2006) by Jay McInerney, *A Day on the Beach* (2007) by Helen Schulman, *The Submission* (2011) by Amy Waldman and many others. Some of the writers tried to find ways to represent the traumatic experiences through experimental literary techniques, introducing images to capture the horror of these experiences without simplifying it.

Writing about 9/11 has been and will always be difficult. Many writers found themselves in the position of choosing between the political novels and the novels of psychic trauma in their attempt of dealing with this event. Critics have also took into consideration this division when referring to the 9/11 fiction. Richard Gray considers that there are two types of 9/11 novels: those which domesticated the crisis and introduced it into the realm of the familiar environment and those that offer a transnational context and extend the psychic trauma to further levels, including the political, historical and cultural perspective (Gray, 2011, p. 17). In his analysis, Richard Gray selects novels like *The Writing on the Wall, The Emperor's Children, A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006) by Ken Kalfus, *The Good Life* (2006) by Jay McInerney and *The Falling Man* (2006) by Don De Lillo to represent the first type of 9/11 novels while novels like Deborah Eisenberg's *Twilight of the Superheroes* (2007), Moksin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) and Andre Dubus III's *The Grandfather of the Last Days* (2008) are included in the second type of the same categorization.

All these texts have revealed the major difficulties that the writers had when representing the traumatic event; but, aside from *Windows on the World* and the poem and film *Out of the Blue*, the event itself is mostly absent from an explicit description. This fact could be considered possible mainly because this *looking away* from the vivid reality is in fact a tacit acknowledgement made by these writers for whom the traumatic event is beyond any literary representation or visual symbolism which makes the fictional representation (literary or cinematographic) become unnecessary (Randall, 2011, p. 8).

The use of the tragic event only as a background for the narratives is common for most of these texts, because each case of psychic trauma, individual or collective, which is revealed in a literary form should be universal. The accurate description of the 9/11 attacks is not meant for literature, but for journalism and media. Unlike journalism or/and media, the value of these novels is not given by the ability to provide information, historical context and immediacy. As a form of

artistic representation, literature is independent from history, it may create and use certain rules but it also may function as an alternative to history (Salván, 2009, p. 208).

Don De Lillo's Falling Man *as Psychic Trauma Novel*

In his writings, Don De Lillo has dealt with both types of trauma, personal or psychic and collective or cultural. He used different genres to express the individual and the collective consequences of the tragic event. The essay *In the Ruins of the Future* was written only after three months after the attacks. In this case, the author focuses on the cultural consequences that the traumatic event may have on people and on the nation. A combination between psychic trauma narrative, based on the accidental murder of one of the main character's friend, and cultural trauma generated by the cold war in the United States of America can be found in *Underworld* published in 1997. The novel *Falling Man* deals mainly with the psychological consequences of the traumatic event on few individuals.

Different from journalism and media, De Lillo's novels offer new perspectives upon the 9/11 attacks. His writings could reenact the traumatic effects of those tragic moments in the mind of the survivors. In order to overcome the psychic trauma that haunts their lives, the individuals need to assimilate the event in their personal history, accessing the traumatic memory and inserting the event in their existing mental scheme. Their purpose is to turn the traumatic memory into narrative memory through the process of narrating the events. They have to become able to use the language in order to describe what happened. The same process, the one of verbalizing the traumatic events, can be found in *Falling Man* where several characters are trying to turn their traumatic memory into narrative memory. The struggle between the characters' need to deny the event and delay the narration and their urge to know and to speak up represents one of the major themes of the novel. In fact, the whole text is a literary representation of the characters' struggle with their memory ready to reveal what happened inside the towers but impossible to narrate just because the psychic trauma was not assimilated and thus remains beyond the bounds of language. This struggle affects not only the individuals but also the narrative itself.

The novel *Falling Man* deals with 9/11 tragic events but the literary strategy the author chose is not a traditional one which proved to be inadequate for showing the effects of the psychic trauma on certain characters; it is a strategy based on fragmentation, repetition and inter-textuality which are more appropriate to present the chaotic aspects of traumatic experiences. The narrative contains

three main parts, each of them being named after a character:[10] Bill Lawton, Ernst Hechinger and David Janiak. Being narrated in the third person, the text shifts from one perspective to another, mostly from Lianne and Keith but also from Hammad, one of the terrorists, and Florance, one of the survivors. The novel is almost circular. It opens with the moment when Keith Neudecker was walking away from the towers, only few minutes after the collapse of the first tower, and ends with the same character coming out on the street, escaping from the burning tower. The author's intention is to relieve the past through compulsively repeated words or phrases, repetitive actions and images, nightmares and flashbacks in a similar way as the traumatic mind would reveal itself. In fact, it is accurate to agree that the traumatized minds of the characters shape the entire narrative. The description of Keith's state of mind is given as a narrative disruption:

> *He used to want to fly out of self-awareness, day and night, a body of raw motion. Now he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 66)

Considering that repetitions, symbolizations, re-enactments and physical suffering are able to replace memory in trauma fiction, in De Lillo's novel they become literary techniques used to reveal the actions, thoughts and reactions of the main characters in the days, months and years after the traumatic event (Vickroy, 2002, pp. 30-33). It is the case of Keith and Lianne. For example, Keith's programme of physical exercises for his wrist also helps him control the unconnected images that spring into his mind like the chaos. He continues to repeat the exercises even when his wrist is fine turning this repetition into a form of mental therapy. The repetition seems it would never end, since Keith still does the old exercise after three years later, counting the seconds needed for the exercise, five seconds each time, and the days after the collapse of the Twin Towers.

> *He would need an offsetting discipline, a form of controlled behavior, voluntary, that kept him from shambling into the house hating everybody.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 143)

[10] The critic Joseph Conte sustains that the names of the characters share the attribute of metonomasia sine they have been altered to fit certain purposes. He claims that Bill Lawton represents the anglicized form of Osama bin Laden, Ernst Hechinger is in fact the real name of Martin Ridnour, a former German activist, and David Janiak stands for the real name of the artist known as Falling Man (Conte, 2011, p. 569).

Because of the memory lapses, while in hospital, Lianne was asked to count down from one hundred by sevens and she continues to do so at home admitting that the repetition brings her comfort.

> *It made her feel good, the counting down, and she did it sometimes in the day's familiar drift, walking down a street, riding in a taxi. It was her form of lyric verse, subjective and unrhymed, a little songlike but with a rigor, a tradition of fixed order, only backwards, to test the presence of another kind of reversal, which a doctor nicely named retro-genesis.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 188)

Both Keith and Lianne are looking for specific patterns in order to re-shape their identity and lives. The repetitions they continue to do seem to provide them a certain structure in their chaotic thoughts. Along with these repetitions, Keith finds in poker another structure because of the guiding principles of the game which he considers easy interludes of dream logic. Lianne does the same when she chooses to go to church three times a week for the regular congregants.

> *They'd established a pattern, these three, or nearly so, and then others entered and the mass began.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 234)

A clearer structure could be found in Hammad's life, one of the terrorists who hijacked the plane that crashed into Keith's tower. He has a previously established pattern to follow and for him most of the things were very well defined. On a certain level, there is a similarity among Hammad's narrative, Keith's obsession with poker and Lianne's regular mass attendance: they all share a common need for rules, structures and patterns.

The same need for structure is to be found in the whole narrative and even in small fragments. For example, in a single sentence, describing the situation inside the plane in the minutes just before the crash, two of the main characters, Keith and Hammad, are linked together following a narrative pattern:

> *A bottle fell off the counter in the gallery, on the other side of the aisle, and he (Hammad) watched it roll this way and that, a water bottle, empty, making an arc one way and rolling back the other, and he watched it spin more quickly and then skitter across the floor an instant before the aircraft struck the tower, heat, then fuel, then fire, and a blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 239)

On a larger level, the same structure links the opening moment, which describes the scene in which Keith leaves the towers, with the final moment which refers to the same scene but with few seconds before.

Besides the repetitions, there are also symbolic images[11] which play an important role in the trauma process and in its representation in *Falling Man*. According to Luckhurst, traumatized persons see intrusive images and also have recurrent dreams and nightmares which are meant to replace narrative memory in a traumatized mind. More than that, the psychic registration of trauma may reside in the image which functions as a symbol. (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 147) Following this point of view, the well-known images of the 9/11 attacks that open the novel achieve the function of symbols:

> *It was not a street anymore, but a world, a time and a space of falling ash and near night. He was walking north through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands, a woman with a shoe in each hand running past. They ran and fell some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down round them and there were people taking shelter under cars.* (De Lillo, 2007, p. 3)

The power of the image just described lies in the fact that it symbolizes the individual frozen in a free fall, like the traumatic memory frozen in the individual's mind which is no longer able to integrate the traumatic experience into memory, mainly because it lacks a form of reference and narrative. Similarly, the image of free falling[12] becomes the key symbol in the novel, standing for the falling through time, space and memory. The image of falling ashes substitutes Keith's own disintegration as an individual. He can no longer voice his feelings, he can no longer adapt to his new life, to his new identity and to a new reality which he cannot recognize and thus prefers to lose his time playing poker in Las Vegas, but the image still returns in his mind as flashbacks:

> *These were the days after and now the years, a thousand heaving dreams, the trapped man, the fixed limbs, the dream of paralysis, the gasping man, the dream of asphyxiation, the dream of helplessness*. (De Lillo, 2007, p. 230)

In *Falling Man* the focus is on visual images rather than on narrative. Traumatic memory cannot be fixed on a linguistic level but on an iconic and/or symbolic one. It is non-verbal, context-free and non-narrative (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1995, pp. 160-62). The novel reflects this type of memory through imaged, repeated and fragmented episodes. Thus, traumatic memory uses images

[11] Some of 9/11 narratives contain literally inserted images. It is the case of Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredible Close*.

[12] This image makes reference to the photograph known as *The Falling Man* taken by Richard Drew and published on the page seven of *The New York Times* on September the 12th 2001. The same photograph was further reproduced in lots of newspapers all over the world.

which re-interprets and transcends the traumatic events in order to find a way to understand them. It is the example of the image representing the shirt which falls down out of the smoke in the air. This image functions as a substitute for the real image of a falling man which Keith interpreted as a falling shirt revealing his incapacity of incorporating the image in a normal narrative memory, causing his cognitive and emotional paralysis. Unlike Keith, Lianne needs art to come to terms with the images that haunt her mind and that are freed through Giorgio Morandi's still lives. She tries to interpret the meaning behind the performance of the artist that re-enacts the image of falling people from the Twin Towers. Trauma can be translated and understood via art, stated Ann Kaplan (2005, p. 19). Although it does not provide answers, art may help to work through the pain that trauma causes while the wound is open. This is what Lianne does, uses the painting and the performance as mediators of her own pain.

The two main characters, Keith and Lianne, represent the two sides of the same coin: the one who fails and the one who almost succeeds in the process of overcoming the individual trauma. Their frozen identity remains somewhere between the traumatic memory and the narrative memory. The repetitions, the symbols of the images and the acts of re-enactment the traumatic experiences in order to surpass them represent psychological strategies meant for restoring the traumatic self. At the same time, they could be considered literary strategies for a narrative that shares the same way of functioning as the individual's mind. *Falling Man* intends to describe the chaotic aspects of trauma as they are revealed by a tormented mind and highlighted through literary strategies in a narrative text. All the shifts in time and memory, all the visual images, the textual gaps, repetitions, narrative disruptions, the entire variety of subject changing points of view render the disorienting positions of the characters who have experienced tragic events.[13]

The novel presents trauma by internalizing the rhythms processes and uncertainties of traumatic experience within the characters' sensibilities, structures and identity (Vickroy, 2002, p. 4). Trauma was introduced in the human consciousness as a temporal dislocation and anamnesis disrupting the individual's sense of identity.

> *What is produced in the post-war world is, then, a disrupted temporality in which the dynamic relation between past, present and future which we saw as intrinsic to modernity is forced to co-exist with elements of frozen time: a lost past, a traumatic present and a blighted future*. (Armstrong, 2005, p. 19)

[13] Both, Keith and Lianne act out their trauma but prove to be incapable to distinguish between past, present and future, feeling their perception of time altered by the tragic events.

In the world offered by the novel *Falling Man* the identity of the characters becomes fluid and loses its form. It has to be re-integrated within the narrative memory together with all the other traumatic moments. The ambiguous ending shows an atmosphere of suspension, reflecting the same inability of assimilating the traumatic reality. This unclear manner of closing a novel may be another literary strategy meant to determine the readers become witnesses of the tragic events and fully understand the characters' trauma.

Conclusion

The novel *Falling Man* as a psychic trauma narrative reflects the effects of a traumatic event on the individual. The 9/11 attacks[14] affected not only those who were directly implicated in the event but also society at large, disrupting the attachments between self and others. The very same event is impossible to be assimilated and integrated in the individual's mind since he or she can no longer take as a reference his or her identity. The individual wounds tend to re-shape the nation's sense of identity just as it tends to re-shape the victim's identity. The literary strategies used in the novel reflect, at a formal level, the traumatic effects of trauma on individuals. The narrative does not represent trauma as a cultural subject matter but it re-enacts the influence that the events had on victims' traumatic memory. The novel is using repetitions, fragmentations, temporal disruptions, symbolic images, shifting perspectives as literary strategies for a particular trauma aesthetic. Thus it renders the manner a traumatic mind works, trying to re-shape reality and identity, being based on the contradiction which states that traumatic experiences resist verbalization and representation. This contradiction causes the rejection of the linear representation of traumatic events in trauma fiction and the use of unsettling temporal structures and various ways of indicating referentiality, figuration and indirection become more appropriate and specific for 9/11 psychic trauma novels.

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[14] As a mediated event, the 9/11 attacks were traumatic more in the symbolic way and rather for what it represented than for the actual damage that it caused. (Redfield, 2009, p. 4)

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A Critique of "Under the Surface: Fracking, Fortunes, and the Fate of the Marcellus Shale"

Review

Tom WILBER

Under the surface: fracking, fortunes and the fate of the Marcellus Shale. (2012): Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

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"Under the Surface: Fracking, Fortunes, and the Fate of the Marcellus Shale" by Tom Wilber presents a thorough and original account of the fracking industry in and around the Marcellus Shale. The author draws on his journalistic experience, traveling back and forth between Northern Pennsylvania and Southern New York, to trace the development of the shale gas industry, as well as its social, political, economic and environmental implications.

In Chapter 1, Wilber begins his investigative journey in the small community of Dimock, Pennsylvania. Through the stories of locals such as the Carters and the Lockharts, Wilber creates a contrast between Dimock before and after the arrival of landmen, a foreshadowing element which develops in later chapters. After discussing the tactics used by oil industry representatives to acquire drilling rights, Chapter 2 focuses on community efforts which spawn across Pennsylvania and New York to educate landowners and level the playing field in their negotiations with the landmen, the agents employed by gas companies to secure leases of mineral rights and land for drilling. This chapter features characters Jackie Root in Pennsylvania and Arshur Terwilliger in New York State who spearhead movements in their respective regions to unveil the suspicious practices of newly arrived landmen. Chapter 3 takes us back to Dimock where the "Gold Rush" of Shale gas is fully in motion, and the animosity between landowners and energy companies continues to accrete. The epitome of this conflict is embodied by Ken

Ely, an early supporter of gas development whose interactions with Cabot Oil in his property escalate to a formal complaint with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The role of the DEP takes center stage in this chapter, as both the exponential growth of the industry and the rising concerns of Dimock residents turn to the governmental institution for support. Chapter 4 sees Wilber delve deeper into the scientific scholarship surrounding fracking and the Marcellus Shale. Wilber presents arguments from pro-fracking and anti-fracking parties and dissects their claims, allowing these findings to speak for themselves yet confronting those which he believes are invalid with examples that support his rebuttal. Chapter 5 picks up the thread of Chapters 1 and 2, heading back to Dimock and zooming in on a group of "accidental activists" organizing to take a stance against the unlawful practices of oil companies in their backyard. On the other side of the border, Wilber attends a pro-fracking rally in New York State and emphasizes the societal divide and partisanship that natural gas development spurred. Chapter 6 explores the political implications of the ongoing battle taking place in Dimock, taking a broader approach to the conflict and analyzing how a local debate had national ramifications. This chapter shifts the attention from individual residents to political organizations, politicians, and national agencies all entangled around the question of fracking in the Northeast corner of the U.S. In Chapter 7, Wilber continues to delve into the political and legal battles that spring at the national level regarding the development of the Marcellus Shale. He explores debates taking place in Congress, in the Departments of Environmental Protection in NY and PA, and finishes up the chapter where it all started: in Dimock. The final chapter of the book, Chapter 8, reigns in the national debate around natural gas development and focuses on two contrasting resolutions in New York State and Pennsylvania. In Cooperstown, NY, Wilber examines the small town's successful history of fighting back against industrial development. Much like the residents of Dimock, activists in Cooperstown band together and achieve a decisive victory in the courts of law impeding state regulatory laws from superseding the local zoning restrictions which formerly prevented industrial development in the region. Though residents of Cooperstown get their happy ending, things don't quite pan out the same way in Dimock. Wilber contrasts the local success in New York with the more controversial and disputed resolutions in Pennsylvania, where the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DEP fail to come through in their investigations against Cabot Oil. In the end the oil company ends up settling the dispute for an undisclosed yet unsatisfying amount and Wilber leaves the reader with the bitter taste of defeat.

In a field of research dominated by partisan arguments, Wilber's ability to establish a firm middle-ground makes this book a must-read for those looking to make an informed assessment on the advantages and drawbacks of hydraulic fracturing or "fracking."

This even-handed approach is made possible by the vast array of voices he incorporates into the narrative, allowing landmen, geologists, politicians and landowners to make their case. On the pro-fracking part, Wilber mentions several notable people: geologist Terry Engelder (affiliated with Pennsylvania State University), James Underwood (a landman employed to secure leases of mineral rights and land for drilling), Ken Komoroski (a spokesman for Cabot Oil and Gas), Scott Kurkowski (a lawyer representing natural gas companies), Timothy Considine & Robert Watson (authors of the "Penn State Report") and Tom Corbett (former governor of Pennsylvania who ran on a platform aiming at reducing taxes and regulations on natural gas industry). The main motivations beyond the pro fracking side included: the fight against fuel dependency, the decline of other extractive industries, important economic opportunities or "avenues of wealth" and, above all, the promise to bring new jobs to destitute areas.

On the side of moderates and centrists, several key actors are cited: geologist Pearl Gertrude Sheldon, John Holko, the secretary of the New York branch of the Independent Oil and Gas Association, New York Governor David Paterson, Jackie Root and Victoria Switzer, both activists trying to bring the parties involved together to find solutions. The main motivations of those taking a moderate stance included the desire to uncover the truth about the process and to achieve fairness and transparency. Other goals involved accountability and rightful compensation from companies, an optimistic desire to get the best of both worlds (economic developments and environmental conservation) and a great interest in finding fuel alternatives to fight climate change, where fracking has been seen as a promising solution.

Lastly, the anti-fracking debate is also supported by important players: community leaders such as Ashur Terwilliger and Chris Denton, Ken Ely, a landowner involved in a series of negative events with the oil company, the Sautner family, who had to move away from Dimock, Michelle Kenned, the author of a local ban on shale oil drilling, the geologist Tony Ingraffea who believes that shale gas may even be worse than other fossil fuels, Walter Hang (environmentalist and pollution researcher) who documented the dangers of drilling by looking into government investigations, newspapers, and unofficial

complaints. Their main motivations had to do with the goal to protect drinking water supplies, species and ecosystems and to avoid hazardous spills, explosions or leaks. Furthermore, in central and southern New York state many communities and businesses rely on tourism and the natural landscape and did not want to risk their livelihood to the environmental consequences of fracking.

Regardless of industry officials' resistance to interviews, Wilber recognizes this gap and goes above and beyond to make up for it, further cementing his role as a reporter. A factor which differentiates "Under the Surface" from other books on the subject is how seamlessly Wilber interweaves personal accounts, making a story about geological formations seem novelesque. "Under the Surface" achieves what many books in its category have failed at: to create a comprehensive and unbiased guide to understand fracking and its implications. Wilber provides a voice for those to whom fracking impacts the most, and helps the reader understand the different facets which natural gas development affects. From an organizational standpoint Wilber's narrative flows seamlessly between Pennsylvania and New York, establishing a clear channel between the two locations. The final chapter is a testament to Wilber's skill as a writer with his decision to conclude with the events in Dimock rather than in Cooperstown. This offers some insight into the author's desire to create a sense of defeat and unfairness in the reader's mind.

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