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# ENGLISH STUDIES

at NBU



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## About the journal

### Aims & scope

English Studies at NBU (ESNBU) is an entirely open access, double-blind peer reviewed academic journal published by the Department of English Studies, New Bulgarian University in one or two issues per year in print and online.

ESNBU welcomes original research articles, book reviews, discussion contributions and other forms of analysis and comment encompassing all aspects of English Studies and English for professional communication and the creative professions. Manuscripts are accepted in English, with occasional articles in other languages. Translations of published articles are generally not accepted.

### Submission and fees

Submissions are accepted from all researchers; authors do not need to have a connection to New Bulgarian University to publish in ESNBU. Submission of the manuscript represents that the manuscript has not been published previously, is not considered for publication elsewhere and will not be submitted elsewhere unless it is rejected or withdrawn.

There are no submission fees or publication charges for authors.

### Copyright

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### Peer review policy

All manuscripts are refereed, with research manuscripts being subject to a double-blind peer review process taking a maximum of four weeks. Our peer reviewers are asked to follow the [Peer Review Policy](#) and the [COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#) when handling papers for ESNBU.

### Publication ethics and conflict of interest

The editorial team subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and is dedicated to following the [COPE Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#) and the [COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors](#).

All authors, peer reviewers, and members of the editorial team must disclose any association that poses a Conflict of Interest in connection with manuscripts submitted to ESNBU. Our [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) applies to all material published in ESNBU including research articles, reviews, and commentaries.

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to another issue of *English Studies at NBU*.



I gladly present five new articles in this issue. We are becoming truly international with authors from Nigeria, Slovenia, Belgium and Bulgaria who covered topics such as Culture, EFL methodology, Linguistics, Nigerian poetry and African American slavery Literature.

I wish you good reading.

On a different note, ESNBU entered ICI Index Copernicus World of Journals with full-text, metadata and reference lists. The Journal passport is here: <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=50139>

ORCID iDs for name disambiguation is fast catching on among our authors. You can find out more and register for an ORCID iD at <https://orcid.org>.

We keep acknowledging our reviewers' efforts on Publons.com. You can see our journal page on Publons here <https://publons.com/journal/34145/english-studies-at-nbu>.

Publishing the References in the abstract web page of each paper is ensuring greater visibility of the journal.

More reviewers now opt in for disclosing their names, which, we hope will invite discussion and post-publication reviews both on the web site and in the form of scholarly responses to already published articles.

As always, you are welcome to send us your comments or contact the authors or the editors for further dialogue. We look forward to getting feedback from you, and continue to welcome submissions for our upcoming issues. You can find out more about submitting a paper to ESNBU at our web site.

We keep posting news, updates and useful resources in the News section on the web site <http://www.esnbu.org>, so come back soon.

Finally, I would like to thank our authors, old and new reviewers and the entire editorial team for their help and support in the preparation of this issue.

Kind regards,

Stan Bogdanov, Managing Editor

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## Call for papers

### 2018 Special Themed Issue:

### "Translator and Interpreter Training in a Multilingual and Multicultural World: Issues and Methods"

The English Studies at NBU and the [Association of Translator and Interpreter Trainers](#) are planning a joint themed issue to address the current state and perspectives of translator and interpreter training in Southeast Europe and Russia. One of the key challenges we would like to discuss is how to ensure that universities adapt to rapidly changing societal and market conditions and produce the high-level professionals that the language industry needs. Other issues to consider:

- approaches to teaching translation and localization
- approaches to interpreter training
- the role of internships in language industry
- translation and interpreting competitions as a teaching tool
- teaching audiovisual translation
- the growing need for sign language interpreters
- the role of professional associations in translator and interpreter training
- training of trainers
- language training and language enhancement for students of translation and interpreting

#### Guest Editors:

**Marklen Konurbaev**, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

**Alina Pelea**, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

**Emilija Sarzhoska-Georgievska**, Ss. Cyril & Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of Northern Macedonia

**Ildikó Horváth**, ELTE University, Budapest, Hungary

**Viktor Ristani**, Tirana University, Tirana, Albania

Submissions may include empirical studies, essays, reflections, opinion papers and reviews.

**Deadline for submissions:** 30 September 2018

**Planned publication date:** December 2018

Check the [Submission requirements](#)

## BRIDGING DIFFERENCE THROUGH CLASSROOM MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Jason Blake

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### Abstract

Cultural misunderstandings often arise because of the unstated assumptions or “background books” that each of us has. In the classroom, such misunderstandings can make for uncomfortable moments, but they can also lead to fruitful teaching experiences for teacher and student alike. Using a variety of examples that arose while teaching a module called “Canadian Culture” at a Slovenian university, I argue that such moments – such as when students seem not to have heard what I think was a clear message or bit of information – the resulting cultural misunderstanding can be educationally rewarding. They force us to break out of the question-and-answer routine that is often a part of the teaching process.

**Keywords:** Canadian culture, classroom misunderstandings, cultural misunderstandings, mistranslation

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Anyone who learns a foreign language runs into misunderstandings. These misunderstandings can be of various types. They can be lexical, resulting from lack or misuse of vocabulary (such as when I complimented a Slovenian waiter on his “bradavica” /nipple/ rather than his “brada” /beard/); they can be phonetic (such as when a waiter looks quizzically at me whenever I try to order something in a language other than English); and sometimes, perhaps more disturbingly, they can be more broadly cultural. This last type occurs even when the speaker and the listener share a vocabulary, understand all the words and still cannot communicate smoothly. They both do and do not speak the same language.

It is this third type of miscommunication or cultural misunderstanding that is the focus of this paper. Beginning with a close examination of an obituary gone wrong and the cultural factors that led to that mistranslation, the article moves on to a more theoretical examination of messy cultural encounters that occur even when the differences between cultures are relatively minor, before offering a trio of classroom examples. Though the examples are derived from my own experience teaching Canadian culture in Slovenia, they should prove valid and useful for other European classrooms. Each of the examples I reproduce here interrupted the smooth flow of the classroom by introducing misunderstanding. My argument is that course-related cultural misunderstandings are often memorable and beneficial for learning. A silky smooth class does not necessarily mean much learning has been done; it is educationally rewarding to break out of the question-and-answer routine or planned discussions that govern many classes.

### **An Odd Obituary**

I will start with an obituary that lost or gained in its translation from an English-language source text into a Slovenian version that appeared in *Delo*, the leading Slovenian newspaper. My close reading of just a few lines will, I hope, show precisely the mechanisms which produce misunderstandings. The Toronto-born actor William Hutt died in 2007. As a July 3, 2007 *Delo* report read, “The Canadian stage actor [...], who died [...] in Ottawa at 87, ranked among the most respected [...] in the world, [and] in the view of some he was the greatest classical stage actor in the world.”<sup>1</sup> So far, so good, so

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<sup>1</sup> My back-translation. The original reads: “*Kanadski gledališki igralec William Hutt, ki je umrl za levkemijo v Ottawi, star 87 let, je sodil med najbolj spoštovane umetnike svoje zvrsti na svetu, po mnenju nekaterih je bil sploh največji klasični gledališki igralec na svetu.*”



accurate. But then came a cryptic line in the obituary: Hutt “insisted that actors speak in pure, *uncorrupted* Canadian English.” What is “uncorrupted Canadian English?” I wondered. Given the “uniformity of Canadian English from Ontario west to Vancouver Island” (Brinton & Fee, 2001, p. 425) and the widespread Canadian belief that we all speak English in the same way, this focus on linguistic corruption seemed odd. Moreover, it seemed an unusual point to focus on for a Slovenian audience. Why should Slovenian readers be concerned about potential subtleties of non-Standard Canadian English?

What the newspaper had printed was a cultural mistranslation of what novelist and former actor Timothy Finley had said about Hutt: “He was the first one among us [...] to insist on speaking [Shakespeare] in pure, unadulterated Canadian” (“Canada’s great classical actor,” 2007). Hutt’s view was that Canadian actors should perform in their regular accent and not imitate a foreign one – that is, they should not pretend they were from London, England, if they were from London, Ontario. As Hutt biographer Keith Garebian notes, Hutt “dared to be unabashedly Canadian” (1988, p. 344). This was no small feat at a time when Canadian actors would have been regarded as provincial and necessarily second-rate, not least because of their “non-English” accents. It appears that forty years ago, Canadian audiences were complicit in this mimicry: “The colonial mentality in Canada decreed praise for English accents, but Hutt [...] resisted this denaturing” (1988, p. 344). Hutt’s immediate aim, however, was not only to achieve fame for himself by speaking in his more natural accent, but to bring Shakespeare closer to Canadian audiences. In the vocabulary of translation theory, his aim was to domesticate the Bard on Canadian stages by rendering *King Lear* and *Hamlet* and so on in an accent his audience would more easily understand.

The Slovenian reader of the obituary, accustomed to the tradition of fine public speaking or “stage Slovenian”, would likely understand the phrase incorrectly. His or her comprehension of proper “Canadian” would be coloured by a least two bits of background information:

- a) The awareness of the Slovenian tradition of speaking “properly” on stage – using stage pronunciation or “standard pronunciation”. (This concern with so-called standard or proper speech is of course not limited to Slovenian stages; German theatre circles also train actors in the “*Bühnenaussprache*” or “*Bühnendeutsch*.”)

b) The tradition of using Slovenian words rather than loan-words ones in formal settings, such as at school.<sup>2</sup> The Slovenian reader would make use of this information to understand that Hutt preferred Canadians to use words such as “trunk” and “sidewalk” rather than the potentially misunderstood British words “boot” and “pavement”.

The *Delo* translation of the Hutt obituary is a distortion of the original meaning because it is overly determined by Slovenian previous knowledge and assumptions; hence the twisting of the phrase “pure, unadulterated Canadian English” into a Slovenian phrase that could be paraphrased as “local English, spoken the way it ‘should’ be on a public stage – in a way that by no means degrades Canadian English”.

On the other hand, my own critical reading of the Slovenian translation was coloured by 1) what I think I know about Canadian theatre traditions, and by 2) what I think I know about Slovenian language norms and traditions (a point to which I return in the conclusion). I begin with this example to point out the gnarled nature of so many cultural encounters – even if it is as simple and textual as me reading an obituary in Slovenian, being confused, stepping back and trying to think like what I deem is typical Slovenian thinking.

### **Messy Cultural Encounters**

When cultures meet, as they necessarily do in translations and, as we shall see, in the classroom, there is a temptation to establish a confrontation between *types* rather than individuals. Very often, discussions of cultural misunderstandings assume that an archetypal American (whatever that is) encounters an archetypal German (whatever that is). The German thinks the American is insincere because s/he smiles “too much” and s/he asks “How are you?” without listening much to the answer. The American thinks the German does not like her/him because s/he does not smile often and does not ask how s/he is. Each thinks the other is to “blame” for the conversational friction; and neither is entirely right.

The goal of courses on intercultural sensitivity is to help us navigate foreign waters by studying useful generalizations, perhaps even stereotypes. For example, a

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<sup>2</sup> This tradition of using “pure” Slovenian a tradition so strong that even the oft-used German-derived “luft” (for “zrak” – i.e. “air”) is omitted from Slovenian dictionaries, since they are (regarded as a “degradation of the language” (Reindl, 2008, p. 187).

recent guide to Bulgarian life informs the reader that “conformity is always the better policy” and that “if you want to succeed you should rely solely on yourself” (Tzvetkova, 2015, p. 36). For the manager coming fresh from New York and with visions of teamwork and originality, these pithy insights into the way Bulgarian business runs are surely a useful warning. However, if a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, a little bit of knowledge of cultural mores and habits can be perilous because, rather than mitigating culture shock, this newfound knowledge can intensify that shock. In the rest of this paper, I hope to show how this inadvertent misunderstanding that is born not of ignorance but of knowledge comes to be.

If I am speaking to a Slovenian, experience tells me that I can be more direct. The Slovenia version of the Culture Smart<sup>3</sup> series informs me that Slovenian conversation “is more direct and less irony-filled” (Blake, 2011, pp. 82–83), whereas Canadians are more reserved, “courteous and mild mannered” – to the point that “if you make a social blunder, you may never find out because no one will mention it!” (Lemieux, 2016, p. 88). On its own, each of these generalizations is useful foreknowledge ahead of a visit to a foreign country. But what happens when the direct Slovenian hears a should-be indirect and understated Canadian verbally attacking him? This can be a recipe for further misunderstanding, even an escalation of tension caused by a cultural understanding of how the other should be behaving.

Of course, the phrase “cross-cultural misunderstanding” provides a convenient out and a path to reconciliation, as George Bernard Shaw neatly shows in his 1923 play *Saint Joan*. In one scene he highlights the use of an acknowledged linguistic misunderstanding as a means of defusing a tense situation. When an English chaplain calls a French cleric a “traitor,” the bishop threatens him with hellfire. The Earl of Warwick intervenes: “I apologize to you for the word used by [my countryman]. It does not mean in England what it does in France. In your language traitor means betrayer: one who is perfidious, treacherous, unfaithful, disloyal. In our country it means simply one who is not wholly devoted to our English interests.” The Frenchman, Peter Cauchon, issues an immediate apology (“I am sorry: I did not understand”) and “*subsides into his chair with dignity*”. For at least a few moments in *Saint Joan*, cultural translation and the admission that cultural misunderstandings are inevitable but surmountable keeps tension at bay.

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of convenience, I quote from the Bulgarian, Canadian and Slovenian editions in the Culture Smart! series, a book series which aims to help reduce cultural misunderstandings and missteps.

In the language and culture classroom there is little pedagogical value in keeping tension at bay by writing off course-based misunderstandings as intercultural mix-ups, much less in subsiding into our teacherly chairs with Cauchon-like “dignity”. Nevertheless, the temptation not to see potential sources of misunderstanding is acute because misunderstandings are disturbing for the teacher: they interrupt the comfortable flow – the serve-and-volley – of question-and-answer classroom rituals. They can, however, be useful for transmitting day-to-day cultural knowledge; as I hope to show, they can effectively be put to use as a teachable moment.

Most of the literature on language teaching in cross-cultural situations focuses on major differences between cultures – such as is the case when one travels from the United States to teach English in China – or when people want to learn English but are politically wary of the countries that speak it.<sup>4</sup> As readers of a certain age will know, the political implications of teaching English behind the Iron Curtain were many; today, teaching English in Iraq is not a neutral, apolitical undertaking. Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter write in *Teaching Cross-Culturally* of the need to recognize one’s own cultural biases and that, “[o]nly by understanding the other-culture context can we identify appropriate alternatives for teaching that will have maximum effectiveness for student learning” (2003, p. 31). The model is obviously one of exchange rather than one-way trade in English. Their advice is crucial and valid but (one hopes) obvious to the point of banality for any teacher heading to another country to teach English.

Sandra Lee McKay reminds us in *Teaching English as an International Language* that “Selecting a form [of classroom task] that is not appropriate to the context can lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings” (2002, p. 74). For example, a language-learning exercise that involves minimal touching (such as tracing words on a classmate’s back or whispering in his/her ear) may not be socially acceptable in North America, where personal space is measured not in centimetres but in yards. Similarly, though humour is an effective means of encouraging participation and also enlightening students about cultural differences, as Kirsten Hempkin argues, one must be vigilant. She informs us that in parts of Asia a mother-in-law joke “may seem odd or indeed even inappropriate to someone from an Asian culture” (Hempkin, 2008, p. 172). At the same time,

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<sup>4</sup> As Robert Phillipson points out, “Linguistic imperialism was manifestly a feature of the way nation-states privileged one language, and often sought actively to eradicate others, forcing their speakers to shift to the dominant language” (2013, p. 57). This “linguistic imperialism” is not limited to postcolonial contexts.

examining what is odd or culturally inappropriate is a very useful inroad to examining foreign mores, values, and traditions.

These observations on teaching outside of one's home country emphasize the now-obvious need to learn about the foreign culture, not to feel superior, while reminding teachers that they have to be a "cross-cultural communicator", since this will "help educators teaching abroad avoid pitfalls" (Slethaug, 2007, p. 11). The vocabulary in such guides is slightly fear-inducing, as the teacher is warned about "pitfalls" and concerns about being deemed "not appropriate", "odd or indeed inappropriate". It all sounds very dangerous indeed.

### **Minor Differences**

For a Canadian, teaching in central Europe is cross-cultural, but only to a point. It is difficult to speak of a "culture shock" or "culture clash", when arriving in continental Europe from Canada. Cars are driven on the same side of the street, the metric system is in use, and even the cuisine is relatively familiar, snake-free and not overly spicy. Central European students might be less chatty in the classroom, but by the time young Slovenians or Bulgarians arrive at university, they will have had about a decade of fairly rigorous English language instruction, often with a heavy emphasis on grammar, that has been supplemented by hundreds of hours of *Game of Thrones* and *American Idol*<sup>5</sup> and whatever the latest reality show is.

European students' familiarity with recent movie stars and sitcoms makes teaching relatively easy in terms of making connections. One can ask students to, for example, examine stereotypes about Canadians perpetrated in the show *How I Met Your Mother*. Informed by especially American or globalized popular culture, most European students enter university with fairly entrenched views on America.<sup>6</sup> And there's the rub. Slovenian students' comfort with English and American culture can prove unsettling *precisely because minor cultural differences often go unnoticed*. What is more, the popular culture knowledge that students do possess camouflages the knowledge they lack.

To provide a trivial but telling lexical example, a few weeks ago, the word "mullet" came up in class and, to my surprise, every single one of the fifteen students

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<sup>5</sup> In Slovenia, foreign-language television is sub-titled, not dubbed, so students have grown up with (usually American) English in their ears. I thank Diana Yankova for informing me about the teaching situation in Bulgaria.

<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, they are less familiar with Canadian culture, often regarding it as a minor variation on American culture.

knew that the word designates a very unfortunate haircut where, as the Urban Dictionary informs us, “the front is cut trim, but the back is long, left wild and often uncut. Even when the back is cut, it is still longer than the front.” Another example: when I wanted to explain the acronym “PSYCH 101” to a group of first-year students, it was clear many of them already knew the associations and connotations of what is perceived as an easy course. They knew, perhaps from films or maybe pop music, or even comedy routines, that “Psychology 101” is a course that many freshmen take even if they major in Spanish or History or Economics. In Slovenia it is remarkable that students know these little facts and details like “mullet” and jokes behind “PSYCH 101.”

But there is a *but* to this abundance of knowledge: despite the students’ acute awareness of contemporary slang, there is not necessarily an accompanying background understanding. The students may know “PSYCH 101” and the idea that “101” is the designation given to introductory university courses in North America, but many are not familiar with what a liberal arts college is (i.e., a small university that imparts general education in a variety of areas). Thus, discerning or divining what students *don’t know* on the basis of what they do know is difficult precisely because they often seem versed in American culture. However, as I show in the next section, the common cultural bedrock on which conversation depends is not as uniform or solid as it first appears. In contrast, if you are teaching the History of the English Language or American Ethnic Literature, you can safely assume students know little at all about the topic. You can safely start from scratch without running the risk of being pedantic or redundant. Finding the path between redundancy and information overload is difficult.

### **Three Examples**

In the balance of this paper, I provide three specific examples of cross-cultural misunderstandings from my own classrooms. These examples are illustrative in and of themselves, but they will also prove useful for teachers who can put adapt or adopt them for their own classes. Each example is taken from a third-year BA Canadian module that consists of a literary and a general cultural component. The cultural part of the module is a year-long introductory course containing a bit of history, a bit of geography, music and the visual arts, humour, the various education systems, and so on.

When discussing education in Canada, I have the students put together a four-year English programme from the University of Toronto. This fun exercise allows

students to see how different studying English in Canada is compared to doing the same at their home university. I distribute a list of English courses offered, along with these requirements for a specialist degree:

1. At least 1.0 FCE from Group 1 (Theory, Language, Methods)
2. At least 1.0 FCE from Group 2 (Canadian and Indigenous North American Literatures)
3. At least 1.0 FCE from Group 3 (American and Transnational Literatures)
4. At least 3.0 FCE from Group 4 (British Literature to the 19th Century)
5. At least 1.5 FCE from Group 5 (Literature since the 18th Century)<sup>7</sup>

Each year I carried out this exercise, the Slovenian students were surprised, even stunned at what studying English at a large Canadian university entails. Their questions and comments included the following: “You can get a degree in English without passing *Syntax*?” “There’s *no* formal grammar class? How do you learn to write?” “You only need 10 English courses out of 20 to be an English ‘Specialist’?” and, most tellingly, “You only have 5 courses a year? We have 15! University over there is easier!”

Based on their questions, you can easily divine that grammar is a great concern to these students and that they spend far more time in the classroom, even at the university level. No matter how many times I tell them that the students in these courses often meet for three hours a week, that there is (often) much more reading involved, generally more reading to be done at home, more discussion in class, more essays to write, and firm deadlines, they tend to hear primarily what they want to hear – five courses is less than fifteen courses, and the grass is greener on the other side of the Atlantic.

But why is there such a reluctance to hear the literal meaning?<sup>8</sup> Much of what we hear and process is determined by our expectations and assumptions, by our cognitive horizons. Umberto Eco touches on this point in an essay from *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*. There he explains that Marco Polo saw unicorns on his travels. Why did Marco Polo see the mythical creatures? Because he had heard of them in his literal and figurative background books. “[T]he influence of these background books,” writes Eco, “is such that, irrespective of what travellers discover and see, they will interpret and

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<sup>7</sup> The programme list is available at: <http://www.english.utoronto.ca/undergrad/programs.htm>.

Slovenian students, who have relatively little freedom of choice in selecting courses, are surprised to see courses such as “The Graphic Novel” (ENG235H1), “Queer Writing” (ENG273Y1), “Fantasy and Horror” (ENG239H1) and “The Digital Text” (ENG287H1).

<sup>8</sup> This reluctance or inability to hear is of course not limited to a second or third language.

explain everything in terms of these books” (p. 54). We align what we see with what we expect to see, which is why if we head to a country expecting to see generosity, we will be pre-conditioned to spotting the same. This pre-conditioning is why the young Venetian saw beautiful black unicorns with heads like “wild boars” and “hooves [...] as big as elephants” (p. 54). In Eco’s portrayal, Marco Polo was naïve, had not read much, was ignorant of the rhinoceros, and was in search of adventure and wondrous beings.

But the students I encounter, as mentioned, are not “naïve” – they arrive at university with firm ideas about (especially) American culture, including firm movie-inspired ideas about what it is like to study at a North American university; of course, that does not mean that they will shed their Slovenian background books. If there is any sort of discussion or interaction in the classroom, we teachers pick up signals – if someone looks confused, maybe we should repeat or rephrase a concept, or use a synonym, and so on. Those are the easy cases.

Then there are the times when an innocent question shatters your illusions of a having delivered a smoothly effective lecture. For example, I once taught a class on sport in Canada, which too often comes down to ice hockey. In my hubris, I thought I had finely explained, among other things, national sporting symbols, so-called “90-minute nationalism”, and the widespread belief that one is actively participating in nationhood by watching sports on television. When I asked if there were any questions, this painful dialogue ensued (I reproduce it in full in order to reproduce also the extent of the misunderstanding):

Student: “Yes. Where do they keep the hooligans?”

Me: “What?”

Student: “You know, where do the fans fight?”

Me: “They don’t... the tickets are too expensive ... and there’s no tradition of fighting in the hockey stands ...”

Student: “Ah, they fight out on the streets!”

The initial question and my subsequent confusion indicated a massive cultural gap I had failed even to see, much less bridge. Obviously the students had taken a European football template; they had, understandably, assumed that because mass sport look much the same all over the world, and because mass sport can be a site of fan violence, there must be hooligans in hockey culture. Hockey is a fairly violent sport; therefore there must be violence among spectators. The logic is almost syllogistically sound.



Though the class was not as smooth as it might have been, this misunderstanding about North American fan culture gave rise to fruitful discussion – in the metaphor of my title, the misunderstanding led to bridge-building between cultures. Because it was unplanned, we necessarily broke out of the repetitive role-playing that so often occurs in the language classroom: with martial enthusiasm, the teacher relates a series of questions, the students answer the questions, and the sense is that one has effectively learned. Like question-and-answer drills (“Did you go to the store?” “No, I *did not* go to the store.” “Did you go to the zoo?” “No, I *did not* go to the zoo.”), such questions can give the illusion of a smooth class and learning. Like grammar drills, sets of packaged cultural knowledge can be “highly repetitive, controlled, tedious and mind-numbing” (Johnson, 2017, p. 221). (“What is the national animal of Canada?” “The beaver is the national animal of Canada.” “How many provinces does Canada have?” “Canada has 10 provinces.” And so on.<sup>9</sup>).

My students will likely remember that confused classroom exchange about hooliganism and hockey; they will remember the simple question that led to it; and they will remember the natural conversation that ensued about different sporting norms in different countries. We broke out of the frontal, drill-like and automated pedagogical model and moved closer to “the real thing”, to what Keith Johnson calls “the other end of the spectrum”, where language is used for “holding conversations, having discussions” (Johnson, 2017, p. 221) and, in this case, probing into aspects of Canadian culture.

My final example is related to something that is particularly resonant in a post-socialist teaching context: high university tuition fees. Canadian tuition fees run to about 4000 euros, which is far less than many universities in the United States but still shockingly expensive for my students. There is a widespread belief among my students that paying to attend university means passing automatically and even getting high grades (this mentality is not absent in North America, of course). For many students, the market analogy is simple: paying tuition is a financial transaction that is somewhere between buying a hamburger and outright bribery. The student pays, it seems, not for the service of being educated but for the resulting degree and the various grades leading to that degree.

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<sup>9</sup> A further downside to a strictly fact-based approach to culture is that learners might be “left with a random collection of facts that describe the other culture” (Woods, 1994, p. 80); nevertheless, some basic knowledge of dates and names from history are crucial to understanding any culture.

Just how difficult it is to dismiss this (anti-)capitalist mentality became evident when I was grading a short test. A simple question was, “How many chances do you have to pass an exam or individual essay at a Canadian university?” (This question was in fact a pre-question to “Name one advantage and one disadvantage of this”.) The answer is *one*. At least a third of the students, who had prepared well for the test, replied, among other possibilities: “As many as you want.”; “Three.”; “One, but you have to be satisfied with your grade!” Each answer was wrong but understandably so. The students clearly combined their understanding of paying-for-education with their own experiences of having a few chances to pass an exam. They were unable to “un-think” their own university experience. Evidently, I had not devoted enough time to helping them rewrite their background books and to emphasizing what to me seemed a self-understood point about exam dates and grading in a Canadian university context.

As we all know, reflecting on another culture means reflecting also on one’s own culture. When I read the students’ surprising answers to what I had hoped to be a simple pre-question, I was forced to reflect on North American academic culture. I was also forced to recall an incident from my first year of teaching in Slovenia, when a student asked, “When can I retake the exam?” At some point somebody at my university must have told me that students can re-sit certain types of exams if they fail or even if they hope to earn a higher grade. Like my students who were confronting a different system, I neglected to listen to or to believe the information I had received. Coming from an Anglo-American university environment, I was certain that having one opportunity to pass a test was the “natural” way of educating students.

Several years after that experience, my views have become less entrenched – less archetypically Canadian or North American, you might say. I now think: if a student wants to re-sit an exam because s/he hopes to study more and receive a higher grade, why not let her/him? Knowledge acquisition and learning do not stop on May 14 just because that happens to be the exam date. This seemingly simple example about exam dates links back to the bridge in my title and also to the advice of Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter about the need to see one’s own cultural biases and to understand “the other-culture context” (2003, p. 31). As teachers, of course, we want our bridge to extend to the students, so they can walk along it on their path of learning. In an intercultural situation, however, the teacher and the students meet in the middle to exchange knowledge about cultures, background books and assumptions that would otherwise go unexamined.

## Conclusion

I started with an example of a cultural mistranslation in hopes of showing how cross-cultural misunderstandings can occur when unquestioned assumptions about one's own culture are stamped onto a foreign culture. At the outset, I focussed on the word "uncorrupted", which is the English for "*nepopačen*". Now I should make a confession: when I donned my Slovenian glasses, hoping to make sense of a peculiar sentence, I had assumed from the outset there was a mistake in the translation. Why else would I have misunderstood a Canadian topic? Having established that mistake, I sought out the Slovenian assumptions that would produce such a mistake. One of the dictionaries I consulted, much later, provided "unadulterated" as the English for "*nepopačen*". But I, looking for a cultural mistranslation as I played dress-up and double agent in the no man's land between languages and cultures, remained unaware of this tertiary dictionary entry. I was seeing what I wanted to see, doing precisely what I have accused my students of doing. At the same time, I have clearly remembered the Hutt obituary and the information about speaking Canadian English onstage precisely because of my initial misunderstanding. A smoother initial reading of that obituary would have results in forgotten water under the bridge.

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# ALICE IN THE WONDERLAND OF SCIENCE: INTERTEXTUAL FIGURES IN SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES

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## Abstract

Since numerous scientific and mathematical concepts can unsurprisingly be found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the book itself has been a great source of inspiration for many scientists. This paper gives an overview of how Alice finds her way into scientific articles. More precisely, it discusses intertextual figures that refer to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in a corpus of 29 scientific articles from disciplines including psychology, medicine or astrophysics. Results show that intertextual figures tend to be more explicit in the field of physics and medicine than those found in the field of psychology. Crucially, observations show that intertextual figures found in the collected scientific articles serve different purposes depending on the discipline that makes use of them.

*Keywords:* Alice in Wonderland, Intertextuality, Language for Specific Purposes.

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## Science and tales

Science has a long history of turning to literature to explain or name facts. For instance, in 1964, Gell-Mann and George Zweig realized that hundreds of particles could be integrated in a simpler system that contained only a few fundamental particles. The two scientists named those fundamental particles “quarks” in reference to a nonsense word used by James Joyce in the novel *Finnegans Wake* that says “three quarks for Muster Mark” (Joyce, 1939, p. 383). Later on, scientists even assigned flavors to quarks that correspond to their electric charges.

Another example comes from astrophysics. Astrophysicists named intermediate-mass black holes “goldilocks black holes” after the fairy tale *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* in order to show that those black holes are neither too small nor too big, just like Goldilocks trying to find objects of the right size in the bears’ house.

## Alice in scientific disciplines

Unsurprisingly, scientists have found great inspiration in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as well. Examples come from all sorts of disciplines ranging from psychology to physics. For instance, in psychiatry and psychology, some mental illnesses are described by drawing parallels with Wonderland: English psychiatrist John Todd coined the term “Alice in Wonderland Syndrome” (AIWS) to describe patients experiencing body image illusions involving distortions of size, mass, etc. Other examples from psychology make references to Tweedledum and Tweedledee or the rabbit hole as in title “Down the Rabbit Hole: Emergency Department Medical Clearance of Patients with Psychiatric Behavioral Emergencies” (Tucci, Siever, Matorin, & Moukaddam, 2015, p. 721).

The notion of Wonderland is also quite popular among mathematicians who use it in order to describe a specific mathematical system that they call “the Wonderland Theorem” that is “the main input” to “singular continuous spectrum” (Lenz & Stollmann, 2006, p. 203).

Mathematicians also make great use of the metaphor of symmetry with *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, as one can see in the following title of an article about probabilities: “Maximum Entropy and the Glasses You are Looking Through” (Grünwald, 2000, p. 238).

However, the concept of Wonderland is far from restricted to just one or two disciplines. The field of economics was also inspired by it in its description of a model of economic standards. Economists see “Wonderland” as a “compact, integrated economic, demographic and environmental model” that is “investigated using methods developed for studying critical phenomena” (Kohring, 2006, p. 214).

Other disciplines like biology and medicine make even more extensive use of Alice’s story: in gastroenterology, gastric flows are compared to the Mad Hatter’s tea party. In another example, medical advice is taken from the Mad Hatter (and not from the Caterpillar). The rabbit hole metaphor is also popular in biology and in the study of sleep, while Tweedledum and Tweedledee are used to express the duality of certain biological facts.

Last but not least, to physicists, Wonderland is a theorem and the rabbit hole becomes a black hole where Alice is taken as an example of what would happen to a person or an object falling into such a star. Yet, the most striking reference to Alice is the term “Quantum Cheshire Cat”, which will be described in more detail later on.

All those references point to the fact that *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* has clearly nurtured many scientific disciplines.

### **Types of references**

Different kinds of references can be found among the articles that are part of the corpus we worked on (we will talk about the corpus later on). The references can roughly be arranged either at the sentence level or at the word level.

At the sentence level, there are quotations; words literally “copied” from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Then there are what we may call plain references; in other words, mentions of Alice without direct quotation, like some sort of allusion. There are also comparisons such as analogies, which are comparisons between two things that are intended to show that the two are similar. Similes are another kind of comparison; they are phrases that describe something by comparing it to something else using the word “like” or “as” and finally contrasts, which show the opposition between two things.

At the word level, there are terms and what we may call portmanteau noun phrases. We define the latter as noun phrases made by combining the sound and meaning of other noun phrases. The following table shows examples for each kind of reference:

**Table 1**

*Examples of different types of references in the corpus*

Quotations	“ ‘Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin’, thought Alice, ‘but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!’ No wonder Alice is surprised. In real life, assuming that cats do indeed grin, the grin is a <i>property</i> of the cat –it makes no sense to think of a grin without a cat. And this goes for almost all physical properties.” (Aharonov, Popescu, Rohrlich, & Skrzypczyk, 2013, p. 2)
Plain references	“When Alice fell down the rabbit hole, she encountered a variety of strange characters: an infuriatingly enigmatic caterpillar, a Queen with an unhealthy proclivity for decapitation, and a hatter whose idea of catering left much to be desired.” (Bianchi, 2016: 1315)
Comparisons	“The ‘Cat’ is a photon in two possible locations, [L> and [R>. The ‘grin’ corresponds to its circular polarization state.” (Aharonov et al., 2013, p. 2)
- Analogies	
- Similes	
- Contrasts	
Terms	“The main tool we use goes back to Simon’s Wonderland Theorem.” (Lenz & Stollmann, 2006, p. 204)
Portmanteau noun phrases	“Air Medical Research Advice from the Mad Hatter” (Peterson, 1995, p. 53)

## Corpus

References were analyzed in a corpus of 29 texts. The texts were searched for in the *Science Direct* and *PubMed* databases and in the *New Scientist* magazine with the use of keywords such as “Alice”, “Wonderland”, characters’ names, Carroll’s name and the titles of chapters. Articles about literature or the book itself were excluded. The corpus consists of 5 articles about math and economy, 8 articles about medicine and biology, 4 articles about psychology and psychiatry, and finally 12 articles about physics and astrophysics. The corpus is 90,000 words long with each text being approximately 3,100 words long.



### **Definition of intertextuality**

Intertextuality can be defined as “a correlation between two or more texts, more precisely with one text being effectively present in the other one most of the time”<sup>1</sup> in a more or less explicit way (Genette, 1992, p. 8).

In *The Strategy of Forms*, Laurent Jenny (1976) draws a distinction between “works which are explicitly intertextual – such as imitations, parodies, citations, montages and plagiarisms – and those works in which the intertextual relation is not foregrounded” (Jenny cited by Allen, 2011, p. 109).

Koch also gives a definition of explicit and implicit intertextuality. According to him, on the one hand, explicit intertextuality is the reference to previous or further texts overtly made in a given text, such as the texts referred to in the review of the literature section and the list of references of an academic article (Koch, 2009, p. 146). On the other hand, implicit intertextuality is the reference to texts without indicating its source, such as jokes in which previous discourses are ironically referred to or criticized, relying only on the interlocutor’s familiarity with them (Koch, 2009, p. 145).

### **Distribution of references on an “explicitness continuum”**

Placing the different types of references on an explicitness continuum according to the definitions stated above, direct quotations with mention of Carroll’s book would be situated on the explicit side of the continuum, followed by quotations without bibliographical references to the book. The middle of the continuum would be occupied by references that are not treated as quotations by their authors probably because they are well known (for example, the title *curiouser and curiouser* that appears without quotation marks nor mention to the author), plain references to Alice’s adventures (without quotations, but evoking Wonderland or its characters) and comparisons. Finally terms and *portmanteau* references would be at the end of the implicit pole of the continuum because it is assumed that the reader knows the link to Alice’s world and therefore understands the meaning of the word or term in the new context. An illustration of the continuum is given below.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations to English are my own.

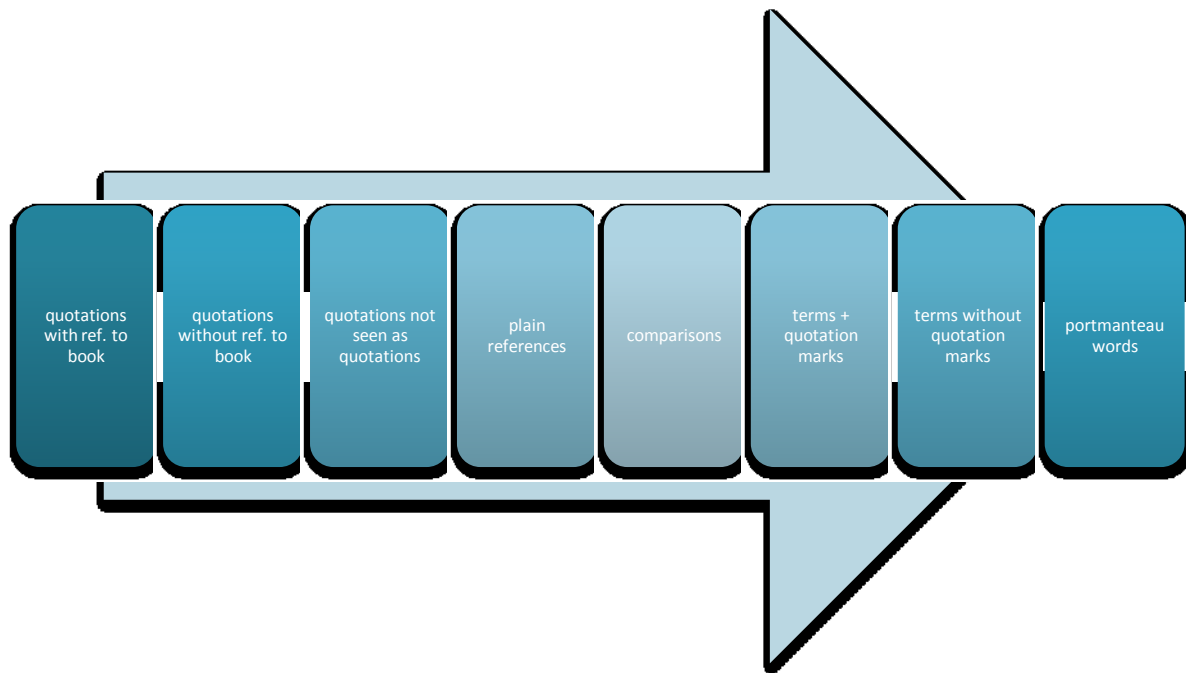


Figure 1: explicitness continuum

Looking closer at the weighted mean of each type of reference, it is clear that terms without quotation marks are the most used category in the corpus, with an average of 0.27 occurrences per 100 words. This type of reference is closely followed by plain references and then by quotations without direct mention of Carroll's book, as shown in the following graph.

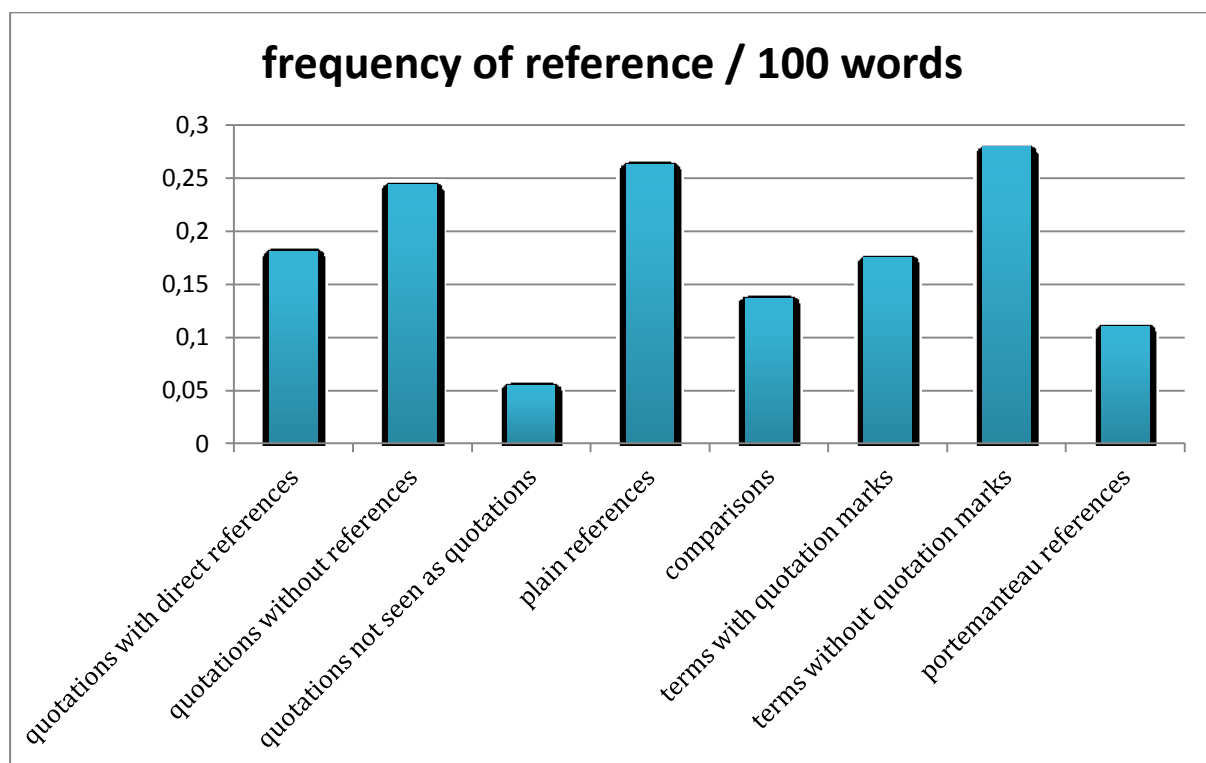


Figure 2: Frequency of each type of reference per 100 words

Above all, it is interesting to analyze how disciplines make use of references, from very explicit references to very implicit ones as shown in the following figure. It is apparent that psychology dominates the explicit end of the continuum, with more quotations and plain references than the other disciplines. Medicine seems very keen on using comparisons to Alice's characters while physics makes great use of terms based on Alice. Therefore, medicine and physics tend to occupy the implicit end of the continuum.

Psychology	Psychology	Psychology	Psychology	Medicine	Physics	Physics	Medicine
Quotations with references	Quotation without references	Quotations not seen as quotations	Plain references	Comparisons	Terms + Quotation marks	Terms without quotation marks	Portmanteau words




Figure 3: Distribution of references on an explicitness continuum for three disciplines

### The functions of references

The different types of references to Alice play different roles in the corpus. Most quotations (with or without mention to Carroll's book) are used at the beginning of articles (in the title or in the introduction) and can be seen as hooks, catchlines or lead-ins to attract readers. Therefore, they have an appeal function.

Plain references can serve to introduce quotations or they may have been used because of lack of time/will to find the precise quotation from Carroll's book.

Comparisons are used to give the reader a better idea of concepts explained in the text by comparing them with Alice's characters or events in the book. They mainly have a vulgarizing function.

Finally, a term based on Wonderland may have three main functions: a nominative function because it gives a name to a new concept. It can also serve as a cognitive short cut to understand this concept (because the concept shares characteristics with one of Wonderland's characters). And in this way, it can also be heuristic and help scientists study the concept from a different angle. The use of quotation marks and explanations when using a term may be a sign that the term is still new to the scientific community and that it may qualify as a neologism. The fact that those quotation marks are not present in more recent articles can be interpreted as a sign that the term is more frequently used by scientists, who no longer see it as a "new term".

## The special case of neologisms

We may also wonder how a term coined after Alice's Adventures in Wonderland continues to be used in a scientific community.

"The Agronomic Jabberwocky" (Kempton, 1928, p. 629) is the title of an article published in 1928 in *Science* in which Kempton, a scientist, makes fun of three agronomists who dared to coin new terms in the way Carroll wrote the Jabberwocky poem. The terms coined by the agronomists are: rugaplanes, thickth midlux, umblux, etc. In the article, Kempton explains how furious he is about those new terms.

Kempton's view on terminology can be compared with the Wüsterian approach to terminology (1930), which prescribed a universal, simplified and strictly technical use of language in the creation of terms.

However, the emergence of socioterminology in 1980-1990 and socio-cognitive terminology in 2000 changed this strict view of terminology and promoted the plurality of language and the importance of studying terms within their social context. As a result, terms were coined more freely and metaphors, and references to mythology and to literature started to make their way through terminology.

Clues as to whether a term is a neologism are the potential presence of explanations or gloss and quotation marks around it (Bowker & Pearson, 2002). In the corpus used in this study, the term "Quantum Cheshire Cat"<sup>2</sup> is present in four texts. Physicists in Grenoble coined this term in 2014. It describes the capacity of neutrons to temporarily separate from their magnetic field (Denkmayr et al., 2014). Most occurrences of the term were present without quotation marks but with explanations and a few occurrences of the term were found both with and without quotation marks in one text.

In the NOW Corpus<sup>3</sup>, 11 occurrences of the term "Quantum Cheshire Cat" were found: 3 of them with quotation marks and 6 of them with explanations. It is highly likely that the term "Quantum Cheshire Cat" is a neologism that is gradually becoming permanent.

It should be mentioned that scientific communities do not use neologisms instantly. Depending on different parameters, they have a certain chance of survival. According to Schneider (2017), a neologism's chances of survival are directly linked to its

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<sup>2</sup> The search was done overlooking case sensitivity

<sup>3</sup> The Now Corpus is a 4.7 billion-word corpus made up of news on the web in English.

frequency, its distribution among articles in a corpus, the absence of an equivalent term in the same language, and finally the absence of an equivalent term in another language.

It is hard to have a precise idea of the frequency of that term but a case-sensitive search on Google results in 7,800 hits of “Quantum Cheshire Cat”. The distribution of the term in 4 articles in the corpus is quite even (between 2 and 5 occurrences every thousand words). There is no equivalent term or synonym in English or in other languages. Given this evidence, one might say that there is a fair chance that the term “Quantum Cheshire Cat” will survive.

### Conclusion

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is undeniably a great source of inspiration for scientists working in many different fields such as math, physics, medicine and psychology. More precisely, the corpus of 29 texts reveals numerous references to Carroll’s book that can roughly be organized on a continuum from very explicit references on one side to implicit references on the other side. Psychology seems fonder of explicit references, while medicine and physics make more use of implicit references. Finally, terms tend to be the most common kind of reference used within the corpus. Having a closer look at one of those terms, we argue that given its frequency on Google, its distribution in the corpus and the absence of an equivalent term, the neologism “Quantum Cheshire Cat” seems to have a fair chance of becoming a permanent term in physics.

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## RETHINKING INVERSION IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

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### Abstract

The article deals with some internal theoretical controversies in the concept and the use of the term *inversion* in English syntax as used in some descriptive and most pedagogical grammars of Modern English. The analysis focuses mainly on the formation of interrogative and emphatic negative structures in English by applying some basic concepts of generative grammar. The aim of the analysis is to explain the transposition of the subject and the verbal predicate by following the Occam Razor's principle of scientific description requiring the employment of a minimal number of principles and technicalities in the course of analysis which results in higher explanatory adequacy. This aim is achieved through the application of the terms *operator* and *operator fronting* in the cases of both obligatory and reversionary inversion. The obligatory visualization of the operator in a series of syntactic structures is also discussed and a general rule is formulated.

**Key words:** inversion, insertion, operator, operator fronting, visibility.

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*Inversion* in English is a widespread grammatical term used to describe the changes in the word order especially when it comes to describing the formation of direct questions and negative inversion.

What this article claims is that despite the long-lasting tradition of its usage in describing the changes of the word order commonly used in pedagogical grammars of English, from a theoretical viewpoint *inversion* turns to be a deceptive term implying false interpretations of how English syntactic rules work.

The arguments presented in this article are based on empirical material involving mainly the formation of interrogatives and negative inversion. In order to reach valid generalizations, the formation of simple negation and reported questions are also analyzed. Aside are left the changes in the word order resulting in subject-verb transposition caused by the topicalization of adverbs and adverbial phrases (AdvP), noun-phrases (NPs) and prepositional phrases (PPs) referred to as *front-focus* or *preposing* (Nordquist, 2017):

(1) [PP In the corner] stood another man of the law. (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 595)

(2) [PP On a hill in front of them] stood a great castle (Swan, 1980, p. 346)

(3) [P Up] walked a policeman (Swan, 2005, p. 303)

Although topicalization is also a fronting type of movement it is of a different nature compared to WH-movement and negative fronting as it allows to move phrases originating in a post verbal position to the front of the clause without affecting the TP (Radford, 1992, p. 530). This is shown in the following examples by Edmonds (1976, p. 31), where the original position in the deep structure of the fronted NPs is marked as “\_”:

(4) [NP These steps] I used to sweep \_ with a broom.

(5) [NP Our daughter] we are proud of \_.

## Discussion

Inversion is most often defined as “a reversal of position, order, form or relationship: such as a change in the canonical SVO word order; especially: the placement of a verb before its subject” (inversion, n.d.b). Another definition says that: “Inversion happens when we reverse (invert) the normal word order of a structure,



most commonly the subject-verb word order. For example, a statement has the subject (s) before the verb (v), but to make question word order, we invert the subject and the verb, with an auxiliary (aux) or modal verb (m) before the subject (s) (inversion, n.d. a). Inversion in questions is often explained as “a change of the places” of the auxiliary verb and the subject or as “a switch” of the subject with the auxiliary (Perfect English Grammar, n.d.; inversion, n.d.).

Negative inversion necessarily occurs when a clause starts with a negative adverb or negative adverbial phrase which requires an inversion of the canonical declarative subject-verb word order (Camus, 2018; Horner, 2014).

As seen from the above the most popular internet resources and dictionary definitions define inversion in the scope of question formation and emphatic negation as a shift, a switch or a reverse of the subject and the first auxiliary of the VP.

No matter how simple and useful *inversion* is in pedagogical and prescriptive English grammars, it fails to explain language facts on a number of occasions summarized in the following cases:

### Case 1

While the rule of inversion holds seemingly true in complex tenses and copular *be* clauses, an additional rule is needed, namely the so called *dummy do insertion* to explain interrogatives such as: *Do you like her?* and *Did you read the book?* It is obvious that a simple subject-verb inversion will end up with the ill-formed *\*Like you her?* and *\*Read you the book?* In addition, there is no explanation when and where the *do-insertion* happens and why the lexical verb remains *in situ*, which adds an extra complexity to the inversion rule.

### Case 2

Conventionally the formation of questions is explained as inversion of the subject and the first auxiliary in both Y/N questions termed *polar interrogatives* by Carter & McCarthy (2006), and WH-interrogatives by simply stating that the first auxiliary precedes the subject (Swan, 2005; Crystal, 1999). However, this description fails to explain the mechanism of the obligatory subject-verb transposition. Second, as in Case 1, it does not explain how and why the auxiliary *do/does/did* appears in both interrogative structures. Carter and McCarthy simply state: “Wherever there is no

auxiliary *be*, auxiliary *have* or modal verb already present, auxiliary *do/does/did/* is used.” (2006, p. 534). Another issue that lacks proper explanation is why only the first auxiliary moves, while the rest of the complex predicate remains *in situ*. The rule simply states: “Where there is more than one auxiliary verb or a modal verb plus auxiliary verb(s), only the first auxiliary or the modal verb precedes the subject.” (2006, p. 534).

### Case 3

However, another inconsistency is observed, namely inversion rule seems to be valid for all but for the WH-questions addressing the subject. For example: From the declarative *John loves Mary*. two WHO-questions are formed: *Who does John love?* (Answer: *Mary*), and *Who loves Mary?* (Answer: *John*). The descriptive rule tells: apply inversion in case of a question to the object and do not apply inversion in case of a question to the subject. Thus the questions to the subject seem to create an exception to the general inversion rules needing an *ad hoc* solution.

### Case 4

Another *ad hoc* rule needs to be applied when the formation of reported questions is concerned. Once inverted in direct questions, a rule of “re-inversion”, or a backshift to the canonical declarative SVO order is needed. What is this obligatory “re-inversion” triggered by is a question that traditional English grammars do not address.

### Case 5

Finally, the causes of negative inversion have never been explained thoroughly in traditional syntactic descriptions, which leads to the need of establishing a third *ad hoc* rule applied to numerous clauses (though not to all), where negative adverbs and prepositional and quantifying phrases such as *never, seldom, if only, under no circumstances, few* etc. come first in the clausal structure.

The five cases above incite a number of challenging questions: Can it be suggested that all types of inversions, including “re-inversion”, be due to one single syntactic rule? If so, can all the phenomena above receive such a general explanation that will also account for the exceptions? And finally, what is the real nature of inversion and what triggers or blocks it?

Possible answers are provided by the theoretical principles underlying the classical generative syntax theory.

The first principle concerning language structure is the concept of deep structure, which contains all “logical relationships of the elements of a phrase or sentence” that change into surface structure by rules of transformation (deep structure, 2016). More consistently the notion of deep structure is defined in Collins Dictionary (Deep structure, 2014) as “a representation of a sentence at a level where logical or grammatical relations are made explicit, before transformational rules have been applied.” What is important is the assumption that deep structure contains all possible syntactic elements, some of which might be either overt or covert on the surface structure. Then, is the subject-verb transposition, traditionally called *inversion*, a kind of transformational rule that can explain all the above mentioned cases?

The second principle concerning the theory of language is the determination theoretical generalizations to strive for the highest possible descriptive and explanatory adequacy<sup>1</sup>. Descriptive adequacy “specifies the observed data [...] in terms of significant generalizations that express underlying regularities in the language” (Chomsky, 1964, p. 63). Compared to observational adequacy descriptive adequacy presents a higher level of abstraction as it formulates rules for all observed data according to which all and only grammatically well-formed sentences in a language are produced. Explanatory adequacy entails that only one rule among many is the correct choice, and this is the one that has a predictive power. However, explanatory adequacy is more oriented towards the rules underlying the concept of Universal Grammar, while descriptive adequacy refers to specific language rules (Rizzi, 2016, pp. 1-2).

And the third is the Ockhamist parsimony methodological principle in science and philosophy postulating that: “It is useless to do with more what can be done with less” (International Encyclopedia of Philosophy). The parsimony is commonly referred to as *Ockham’s razor*. As Ockham says in *Sent. I*, dist. 30, q. 1: “For nothing ought to be posited without a reason given, unless it is self-evident (*literally*, known through itself) or known by experience or proved by the authority of Sacred Scripture.” (cited in Spade & Panaccio, 2016). Putting aside the Sacred Scripture the Razor can be further generalized as: “Don't multiply entities beyond necessity.” (cited in Spade & Panaccio, 2016). In generative grammar Ockham’s razor presupposes two outcomes: one, the aim of scientific analysis is to explain maximum empirical facts with minimal effort, and two,

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<sup>1</sup> For more on observational, descriptive and explanatory adequacy see Rizzi, 2016.

when there are two competing theories (rules) that make the same predictions, the simpler one is better. It needs mentioning, however, that the principle of simplicity does not make assumptions about which theory is true, the Razor only claims that the simpler explanation (theory) is more likely to be true<sup>2</sup>.

The notion of deep structure in combination with Ockham's razor principle help reach an elegant and exception-free theoretical explanation eliminating the ad hoc rules concerning the different types of inversion envisaged in the empirical material above. Such an approach will help to achieve the highest possible descriptive adequacy and a sufficient explanatory one when inversion is concerned.

### **Analysis<sup>3</sup>**

All Y/N and WH-questions, which, together with tag-questions, are supposed to be prototypical in Modern English, manifest what is conventionally referred to as inversion. It is easy to accept the term when complex predicates (combinations of an auxiliary or auxiliaries and a lexical verb) are concerned. Thus the declarative *John is reading a book.* is transformed by inversion into: *Is John reading a book?* But there is no inversion in: *Does John read books?* In this case we can speak about *do-insertion* rather than inversion.

There are already two major reasons to put the use of the term *inversion* at stake. First is the ill-formedness of *\*Loves John Mary?* displaying the theoretical *non-sense* of directly substituting verbs for nouns (and vice versa) in the clause, and second, the need of two rules for making questions: *invert* in all clauses with complex predicates and *insert* in the cases of single verb clauses.

The deep structure contains all elements of a clause; thus it can be supposed that every clause in English has a slot for an auxiliary including those clauses where the predicate is a single lexical verb. Such an assumption allows to interpret the clauses with a single-verb predicates as such containing a *do/does/did*-auxiliary in their TP (tense node) or IP (inflection node). The *do*-auxiliaries are covert categories on the surface structure in neutral declaratives requiring the lexical verb to take the

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<sup>2</sup> More details about Ockham's razor can be found in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and Kaye, S. (n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> The analysis is not conducted in any concrete version of Generative syntax (Phrase Structure Grammar, Government and Binding Theory or Minimalism). It is used simply as a general framework to explain the phenomena provided by the empirical language material.

morphological tense marking as in: *John loves/loved Mary*. What is more, the potential existence of all forms of *do* is supported by the well-formedness of emphatic declaratives where the auxiliary is an overt category on the surface structure as in: *John does/did love Mary*.

With the acceptance of the existence of all auxiliaries in the deep structure the second rule of *do*-insertion is eliminated. What is then the general mechanism of question formation in Modern English? The term proposed by R. Jacobs (1993, p. 259) is a specific movement named *operator fronting* which eliminates the irrational assumption that verbs and nouns are substitutable, on the one hand, and is quite transparent (an important feature of all terms used in any science), meaning that the operator moves around the subject to the front of the clause and lands in the COMP slot to form a Y/N question.

(6a) John is reading a book.

(6b) [COMP] [NP John] [[TP is] [[VP reading]] [NP a book]]]?

(6c) Is John reading a book?

(7a) John loved Mary.

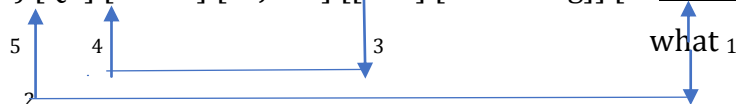
(7b) [COMP] [John] [[[TP past] [[VP love]] [NP Mary]]]]

(7c) Did John love Mary?

Is operator fronting valid for Y/N questions only? Observations on language sample shows that operator fronting occurs in WH-questions in the same way as it does in Y/N questions. The questions to the objects are: *What is John reading?* and *Who did John love?* where the operator again precedes the subject. The operator fronting is preceded by two earlier operations: first the object is replaced by an appropriate WH-word, then moved to the front of the clause, extracting on its way the operator from the TP, placing it in the COMP slot, and subsequently landing in the question slot (QP). The mechanism of the five-step movement is shown below:

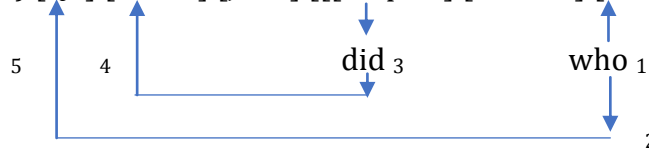
(8a) What is John reading?

(8b) [QP] [COMP] [NP John] [[TP is] [VP reading]] [NP a book]]]



(9a) Who did John love?

(9b) [QP] [COMP] [John] [[[TP past] [VP love] [Mary]]]]



What can be generalized so far is that both Y/N and the WH-questions undergo operator fronting with the difference that WH-questions involve two preliminary steps as replacing the object-NP by a WH-word and then moving it to the front of the clause. But how are the WH-movement and the operator fronting related? Could we suppose that the operator fronting is triggered by the WH-movement? Evidence is found in the formation of WH-questions to the subject *Who loved Mary?*, in which operation fronting is blocked and the clause retains its canonical SVO word order. The movement is presented graphically below.

(10a) Who loved Mary?

(10b) [QP] [COMP] [John] [[[TP past] [VP love] [Mary]]]]



Examples (4) and (5) show that the operator fronting is sensitive to the WH-movement passing over the TP slot where the operator is placed. In (4) the WH-movement simultaneously visualizes the covert operators and triggers the operator movement to the COMP slot. If there is no element to pass around the TP as in (10 a,b) operator fronting does not happen. This explains why WH-questions to the object require operator fronting, while WH-questions to the subject do not. It can be generalized that (11) Every movement crossing the TP of a clause necessarily causes visualization of the covert operator.

The next problem concerns the lack of operator fronting in reported questions. Reported questions in generative grammar are defined as dependent clauses that always contain an obligatory COMP slot filled out by an introductory word. The common introductory WH-words in reported questions are either *if* or *whether* for Y/N questions or WH-words (*what, where, when* etc.) for WH-questions. The reported questions of *Is there a bank nearby?* and *Who is that girl?* are, for example, *Can you tell me if there is a bank nearby.*, and *I wonder who this girl is.*, respectively. The underlying structure of reported questions has the following flat representation:

(12) [[CP<sub>1</sub>] [[COMP] [CP<sub>2</sub>]]],

↓  
*if/whether*

*where*

*what* etc.

where CP<sub>1</sub> is the introductory main clause, and CP<sub>2</sub> is the reported question retaining its canonical SVO word order.

How does the original question cease to be a real question and what blocks the operator fronting? First of all operator fronting is a movement, not an inversion. Movement is allowed under several conditions, among which the principle of an available landing site is crucial. The principle says that if there is no landing place in the deep structure, no movement can occur. Reported questions are dependent clauses with an obligatory introductory word in the COMP slot. The absence of a suitable landing site explains why the operator movement in reported questions is blocked by default following the rule (13) All covert or overt operators necessarily undergo fronting whenever a movement goes around the TP *if* and *only if* there is a free COMP slot.

Could the traditionally so called negative inversion be explained also as a kind of operator fronting movement in conformity with the above rule? It seems it can. The canonical non-emphatic declarative sentence structure containing a negative adverb or negative phrase is the following:

(14) I have never seen such a beautiful girl.

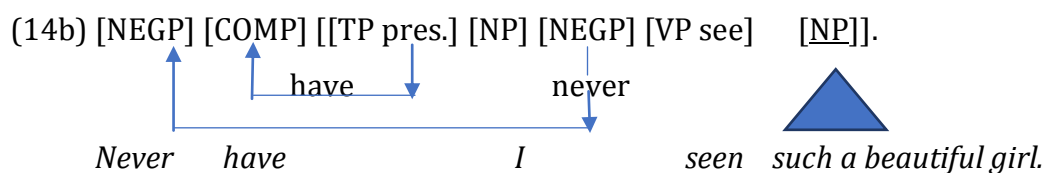
(15) I not only heard him, but ....

Negative emphasis is reached through moving the negative adverb or phrase to the front of the clause which ends up with negative constructions such as: *Never had I seen such a beautiful girl* and *Not only did I hear him, but I also saw him*. They can be united under the umbrella term *negative inversion* in most English grammars and pedagogical handbooks. However, there are no explanations why in such cases a subject-verb transposition is obligatory. What makes operators undergo fronting? And what makes overt operators become visible in simple tense clauses?

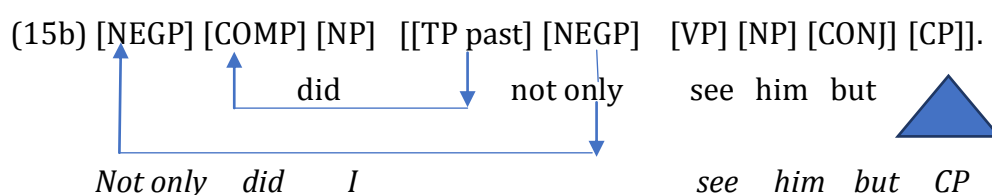
Following Ockham's razor, it is suggested that the operator fronting is caused by a movement. The structure of the non-emphatic negative declarative clause is the following:

(14a/15a) [<sub>CP</sub> [NP] [[TP] [NEGP] [VP]] [NP/CP]]]

On its way to the front the NEGP passes over the operator slot which automatically triggers operator fronting. The two elements move together until the operator goes into the COMP slot, while the NEGP ends up in NEGP slot. The mechanism can be graphically illustrated as follows:



An analogous movement of the NEGP explains the operator fronting in the first clause of (15):



In the deep structure of non-emphatic negative clauses, the negative elements immediately follow the operator. The movement of the negative element to the front of the clause around the subject necessarily goes across the operator slot TP. In the cases when the operator is overt the movement of NEGP necessarily triggers its fronting and landing in the COMP slot. In the cases when the operator is covert, the NEGP movement round the TP triggers its visualization and then its movement to the COMP slot on the surface structure.

The visualization of the operator is an unexceptional rule in simple negative and negative-interrogative clauses where the insertion of *not* immediately after the operator allows regular contractions like *don't*, *doesn't*, *didn't* etc. It can be generalized that (16) Both insertion and movement make covert operators visible.

### Conclusions

It is axiomatic in syntactic theory that particular parts of speech take particular syntactic positions. Without the notion of deep structure, *inversion* means that the subject (NP) and the predicate (VP) swap their positions. Such an interpretation violates basic linguistic principles in structural linguistics like parts of speech, functions and distribution (Lyons, 1968; Jespersen, 1924).



Generative approach to English syntax gives an explicit answer to all questions raised in the five cases above. First, every IP contains a slot for an operator, which is always a finite verb, followed by the lexical verb. In complex predicates the operator is an overt category, while in single-verb predicates it is a covert one. The operator is the only element within the IP that can move around the subject. The movement stops in the COMP slot and is defined as *operator fronting*. The nature of the operator fronting has nothing to do with inversion as both the subject and the lexical verb remain *in situ*. Operator fronting is triggered by question formation and negative preposing. Both movements originate in the right periphery of the clause and affect the operator slot on their way to the front. Movements and the insertion of the negative *not* make covert operators in the deep structure visible. Operator fronting is barred on two occasions: first, when a movement does not go around the operator slot which happens with Who-subject questions, and second, when the COMP slot is occupied and there is no landing site available, which is the case with reported questions.

The generalizations above give an elegant theoretical answer why *inversion* in traditional descriptive grammars of English is an inappropriate explanation of how language works. Its replacement by *operator fronting* eliminates the need of additional *ad hoc* rules to explain exceptions, on the one hand, and offers a powerful explanatory tool for the description of language structure, on the other.

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# THE PORTRAITURE OF STOCKHOLM SYNDROME: CULTURAL DISLOCATION IN PHILLIS WHEATLEY'S POETRY COLLECTION AND SELECTED AFRICAN AMERICAN TEXTS

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## Abstract

One of the tropes that have often been glossed over in African American literature is the concept of Stockholm Syndrome. The syndrome emphasises irrationality and abnormal psychological or mental disposition of Stockholm Syndrome sufferers towards individuals responsible for their pitiable conditions. This article examines the conception and its nexus with slavery and the use of religion (Christianity) as an ideological tool for the indoctrination or brainwashing of African slaves and their descendants in the United States of America. I argue that the syndrome, though conceived as a correlate of Freudian ego-defence mechanism, operates like a psychedelic or hallucinogenic drug which, according to Karl Marx, dulls the reasoning capacity and cerebration of the sufferers and prevents them from thinking rationally. Besides, it alters their perception of reality forcing them to accept abnormality as normality in a bid to create an escapist route for their fears, hurt feelings and pent-up wounds.

**Keywords:** Stockholm Syndrome, African American literature, Phillis Wheatley, Transatlantic slavery, Ego-Defence Mechanism

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Lucy Christopher's 2009 thriller, *Stolen: Letter to My Captor*, ingeminates the perniciousness of abduction and, most importantly, the portraiture of Nils Bejerot's<sup>1</sup> neologism, "Stockholm Syndrome", in literature. Though written by a non-African American, the novel bears intertextuality with some of the poems in Phillis Wheatley's poetry collection, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1793), and some African American texts analysed in this article. Christopher's protagonist, Gemma – the victim of abduction in the novel – develops *love* for her abductor (Ty) whom she writes reflectively after regaining her freedom:

Let's face it, you did steal me. But you saved my life too. And somewhere in the middle, you showed me a place so different and beautiful; I can never get it out of my mind. And I can't get you out of there either. You're stuck in my brain like my own blood vessels. (Christopher, 2009)

Gemma clearly suffers from Stockholm Syndrome by having irrational *love* and emotional attachment, albeit short-lived, to her captor who kidnaps her at a Bangkok airport and brings her to a desert in Australia.

Since this article examines the concept of Stockholm Syndrome through the lens of African American literature, my analysis of the syndrome will be confined to texts written by African American writers, especially those that portray the evils of slavery in their works and its overarching effects on characters whose actions are interpreted as a corollary of their troubled past and a projection or release of their traumatic experiences. These experiences, therefore, make them susceptible to the syndrome. Consequently, the contrapuntal reading of Wheatley's *controversial* poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"<sup>2</sup> (1768), and similar creative works by African American writers, brings to the fore the age-long knotty issue of race relation and other attendant problems or tensions generated by the racial taxonomy of humanity into the white, the black, and the yellow classifications. Wheatley has probably stirred the hornet's nest with her octave:

'Twas mercy brought me from *Pagan* land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

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<sup>1</sup> Nils Bejerot is a top Swedish criminologist and researcher who coined the term, Stockholm Syndrome.

<sup>2</sup> It is one of the poems in her anthology.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
 "Their colour is a diabolic die,"  
 Remember, *Christians, Negros*, black as *Cain*,  
 May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train. (15)

Critics such as Collins (1975), Ogunyemi (1976), and Gates (2003) view her oeuvre as an affront on the black race; while, to some, it is merely an attempt by a poor slave girl to appreciate the beauty of a newfound religion that welcomed her with open hands into the utopian Abrahamic faith. The poem, some critics would argue, appears innocuous, because it reads much like a riposte defending the humanity of blacks and their accessibility to redemption that Christianity promises.<sup>3</sup> A slightly different interpretation to the poem is offered in this article. It counters other hermeneutics and queries the psychological condition of Wheatley at the time she wrote the poem. The hermeneutics is based on the following posers: what experiences birthed the poem? What did she see in Judeo-Christian God that made her denounce her indigenous African gods and deities? Is her case not that of religious brainwashing? Why is her poesy punctuated with *ethnophaulism* that further reifies the warped Eurocentric conception of Africa as a cultural space of savages? Considering her abduction in Africa at the age of seven, could this repressed experience be responsible for her cultural amnesia or dislocation and the inferiorisation of her Africanity?

A postmodernist critique of the poem helps to reveal the covert tensions and the complete brainwashing of a youngster who is made to see nothing good in African cultural patrimony, but to praise that of her captors. Her mindset only recognises Judeo-Christian God as the *ne plus ultra* and Christianity as the sole redemptive faith available to humanity. This mindset is against the postmodernist culture which believes that there is no absolute or universal truth, reason or knowledge. To describe the Jewish supreme deity as the sole redemptive agent is, therefore, an attempt to inferiorise pantheon of African gods believed by their devotees to be potent sources of healing, blessing and redemption. The possible explanation one may give to Wheatley's poem is that the youngster is a sufferer of Stockholm Syndrome. Her psyche appears to have been buffeted by slavery and the religion of her captors. Rather than developing an

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<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, Mani (2015) posits that the poem, and by extension, other poems in her collection, shows a "disapproval of slavery through her praise for religion, political commentaries, supporting elegies and death and finally through her escapism into an imaginary world" (p. 74).

ingrained hatred for the imposed foreign religion and culture, she falls in love with them, seeing them as sole redemptive forces. Her condition is mentally and physically that of mental abduction, hence the belief that the poet-persona may have developed irrational pathological love for the cultural and cosmology of her captors.

### **Stockholm Syndrome Defined**

According to Nair (2015), Stockholm Syndrome is “a psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy, sympathy and positive feelings towards their captors sometimes to the point of defending and identifying with their captors. These feelings are generally considered in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims who essentially mistake a lack of abuse from their captors for an act of kindness” (p. 385). He equally identifies the intrinsic features of the conception to include: “positive feelings toward the abuser”, “negative feeling toward family, friends or authorities trying to rescue them”, “support of abusers’ reasons and behavior”, and “inability to engage in behavior that may assist in their release” (p. 386). Methuselah (2014) also defines the concept as “a paradoxical relationship between a captive and a captor in such a way that he/she is willing to help or protect the captor even from law enforcement agencies who might be on the trail of the captor to bring him/her to justice” (p. 53). Wade (2015), in his paper dedicated to Kristin Enmark,<sup>4</sup> describes it as “both a cliché and an accepted ‘clinical’ reality, a received truth [that] reveals a style of theorising the oppressed, as submissive and deficient, as in need of instruction, correction, as participants in their own oppression”<sup>5</sup>. The syndrome, in essence, emphasises hostage taking situation in which the hostages develop irrational love, emotions and positive feelings towards their hostage-takers as a proof of appreciation for the modicum of kindness exhibited to them while the abduction lasts.

Applying the Stockholm Syndrome conception to Wheatley’s poem, in order to probe the workings of her mind, may help situate the poet as a sufferer of the syndrome. This is because there is a link between a writer’s perception of reality and the construction of that reality with a tapestry of language that uniquely explores their psychological conditions and the workings of their minds. Hicks (2004) confirms this

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<sup>4</sup> She is one of the victims of the 1973 Kreditbanken robbery at Norrmalmstrog, Stockholm, Sweden – an incident that gave birth to the neologism.

<sup>5</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology defines it as “A psychological condition in which a hostage identifies with her/his captors and shows loyalty and affection toward them” (2009, p. 523).

when he writes that “our social reality is constructed by the language we use” (p. 4), and language use is a product of the user’s emotions, temperament and psychological conditions. Considering the restrictive and regressive effects of chattel slavery and the inhumanity that attended the ignoble subjection or relegation of humans to the position of beasts of burden, it is not out of place for the poet to have experienced mental abduction, sequel to her physical abduction from Africa. Most victims of slavery in the US can be said to have experienced a traumatic experience similar to the victims of hostage taking, rape, murder, and spousal or child abuse. What connects all the victims together can be put as psychological trauma occasioned by the precarious position they find themselves that leaves them at the receiving end of attacks, abuse, abduction or death.

To start with, most Africans shipped to American plantations were kidnapped before being sold into slavery. The stories of Olaudah Equiano who was stolen from Igboland in the present day Nigeria at the age of seven alongside his sister, and Phillis Wheatley who was stolen from an unknown West African community<sup>6</sup> readily come to mind. Slavery dehumanises; it reduces humans to beasts of burden leaving them objectified or *thingified*. The evils of slavery and its despicability are portrayed by almost all the slave narratives and other books of slavery as a moral evil that defeated God’s purpose for humanity. The 92-year-old former slave, Henry James Trentham, in Belinda Hurmence’s, *My Folks Don’t Want me to Talk about Slavery* (1984), described slavery as “pretty rough, and I am glad it is all over” (p. 8). Similarly, in their slave narratives, Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth paint the horror of slavery and the privation of slaves who toiled from morning till sunset on plantations. The privations suffered by slaves left them defenceless and helpless. The point being made is that slavery reduces human’s worth, and the mental agony it unleashes may serve as a similitude of mental torture suffered by victims of rape, incest, and abduction.

### **Is Stockholm Syndrome a Health Challenge?**

It is difficult to declare that Stockholm Syndrome is a health challenge or not. While divergent opinions are bound to trail the conception of the phenomenon as a health or non-health issue, the psychological condition that predisposes a victim/sufferer of the syndrome to act contrary to the expected opinion makes the

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<sup>6</sup> G. J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton in *Portraits of African Women: From Settlement to the Present* write that she was a Fulani girl from Senegal, West Africa, and was born in 1753 and enslaved in 1761.

syndrome a likely health challenge. In his article, “Stockholm Syndrome – A Self Delusive Survival Strategy”, Nair (2015) describes the conception as a psychiatric or traumatic condition in which “patients are given anti-anxiety medication or other prescriptions to help them with their nervousness and anxiety” (p. 386). The condition, to Nair, is a health challenge because “people with Stockholm Syndrome report the same symptoms as those diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [and] the symptoms are insomnia, nightmares, general irritability, difficulty in concentrating, being easily startled, feelings of unreality, inability to enjoy previously pleasurable experiences, distrust, flashbacks” (p. 386). PTSD is defined as “An anxiety disorder [that] ... occurs in people who have experienced life-threatening events to which they respond with feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror. Examples of causal events include, but are not limited to, combat, childhood abuse, rape, other physical assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, and severe motor vehicle accidents”. (p. 394)<sup>7</sup>

The projection of repressed unconscious elements in the psyche and the categorisation of Stockholm Syndrome as belonging to the class of PTSD possibly confirms that the syndrome is a psychological condition triggered off by the involuntary recollection of hurts and wounds bottled up in the subconscious of the sufferer. If ranked alongside PTSD, it means that Stockholm Syndrome sufferers may be having an *illness* resulting from their repressed traumatic experiences or pains. This, therefore, makes the syndrome a serious challenge that deserves adequate attention in view of the fact that its manifestation is not limited to hostage taking situation alone, but also rears its head in “abused of children, battered/abused women, prisoners of war, cult members, incest victims, criminal hostage situations, concentration camp prisoners, controlling/intimidating relationships”.<sup>8</sup>

### **Stockholm Syndrome as a Correlate of Ego-Defence Mechanism**

Many scholars see Stockholm Syndrome as a defence strategy devised by victims of abduction to escape their ordeal. In fact, Lucy Christopher foregrounds this well through the characterisation of Gemma who develops “soft” *love* for Ty, making the abductor believe that she loves him, though it is a decoy to make her escape from a desert in Australia. Freudian Defence Mechanism is “the process by which the contents

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<sup>7</sup> See: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology*

<sup>8</sup> See: Joseph M. Carver’s “Love and Stockholm Syndrome: The Mystery of Loving an Abuser”  
<http://counselingresource.com/lib/therapy/self-help/stockholm/>



of our unconscious are kept in the unconscious ... [or] the process by which we keep the repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we can't handle knowing" (Tyson, 2016, p. 15). Ewen (2003) also describes defences as a "method used by the ego to ward off threats from the id, superego, or external world, and to reduce the corresponding anxiety. Most defence mechanisms operate unconsciously, making possible the primary goal of self-deception" (p. 23). It is also "any of a number of strategies the ego employs to prevent the energy of an unfulfilled desire from disrupting its plans. It usually involves repression of the desire and a redirection of the energy" (p.1 52)<sup>9</sup>. As "psychic procedures for avoiding painful admissions or recognitions" (Barry, 1995, p. 98), defence mechanisms are beneficial to man because they help him to forget those unpalatable experiences, hurts and wounds that may predispose him to unleash his wounds and frustrations on the society. Identification with the aggressor – which parallels Stockholm Syndrome – is one of the numerous ego-defence mechanisms often used by victims of abuse or people with traumatic experience to evade reality by attempting to become exactly like their abusers.<sup>10</sup> Freud<sup>11</sup> (1966) describes the conception "as the mechanism of identification or introjection" (p. 113) in which a victim impersonates "the aggressor, [by] assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression ... [or a case in which] the child transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat" (p. 113).

Laplanche & Pontalis (1973) further explain the concept as the "reversal of roles [in which] the aggressed turns aggressor" (p. 209). According to them, the concept, which is not originally part of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, is a:

"Defence mechanism identified and described by Anna Freud (1936) ... [in which an individual] faced with an external threat (typically represented by a criticism emanating from an authority), the subject identifies himself with his aggressor. He may do so either by appropriating the aggression itself, or else by physical or moral emulation of the aggressor, or again by adopting particular symbols of power by which the aggressor is designated. (p. 208)

Relating the defence mechanism to Stockholm Syndrome indicates role reversion or identification in which the abducted takes on the role of the abductor. This is clearly

<sup>9</sup> See *Dictionary of Psychology*

<sup>10</sup> Other ego-defense mechanisms include "denial", "repression", "sublimation", "projection", "regression", "displacement", "rationalisation", "intellectualisation", and many more.

<sup>11</sup> It is Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna, that is referred to here.

evinced in the 1974 celebrated case of Patty Hearst, who was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), only for her to join the army and participate in many robberies (Nair, 2015).

### **Portraiture of Stockholm Syndrome in African American Texts**

Before identifying the elements of Stockholm Syndrome in Wheatley's anthology, it is important to consider the portraiture of the syndrome in other African American texts. This is to better foreground the claim that chattel slavery, as practised in the southern part of the United States of America, parallels hostage taking situation, or better constructs the oppressed-oppressor, bourgeois-proletariat, white-black binaries, and the racial animosity or inordinate quest for materialism that kept transatlantic slavery going for 400 years.

Apart from the prominence that Sojourner Truth's *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* enjoys as a slave narrative, the text is also believed to belong to the genre of "spiritual narratives" of African American literature considering the biblical thread links that bind the text together and its focus on stories of and about God (Ganzevoort, 2011) or scriptural stories that help to sermonise characters and redirect their frustrations to God who possesses solution to man's existential problems. Through Isabella who is also Sojourner Truth, she portrays the evils of slavery in America and its destructive effects on slaves who toiled day and night on plantations. One of such horrors is the forceful taking away and sale of Isabella's son from by her masters, despite the law forbidding the sale of slave out of the State of New York:

A little previous to Isabel's leaving her old master, he had sold her child, a boy of five years, to a Dr. Gedney, who took him with him as far as New York city, on his way to England; but finding the boy too small for his service, he sent him back to his brother, Solomon Gedney. This man disposed of him to his sister's husband, a wealthy planter, by the name of Fowler, who took him to his own home in Alabama. (p. 44)

Isabella's mother, Mau Mau Betty – a mother of about "ten or twelve children; though Sojourner is far from knowing the exact number of her brothers and sisters" (p. 12), too, has her children sold off by her masters, as a way to raise money for themselves. However, Isabella makes frantic efforts to take back her child, having been freed herself, though the boy who has been brainwashed by Fowler denies knowing

Isabella: “at sight of her the boy cried aloud, and regarded her as some terrible being, who was about to take him away from his kind and loving friend. He knelt, even, and begged them, with tears, not to take him away from his dear master, who had brought him from the dreadful South, and been so kind to him” (p. 52). Isabella’s boy fits the description of a Stockholm Syndrome sufferer, though forced by his master to denounce his mother in court; just as slaves belonging to Colonel Lloyd and Jacob Jepson in Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, similarly, fight over who is superior or richer between their masters – the same individuals who subject them to enslavement and inhumanity:

Indeed, it is not uncommon for slaves even to fall out and quarrel among themselves about the relative goodness of their masters, each contending for the superior goodness of his own over that of the others. At the very same time, they mutually execrate their masters when viewed separately. It was so on our plantation. When Colonel Llyod’s slaves met the slaves of Jacob Jepson, they seldom parted without a quarrel about their masters; Colonel Llyod’s slaves contending that he was the richest, and Mr. Jepson’s slaves that he was the smartest, and most of a man. Colonel Llyod’s slaves would boast his ability to buy and sell Jacob Jepson. Mr. Jepson’s slaves would boast his ability to whip Colonel Lloyd. These quarrels would almost always end in a fight between the parties ... They seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves. (p. 12)

In Langston Hughes’ *Not Without Laughter*, grandma Harrie; her daughter, Annjee, and some old Negroes evince Stockholm Syndrome through their actions. The text portrays the post-slavery America, the ingrained race tensions and the gut-wrenching lifestyle of slaves in the northern part of the country. Despite their freedom, the former slaves continue to exist on the fringe of American society. Not minding the inhumanity meted out to the coloured people during and after slavery, grandma Harrie - who toils from the cradle to the grave – continues to defend white Americans and refers to them as good people. The love relationship between Annjee and Jimboy, too, bears the semblance of the conception, considering the fact that Annjee is a victim of unrequited love, because Jimboy often abandons her in search of greener pastures elsewhere. Despite being abandoned, Annjee keeps loving and defending his husband whom her mother detests for being a worldling and for his laziness. Through the

characterisation of grandma Harrie and some other old Negroes, white Americans are not wicked as often touted by many coloured people. Reflecting on the slavery period, grandma Harrie hints on the contradiction that shapes the modicum of kindness shown to slaves by the same people who keep them in bondage:

They talks 'bout slavery time an' they makes out now like it were de most awfulest time what ever was, but don't you believe it, chille, 'cause it weren't all that bad. Some o' de white folks was just as nice to their niggers as they could be, nicer than many of 'em is now, what makes 'em work for less than they needs to eat. An' in those days they had to feed 'em. An' they ain't every white man beat his slaves neither! Course I ain't sayin' 'twas no paradise, but I ain't going to say it were no hell either. (p. 126)

In a discussion with her daughters (Annjee and Harriet), her son-in-law (Jimboy), grandson (Sandy), and her neighbour (Sister Johnson) on the perception of whites in Stanton; Harrie notes that, "If you don't like 'em, pray for 'em, but don't feel evil against 'em. ... I been knowin' white folks all my life, an' they's good as far as they can see" (p.50). While narrating slavery story to Sandy, Harrie's statement clearly portrays the syndrome:

"Well, de freedom come, an' all de niggers scatter like buckshot, goin' to live in town. An' de yard niggers say I's a ole fool! I's free now – why don't I come with them? But I say no, I's gwine stay Miss Jeanne – an' I stayed. I 'lowed ain't nary one o' them colored folks needed me like Miss Jeanne did, so I ain't went with 'em" (p. 127).

As revealed in Harrie's narrative, some slaves weep bitterly seeing their white masters going to fight in the war between the North and South over the abolition of slavery and emancipation of slaves in the South:

I disremembers what year it were de war broke out, but white folks was scared, an' niggers, too. Didn't know what might happen. An' we heard talk o' Abraham Lincoln 'way down yonder in de South. An' de ole marster, olde man Winfield, took his gun an' went to war, an' de young son, too, an' de superintendent and de overseer – all of 'em gone to follow Lee. Ain't left nothin' but womens an' niggers on de plantation. De womens was a-cryin' an' de niggers was, too, 'cause they was sorry fo' de po' grievin' white folks. (p. 127)

Harrie's first daughter, Tempty, and her husband, Mr. Siles, possibly suffer from the syndrome, even though the postcolonial model of "mimicry" – the parody of the oppressor's values, assumptions, lifestyles and beliefs – also describes their snobbish

attitude. They look down on blacks and refuse to associate with them. They describe their own people as uneducated and too religious, because they (Tempty and Mr. Siles) are educated. Tempty's extrapolated experiences of serving a white lady as a personal maid manifest in her ignoble attitude towards blacks in Stanton, ditto for Mr. Siles. Having been impressed by her services and loyalty, the white woman wills a house to her. According to the narrator in Hughes' text, Tempty and her husband hate blues and spirituals "because they were too negro" (p. 171), besides they believe that:

Colored people certainly needed to come up in the world ... up to the level of white people – Dress like white people, talk like white people, think like white people – and then they would no longer be called "niggers".

In Tempty this feeling was an emotional reaction, born of white admiration, but in Mr. Siles, who shared his wife's views, the same attitude was born out of practical thought. The whites had the money, and if Negroes wanted any, the quicker they learned to be like the whites, the better. Stop being lazy, stop singing all the time, stop attending revivals, and learn to get the dollar – because money buys everything, even the respect of white people. (p. 171)

The poet-persona in Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America" also suffers from Stockholm Syndrome believing that her abduction has done her a lot of good. To the persona, remaining in Africa will have shut the door of salvation to her, where she remains bound to the African heathenish beliefs and its animist cosmology. Her first four lines, "'Twas mercy brought me from Pagan land,/Taught my benighted soul to understand/That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:/Once I redemption neither sought nor knew", seem to reinforce the mental state of a Stockholm Syndrome sufferer who defends the belief and faith of her captors, closing her eye to the despicable act of her abduction in the first place, and not minding the fact that the abductors or enslavers are the same hypocritical evangelists who convert her to Christianity. In her elegy, "On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Sewell, 1769", Wheatley laments the loss of a Rev. Dr. Sewell, who possibly was a slaveholder or one of the top shots controlling the 18th century Boston slave economy. Her religious indoctrination or brainwashing prevents her from seeing the *abjected* space she occupies in the American society, and rather than reflecting and projecting in her poetry the mercantilism and

devilry of bourgeois white Americans that degraded her humanity, she is lost in the praise or lamenting the loss of her captors:

Ere yet morn its lovely blushes spread  
See *Sewell* number'd with the happy dead.  
Hail, holy man, arriv'd th' immortal shore,  
Though we shall hear thy warning voice no more.  
Come, let us all behold with wishful eyes  
The saint ascending to his native skies;  
From hence the prophet wing'd his rapt'rous way  
To the blest mansions in eternal day. (pp. 15-16)

Though Shields (1988) writes that Rev. Dr. Sewell or Sewall was the “son a diarist and Chief Justice Samuel Sewall (who also wrote one of the earliest antislavery tracts in the colonies, ‘The Selling of Joseph’, in 1700), [and] was a principal minister of the famous Old South Church of Boston, which the Wheatley family attended” (p. 281), the cleric is seen as being culpable in the enslavement of Africans in America, since he may have benefitted indirectly from slavery. Though he may not have homologated slavery, the way Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) in his Papal Bull or the Doctrine of Discovery (1452)<sup>12</sup> did. It is submitted that the cleric may have benefitted from the enslavement of blacks in the US, because his salary must have been paid by members of his congregation comprising mainly Boston slaveholders.

In “To the University of Cambridge, in New-England”, Wheatley blatantly commits what Wertheimer (2006), calls “an important semiotic slip ‘between religious escape and racial denial of the self.’” (p. 66)<sup>13</sup> by referring to (Africa) as a “land of errors”, “Egyptian gloom”, “dark abodes”:

WHILE an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,  
The muses promise to assist my pen;  
'Twas not long since I left my native shore  
The land of errors, and Egyptain gloom:  
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand

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<sup>12</sup> Pope Nicholas V directed the Portuguese King, Alfonso V, to “invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever ... [and] reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit” (Davenport & Paullin, 2004, p. 23).

<sup>13</sup> Eric Wertheimer (2006) cites Terrence Collins (1975).

Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights  
 Above, to traverse the ethereal space,  
 And mark the systems of revolving worlds.  
 Still more, ye sons of science ye receive  
 The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,  
 How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows. (p. 13)

In defence of Wheatley, Baker-Benfield and Clinton (1988) believe that the slave girl does not intend to portray Africa as a space with "happy primitives; it is an African without Christianity and without civilization. Although this portrait is flattering to her native land, it is rhetorically useful; it creates an ironic contrast between her lot and that of the Harvard students. The latter are Christians by birth, and because they have the privileges of class, they are offered a knowledge of the highest civilization that human beings have attained. Yet they are abusing this God-given gift, one that has been denied to members of Phillis Wheatley's race. A lowly African must remind them that they too, like all people, may be destroyed by sin" (p. 112). Their interpretation is an alibi intended to extenuate Wheatley's racial denial and self-abnegation, since she does not see any African as *honnête home*, but as backward uncivilised brute.

Despite being a black writer, her poetry is punctuated by dysphemism or possibly *ethnophaulism* that portrays "Africa" as a *toponymy* of backwardness. Her psyche, which has been conditioned to see white as good and black as evil, is a correlate of the mindset of European supremacists and their African collaborators who never see anything worthwhile in Africa and its people. The African collaborators of white supremacist ideology are the people that Appiah (1991) calls the *comprador intelligentsia*, that is, "a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa" (p. 348).

Interestingly, Appiah's *comprador intelligentsia* could as well be described as sufferers of Stockholm Syndrome considering the fact that they mimic the West

ignorantly and throw away their cultural patrimony. No wonder Uroh (2008) believes that such people are victims of *cultural dislocation* – “a forceful disorientation or delinking of a people from their collective heritage in the arts, sciences, political and social organizations, social norms, religious belief systems, linguistic usage” (p. 129). In the case of African collaborators of European supremacy, their cultural dislocation is not forceful but deliberate. They evince Langston Hughes’ *jeu d’esprit* calling for outright mimicry of whites by blacks in all ramifications in order for them to break out of poverty and underdevelopment. However, Phillis Wheatley’s cultural dislocation is both forceful and deliberate. It is forceful because transatlantic slavery uprooted her from Africa; it is, however, deliberate since she allows the permanent conditioning of her mind in the direction of praise singing her captors for removing her from a *toponymy* of darkness and backwardness – that shows her as a sufferer of Stockholm Syndrome, just like slave characters in most of the works examined. Gates (2003) writes that the reason why Phillis Wheatley is unpopular and why her poetry did not receive adequate attention it deserves among black Americans is due to the unnecessary praise singing of slaveholders and people that Césaire (1955) calls “the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, [propelled by their] appetite ... [and] ... the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies” (p. 2).

While commenting specifically on the poem, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”, Gates (2003) submits that the poem “has been the most reviled poem in African-American literature. To speak in such glowing terms about ‘mercy’ manifested by the slave trade was not exactly going to endear Miss Wheatley to black power advocates in the 1960s” (p. 71). Collins (1975) also believes that “Wheatley’s true legacy is the testimony her poetry gives to the insidious, self-destroying nature of even the most subtle, most gentle of racially oppressive conditions” (p. 88), just as Ogunyemi (1976) submits that through her poems she displays “a complete lack of feeling and involvement on her part as a writer – all attributes of a neo-classical writer” (p. 17). Despite being regarded as “the first prominent Black writer in the United States to publish a book of imaginative writing. She is also the first to start the African-American literary tradition, as well as the African-American women literary tradition” (Mani,



2015, p. 74), many scholars in Black cultural study still see her as a perfect example of cultural dislocation and one of those Africans or African Americans who project negative image of their race to the rest of the world. My argument in this article is, therefore, not to see her in this light alone, otherwise the hermeneutics of her person will be narrow and restricted. Wheatley should rather be seen as a victim of Stockholm Syndrome who was not in possession of her psyche when she wrote her poems, because slavery had greatly impacted the mind (Wertheimer, 2006) that she suddenly developed hatred for her own culture, but irrationally loved what did not belong to her. She may have written the poems to please her enslavers and use them as a defence strategy to escape enslavement. To please her enslavers, she must identify with them and look down on her indigenous culture and people – that is Stockholm Syndrome at work in her.

### **Christianity and Subjection of Slaves to Stockholm Syndrome**

The transatlantic slave trade is believed to have led to the uprooting of a number of Africans to the Americas and it operated for 400 years (Mani, 2015). Walvin (2007) also posits that nothing less than 27,000 voyages were made by slave ships between Africa, Europe and the Americas as European slave merchants<sup>14</sup> navigated African coasts in triangular trade that stalled the development of Africa in many ways. Apart from the use of force and wanton dehumanisation of slaves who were left toiling on plantations in the Americas, religion (Christianity) was used by the enslavers as a tool to benumb the minds of the enslaved and ensure their perpetual enslavement. Religion has always been one of the state apparatuses in a capitalist economy or one of its non-coercive ideological agencies (Tyson, 1999) often used “to chain or imprison the consciousness of the oppressed working class” (Adeniyi, 2017, p. 58). Louis Althusser defines “repressive structures” or “ideological apparatuses” as “institutions like the law courts, prisons, the police force, and the army, which operate ... by external force ... groupings as political parties, schools, the media, churches, the family, and art ... [that]

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<sup>14</sup> Portuguese were said to have started the trade with the capture of 12 slaves in 1441 by Antam Gonçalves from the coast of Africa and brought them to Prince Henry of Portugal. The trade, considering its economic prospects, was later approved by the Pope, as Gonçalves was encouraged to go for more raids. See Mani, 2015.

foster an ideology – a set of ideas and attitudes – which is sympathetic to the aims of the state and the political status quo” (p. 61).<sup>15</sup>

It is argued in this article that Christianity is used by slaveholders and white population after abolition of slavery as a weapon to subjugate blacks. Their subjugation, therefore, makes them susceptible to Stockholm Syndrome. In other words, Christianity is a weapon mostly used to benumb and deprive the oppressed the ability to reason and reflect on their *abjected* condition. The religion operates surreptitiously to achieve this aim as it enables the oppressed to remove their minds from their earthly ordeals and channel their wounds, frustrations to God whose promise of utopian eschatological hereafter will replace their present ordeals. This is why Karl Marx posits that “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people”.<sup>16</sup> In his explanation of what Karl Marx means by equating religion to hallucinogenic drugs, Igboin (2014) notes that “he critiqued religion as an analgesic that dulls the senses, thus inducing a false sense of satisfaction, and preventing the oppressed from revolting against the grubby socio-economic system. As the sigh of the oppressed, religion makes them resign to fate since it only gives an unrealistic eschatological hope” (p. 1).

In African American literature, the preponderance of religion as a defining leitmotif is phenomenal. Most of the slaves were made to believe that it was their lot to obey and conduct themselves orderly before their enslaving masters. They quote Biblical verses that preach obedience to the authority, and indoctrinated the slaves making them believe that their slavery was godly. Corroborating this view through Wheatley’s oeuvre, Mani (2015) writes that:

one glance at her poems will tell readers how well Christianity has been used as a tool to brainwash the slaves brought from Africa to accept their misfortune as slaves ...

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<sup>15</sup> Also contained in Adeniyi’s “Bourgeois Tensions, Marxist Economics and Aphaeresis of Communal Spirit in Sembene Ousmane’s *God’s Bits of Wood* and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Devil on the Cross*” (2017).

<sup>16</sup> See the article “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>. Igboin (2014), however, believes otherwise, stating that the Marxian view of religion is “prismatic” (p.1), and rather than being used by the oppressors to suppress the rebellious instincts in man, it should better be conceived as “an amphetamine or a catalyst for revolt [or] an energizing pill, to pursue other goals” (p.1).

Due to the exposure to Christianity, she has grown up thinking that Blacks were a cursed lot. She uses the biblical knowledge taught to her by her master, to relate the Blacks with the cruel son of Adam, Cain, who kills his own brother, Abel out of jealousy. From that incident, Cain was cursed by the Lord to shoulder his sins without salvation. This poem conveys a deep meaning to her race. She urges them to accept their fate as slaves and turn to religion for salvation. She states that although they are viewed as a cursed race, they can still attain freedom through religion in their afterlife. (p. 76)

With the exception of Frederick Douglass, other foremost African American writers portray the religiosity of blacks during slavery period and post-slavery America. Sojourner Truth, for example, is taught by her enslaved mother, Mau Mau Betty, to trust in God and always obey her masters. Langston Hughes also provides the portraiture of a people who are still enslaved by religious ideology in post-slavery America as they go about singing spirituals and attending church programmes unendingly. Douglass believes that American Christianity is different from the Christianity of Jesus. He believes that Christianity is fraught with many unresolvable errors and contradictions; besides, it is pretentious. According to him, the Christianity of Americans is a “slaveholding religion” (p. 71), because:

We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. The man who robs me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation. He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me (pp. 71-72).

The foregoing excerpt expresses the dilemma of Christianity in America. Rather than being the religion that seeks renewal of soul and draws man closer to God, irrespective of race, sex and educational status; the faith, as practised in America, is filled with “horrible inconsistencies” (Douglass, 1995, p. 71). One of the inconsistencies is the enslavement and wanton killings of blacks by white Americans who misinterpret the religion and adopt it as an excuse to privilege the white race and inferiorise black

Americans – who in their collective unconscious are archetypes of impoverishment. Blacks to them are merely hewers of wood and drawers of water, and exist on the periphery of American Dream.

### Conclusion

This article has examined the evils of transatlantic slavery in the United States of America. It argues that slavery reduces human worth and subjects humans to untold hardship. It believes that Stockholm Syndrome is a defence strategy used by the enslaved and their descendants to escape the pains of slavery and post slavery American racial tensions. Slavery subjugated them; the enslavers further used Christianity (religion) as an ideological weapon to imprison the minds of the enslaved and prevent them from reasoning by making them accept abnormalities as normality. While some of them developed irrational love and emotional attachment for their enslavers – the way victims of abduction sometimes do for their captors, others accept the religious ideologies, culture and language of their enslavers as the model to define themselves and express their identity. They also do so to the detriment of their own indigenous cultural practices.

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## FEMALE 'WEIGHT' IN THE NIGERIAN FICTION: IYAYI'S VIOLENCE AND IBEZUTE'S DANCE OF HORROR

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### Abstract

This article is a masculinist examination of Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Chukwuma Ibezute's *Dance of Horror*. The article despises the ideological stance of some feminists – that women are unfairly treated in society and in literature by men. It explores women's relationship with men and contends that every woman is in control of her man and society around her. The article shows how women use marriage, love, sex, their body, social status, kitchen and cradle influence to hold men to ransom. The article, however, recommends that men should not act on their women's unverifiable and manipulative claims. In all, the article concludes that women are oppressive and exploitative to men.

**Keywords:** female weight, feminist, 'masculinist', men, women, oppression.

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Before now, the focus of African literature has only been on the socio-political conditions of the African people. Attention was not paid to the fact that male writers and critics took centre stage in literary creativity and criticism until a group of activists in feminist movement began to accuse the male creative writers and the male critics of improper representation of women in literature (Awuzie, 2015, p. 2). In her article entitled "Women and Nigerian Literature", Ogunyemi (1988, p. 60) asserts that "the literature is phallic, dominated as it is by male writers and male critics who deal almost exclusively with male characters and male concerns, naturally aimed at a predominantly male audience". Okereke (2000, p. 80) affirms that "the male has been the producer of literary meaning and the female has been more of passive consumer of this male-constructed meaning". Okereke maintains that "male writers assigned the multiple spaces in transformation to the men, while the women, even when highly educated, served to rest and revitalize the tired men for greater performance and achievement" (p. 81).

Feminist ideology in literature started in Europe and America. While some feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) believe in women's equality with men, they condemn distinguished sex roles as an oppressive man-made structure. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft despises sex differences. In this book, as Adams (1992) observes, Wollstonecraft is of the view that "the mind does not know sex". Adams buttresses this point with Claire Tomalin's remark that "society is wasting its assets if it retains women in the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistresses, denies them economic independence and encourages them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else" (Adams, 1992, p. 394).

This feminist ideology in literature which has earlier been practiced in Europe and America was brought to limelight in Africa by the Africa's first female writer, Flora Nwapa, through her novel, *Efuru* (1966), and her essay, "Women and Creative Writing in Africa", which was first published in 1998 as Awuzie (2015) rightly observes. This essay expounds that *Efuru* is a reaction to the misrepresentation of women in the earlier works of Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, and Elechi Amadi. Through her work Nwapa advocates the recognition of what she calls 'woman-being' in literature and in society. In her words: "I try to project a more balanced image of African womanhood. Male authors undoubtedly neglect to point out the positive side of womanhood" (Nwapa, 2007, p. 527). Nwapa enhances the



image of the African woman in *One is Enough* (1981). This novel is a representation of the African woman and her strive for self-actualization. Within this trend in African literature emerged other activists in feminist movement such as Buchi Emecheta (*The Joys of Motherhood* – 1977) and Mariama Ba (*So Long A Letter* – 1980), to mention only two. In their works they attack patriarchal society for enslaving and oppressing women and make a case for the liberation of women. Of course, they argue that women should have equal rights and recognition with men. In this connection, Chukwuma (1994, p. ix) defines feminism as “a rejection of inferiority and a striving for recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human being. Feminism is a reaction to such stereotypes which deny them a positive identity”. Female critics such as Virginia Ola, Helen Chukwuma, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, Juliet Okonkwo, Emilia Oki, Ebele Eko, and Nana Wilson Tagoe, to name only a few, are supporting voices to the feminist movement and ideology in Africa.

However, this feminist ideology is despised by Masculinists. The stance of masculinists is that there are impenetrable sex differences, and these differences are God-ordained or natural. Therefore, feminists who try to oppose these differences by legislation and social arrangement are dragging development through a false misleading observation. Going by this, masculinism is seen as men’s rights movement and ideology that studies the sexes complementary and independent by exigency. According to Itulua-Abumere (2013), “the critical writings of men and masculinity which constitute the sociology of masculinity seek to highlight the ways in which men’s powers come to be differentiated, naturalized and embedded across all cultures, political borders and organizational networks” (p. 42).

Warren Farrell, a former ardent feminist, is one of the masculinists in America who does not believe in women’s equality with men. He says that “nobody believes in equality anyway” (Svoboda, 1997, p. 7), because there are male roles as well as female roles. He maintains that “men don’t oppress women any more than women oppress men. The whole concept of men and women oppressing each other is ridiculous. That’s a fabrication of the feminist movement. What is true is *“that both sexes have roles that can legitimately be considered oppressive, but those roles are not roles designed by men or women, they were designed by biological necessity and the necessity of survival”* (Svoboda, 1997, p. 5) (Italics mine). He further states that many researchers have shown that

“women batter men and men batter women equally” (Svoboda, 1997, 6). The import of this is that both feminism and masculinism are struggles to correct disbenefits caused by gender roles.

In Africa, masculinist ideology commenced with the publication of Chinweizu’s *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy* (1990). In this book Chinweizu opposes feminist ideology. He contends that “feminist propaganda and conventional knowledge notwithstanding, it seems prima facie odd to claim that women are powerless in society and in particular, over men”. He maintains that “women do get, and always did get, what they want – be it riches, or thrones, or the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their men folk are obliged to endure” (p. 11). He adds that women do achieve their wants from men by means of any of the following: “women’s control of the womb; women’s control of the kitchen; women’s control of the cradle; the psychological immaturity of man relative to woman; and man’s tendency to be deranged by his own excited penis” (p. 14). Thus, it is certainly incorrect to claim that women are unfairly treated in society and in literature, because from creation woman has been in control of everything, including man (her head) whom she considers to be her oppressor.

However powerful a man maybe, his power is used to serve the women in his life, that would make dubious the notion that men are masters over women. Because every man has as boss his wife, or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world but women rule the men who rule the world (Chinweizu, 1990, p. 12).

This assertion of Chinweizu echoes Sigmund Freud’s contribution to the Masculinist ideology. Freud, in his study of the human psyche, posits that “in the greater number of ambitious day-dreams, too, we can discover a woman in some corner, for whom the dreamer performs all his heroic deeds and at whose feet all his triumphs are to be laid” (1993, pp. 37–38).

This Masculinists’ view of the relationship between men and women has been reflected in fictional works of most African writers, as exemplified by Festus Iyayi and Chukwuma Ibezute. These writers are Nigerians who have gained recognition across Africa and the globe through their imaginative works. While Iyayi’s *Violence* (1979) has

attracted a lot of criticisms, Ibezute's *Dance of Horror* (2004) is beginning to receive critical attention also from critics of African literature. In "Literature as a Moral Thermometer: A Humanistic Approach to Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*", Mbanefo S. Ogene contends that Iyayi's *Violence* and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* are tools for "moral stability and development of individual, national and political life" (p. 65). He states that *Violence* is a novel which depicts class struggles in the Nigerian society. Maintaining that the novel also exposes the faces of corruption and exploitation, he adds that the text "is reformative" because the "Biblical example of Jesus Christ sermons on the mountain to his disciples" are used "to condemn and satirize the poor, obnoxious and uncivilized aspects of the Nigerian culture" (p. 59). Ushie and Nta (2012) dwell on 'descriptive focus as semiotic markers, that is the signs and symbols or the 'distinct features of the text (the novel, *Violence*)' are literary ingredients for producing meaning 'within the novel' (p. 46). While Ushie and Nta also point out that the novel draws attention to a society consisting of two classes: the poor and the affluence, they maintain that 'a coalescence of pictorial language (literary semiotics) and the semiotics of symbolic characterization corresponding to physical descriptive focus and the abstract description, respectively, effectively construct the mock reality in the novel' (p.48).

Two other critics who have commented on Iyayi's *Violence* are Abubakar Mohammed Sani and Manimangai Mani. Sani and Mani, while looking at the portrayal of working class people in Iyayi's *Violence*, assert that "Iyayi in *Violence* portrays the working class not as passive but as individuals who believe in struggling for their freedom, who are conscious and are prepared to face their problems courageously" (p. 39). They further state that 'in the novel, Festus Iyayi, presents a balanced picture of both the working class and their exploiters'; and that both classes 'show a degree of human weaknesses and strength, although it is abundantly clear that the author is on the side of the working class' (p. 39). On his own part, Yakubu (2015) observes that the author of *Violence* (1979) uses "foregrounding in the novel to create his characters with emotional attachment so that as we read, we sympathize with them in their plight" (p. 3). Yakubu maintains that "in the novel there are words that are associated with exploitation, oppression, violence, death, suffering, disease, neglect, suffocation, class struggle, deprivation, etc., suggesting unpleasant experience and dehumanizing

condition and hence, the need for change” (p. 2). This call for a change makes Ujowundu (2013) to argue that *Violence* is a “Marxist-oriented novel that advocates force against all the forms of exploitation, deprivation and unpatriotism in our society” (p. 307). Ujowundu upholds the fact that “in *Violence*, we are constantly made aware of the political, social and economic forces which determine individual life, men and women relationships, love and family ties” (p. 309).

Coming to Ibezute’s *Dance of Horror* (2004), on the blurb of the Cel-Bez and Company edition of *Dance of Horror* (2004), Angie Izuagba observes that “in this literary work [...] the author vividly exposes the horrors and humiliation women undergo and the utter disregard men have for the supposedly weaker sex”. This observation by Izuagba is feministic. It is what this paper tends to oppose. While Awuzie (2015) comments that “in *Dance of Horror* there are good and bad wife characters” (p. 8), Okereke (2017) points out that the novel “shows the conflicts of birth details, wife characters, son characters, behavior, will, culture and choice of wife that emerge as a consequence of running a polygynous family” (p. 71). Apart from Awuzie who has investigated Ibezute’s *Dance of Horror* and other two novels from the masculinist point of view, others have either looked at it from the feminist standpoint or from the angle of the place or function of literature in society. And when it comes to the study of Iyayi’s *Violence*, the few critics mentioned here have examined the novel either from the humanistic approach or from the Marxist ideological viewpoint or from the literary stylistic standpoint. There does not seem to be any fully-detailed comparative study of female ‘weight’ in Iyayi’s *Violence* and Ibezute’s *Dance of Horror*. Therefore, this essay will explore the delineation of women’s relationship with men in Iyayi’s *Violence* (1979) and Ibezute’s *Dance of Horror* (2004). The discussion will be that men are under the weight or control of women.

### **Female ‘Weight’ in Iyayi’s *Violence***

Festus Iyayi of Nigeria is among the second generation of Nigerian novelists. What this means is that Iyayi is among those Nigerian novelists whose works do not treat themes of colonial rule culture conflict, but treat topical issues in post-independent Nigeria. Apart from *Violence* which he published in 1979, his other two novels are *The Contract* (1982) and *Heroes* (1986). *Iyayi’s Violence* is set in Benin City,

Nigeria. This novel (like Ibezute's *Dance of Horror*) presents a picture of men who are under the weight of their women folk, which conforms to Masculinist ideology. *Violence* is used to show how influential and how much power a woman has over her man. In other words, in the novel, woman is represented as being in control of her man and society around her. Iyayi (like Ibezute) puts into use some of the novelistic tools such as archetypes and symbols that have become constituents of the masculinist ideology, especially those raised in Chinweizu's book. In the novel for instance, wife characters, Adisa and Queen represent women who show that they are in control of their husbands – Idemudia and Obofun. Adisa, Idemudia's wife, considers herself a house wife who must be catered for by Idemudia, her husband, and as such, Idemudia must provide money for food if they are to eat in the house. It is indicated in the novel that there is no odd service Idemudia has not done in order to please his wife, Adisa.

He had even sold his blood to make money. Yes, given out pints of his blood for as little as fifteen naira a pint. Sold his blood so that he and Adisa would not starve, so that they would survive. And this he has not done once nor twice but many times (p.154).

It is revealed that Adisa is not concerned about how her husband makes money but her interest is in the money itself. Ogene (2017, p. 58) comments that "Adisa who is Idemudia's wife" contributes "to the burden of the poor man, Idemudia".

When it comes to clothing, Idemudia goes extra miles to ensure that Adisa clothes better than himself. Of course, "for the past year or more, he hadn't bought a single shirt for himself. All the money he got he had spent on buying her a few clothes, so she wouldn't go naked as he went naked" (p. 256). Even though Idemudia and his wife represent the underprivileged in the Nigerian society, Idemudia's activity shows that a man thinks more of how to satisfy her woman than himself. In other words, his activity suggests that a man's actions are controlled by the woman in his life.

As regards Queen, her weight over her husband, Obofun, is disclosed in the story of how Obofun's love for her leads him into establishing "all his businesses in her name" (p. 192). Queen is in charge of the husband's Supermarket, Freedom Motel and Samson and Delilah Hotel. She is also in charge of her own "two modern storey buildings in New Benin". Out of the two houses, she rents one "to the university at nine thousand naira a

year” and the university pays “for two years in advance. The things a woman could do!” (p. 23). All this points to the fact that Obofun’s wife (Queen) is in control of everything (her husband’s pocket inclusive) – as she negotiates business and perhaps determines how much money would enter Obofun’s pocket. It is important to point out that as their marriage grows sore, Obofun does not divorce Queen, because his property is held in the name of Queen, his wife. The novel’s narrator says that: “He didn’t really realize how concerned he was until he had consulted lawyers about what would happen if he divorced his wife. He was cornered. He knew it, and he had to live with it” (p. 197). This shows how love can blind a man to the point of not knowing when he goes against himself. This apart, the existence of their growing children also helps to keep him bound to his wife. An illustration of this is seen in the following short passage:

They could never leave each other now. At least, he couldn’t afford to. They were no longer husband and wife in the true sense of the word. They were strangers to each other in many respects [...] Now there was nothing but the bitterness, the hatred, the anger, the frustrating knowledge that he couldn’t divorce her. Even apart from his property which was held in the name of his wife, there were the children growing up. No, he told himself, there could be no question of separation (p. 197).

What is deduced from here is that in a society the passiveness of some men makes them become accommodationists. The Obofuns of this world will conditionally live under the same house roof but will always mind themselves and do their things differently.

Another way by which a woman shows that she is in control of her man is by borrowing money and leaving the repay of the money for her man. For example, in the novel, Adisa who is still owing Mama Jimoh (one of the poor female characters) the sum of twenty-three naira, borrows additional five naira from her and states that when Idemudia becomes well, he will “find a job and pay off their debts” (pp.134–135). As long as Adisa is concerned all her burdens must be cast on the shoulders of Idemudia and he (Idemudia) must take care of all. This echoes the words of Chinweizu- that:

When a woman tells a man ‘I love you’ she means ‘I want you to feed me, clothe me, fuck me, get me great with child, and take me as your burden until I catch a better slave’[...]

In contrast, when a man tells a woman 'I love you', he means 'I am eager to be your slave, and ready to do everything I can to make you satisfied and happy' (1990, pp. 42-43).

In *Violence* (1979) some of the female characters are depicted in a way that shows that their male folks are ever ready to give their all to them for sexual gratification. In the novel, Obofun, the husband of Queen, is portrayed as a passive husband, because he borders not about his wife's (Queen's) activities. "It is rumoured that Obofun doesn't care" (p. 27). His wife, Queen, is that archetypal woman in literature that uses her body to obtain what she does not have. It is indicated in the novel that "she uses her body to get what she wants but doesn't give herself until she has got whatever it is firmly in her grasp. No wonder she is richer than Obofun" (p. 32). Her body serves as a means of exploiting men economically. Thus, Queen represents women who cheat on their husbands. However, Obofun who is initially ignorant of his wife's philandering habit goes about celebrating and boasting about his wife's faithfulness, honesty and loyalty to him (p. 33). This boasting of Obofun makes Iriso (another male character who belongs to the ruling class) to laugh in his (Obofun's) face – suggesting that Obofun is nothing but a man under the weight of his wife, Queen.

There is inducement of man by woman's body in the novel. For instance, Queen uses her body to manipulate and induce Iriso, an agent of government, to supply her tins of milk and eggs worth five hundred naira for free. After receiving the supplied items, she begins to think that men are "so foolish [...] and so cheap!" (p. 89). Iriso narrates his experience with Queen thus:

I am in trouble, he complained. We went into her bedroom and she started telling me that she would want a regular supply of peak milk, beef, eggs and other things. I told her there was nothing wrong with that except that she had to pay for it. She said nothing for a long time [...] As I was saying, instead of telling me exactly how much she would be prepared to pay, she came out with it and said that there were different kinds of payments. Then she said she liked me, stood up from the bed on which she had been sitting and invited me to help her undo the zip of her dress. 'She was going to change her dress, she said'. She expected some important visitors. You can trust me of course. I helped her get off her dress and that was the beginning of the end. I couldn't help it. Very soon I was on top of her, and promising her to bring all the things she wanted for nothing. Then she pushed me away (Iyayi, 1979, pp. 31-32).

From what transpires between Iriso and Queen, it can be said that as far as love is concerned men are slaves in the hands of women – as evoked in Chinweizu’s book. By portraying the character, Iriso, as Queen’s love-slave in his work, Iyayi seems to agree with, and draw his ideological position from Chinweizu’s theory of love. In this theory Chinweizu (1990, p. 42) avers that “love is a disease of the heart terrible for man’s liberty, but an excellent pep pill for a woman hunting for a slave: When love smites a man, it turns him into a dazed prey; when it possesses a woman, she becomes a clear-eyed, calculating huntress coolly stalking her befuddled prey”. This is reflected in *Violence* as demonstrated in the preceding quotation. Besides, it is demonstrated in the novel that soon after Iriso realizes that he has fallen prey and has played foul, he exclaims: “Five hundred naira! Three thousand eggs, two thousand tins of milk! Christ! What have I done? Given away for nothing? (p. 102). Despite the fact that Iriso regrets his deeds momentarily, yet he is induced again by Queen’s body. He longs for another meeting with Queen in symbolic Samson and Delilah Hotel at the Airport Road. He assures himself that Queen will contact him when she wants the milk – indicating how much a woman can control a man, using her body. This Samson and Delilah Hotel indicates a place of promiscuity. According to Ushie and Nta (2012):

The names “Samson” and “Delilah” conjure up the allusion to the biblical story of the love affair between Samson (a super powerful Israelite Nazarite) and Delilah (a Philistine woman). Israel and Palestine were arch enemies and Samson was a judge, a deliverer sent to deliver Israel from the oppression of former (Judges, pp. 14-16). But Samson became a lecherous man flirting with Philistine women who became instrumental to his destruction (p. 47).

Without doubt, the hotel’s name “Samson and Delilah” also epitomizes a place of prodigality, which is apt to drain Iriso’s economy.

Another instance of inducement by woman’s body is seen in the business transaction between a male cement dealer and Queen. It is important to note that Queen is also portrayed as a seeker of a better slave, and that better slave for her is the cement dealer. She exploits the cement dealer of his means of livelihood: “She had been with the man only twice and the cement had come. And to think that the man had come to her many times before she had finally agreed! She had no doubt that he would come again. They always come” (p. 89). The implication of these statements is that a woman’s



control over her man is not contestable. The statements also echo Chinweizu's words – that “an addiction which makes a man desperate for sex increases woman's power over him” (1990, p. 34).

In the world of the novel economic exploitation is highlighted. A wife character, Queen, is portrayed as an employer of labour. Unlike Adisa who epitomizes the underprivileged women, Queen stands for women exploiters in the Nigerian society. According to Ogene (2017, p. 58), “Queen resembled corruption and oppression in the novel, *Violence*”. She uses her social position and her physique to get connection with men in authority, the rich, and exploits them. She is as conservative as every other member of the ruling class in Nigeria. As an employer of labour, she exerts her control over her workers – Idemudia, Patrick, Osaro, Omoifo and Bernard – who are all men, by underpaying them and not allowing them to demand a wage increase, or to protest against social injustice meted out to them (men). However, where anyone is caught discussing higher pays, that one is sacked. At her new construction site where the labourers work, “you will be here if you keep quiet” (p. 241). That is why Sani and Mani (2014) comment that “Idemudia and his colleagues are grossly exploited as workers with building contractors” (p. 39). This kind of situation in which these men see themselves is in itself dehumanizing. It is of course regarded in this novel as violence. For the male character, Idemudia, this form of violence consists “not of physical, brutal assault but of a slow and gradual debasement of himself, his pride as a man” (p. 243). The implication of this is that even though women do not mete out physical violence on men, they perpetrate psychological oppression against men. In other words, whereas male weight manifests itself in physical aggression, female weight is demonstrated in subtlety. That is why the male character, Iriso, describes Queen as “a cunning devil” (p. 30).

As Chinweizu (1990) posits that in society men are assigned tough tasks, in the novel this is also depicted. All the male characters are portrayed as tools used by the female characters to carry out difficult assignments. For instance, the poor man, Idemudia, and his friends, Osaro, Omoifo, Patrick and Bernard, are hired by Queen to offload one thousand five hundred bags of cement in the rain. The tough task of offloading cement in the rain coupled with starvation and exhaustion causes Idemudia to collapse and subsequently he is hospitalized. In addition, Queen sends her husband, Obofun, to go and confront Idemudia whom she allegedly accuses of stealing one

hundred and fifty bags of cement while offloading a three-trailer load of cement for her. Unfortunately, instead of meeting Idemudia, he meets Idemudia's wife, Adisa, who just returned from Ogbe hospital where Idemudia is receiving treatment over pneumonia. He finds it hard to accept her pleas of her husband's innocence over the accusation of stealing some bags of cement. In fact, he does not shamefully leave Idemudia's house until she provides him with the true picture of her husband's ill-health condition. It is revealed that: "the futility of his mission struck home to him and he began abusing himself for following his wife's words without properly checking to see if they were actually true" (Iyayi, 1979, p. 65). The lesson here is that, to avoid being ridiculed, men should not act on women's allegations. Rather, men should liberate themselves from women's unverifiable and manipulative claims.

Another example of assigning arduous work to men is seen in the case between Idemudia's parents. Idemudia's mother threatens that her husband who has no money 'must' buy a goat while she 'can' provide the cock and the tortoise (Iyayi 1979, p. 4) that will be used for the ritual that will unlock the door of job favour for Idemudia who has been jobless. From the foregoing, the use and attribution of the modal verbs 'can' to Idemudia's mother and 'must' to Idemudia's father shows that, while Idemudia's mother is not under compulsion to carry out even the easiest tasks, Idemudia's father is under obligation to perform the hardest tasks in their family. Even though his wife's order to him results to and ends in a fight, her power over him is shown through the reaction of her son, Idemudia. It is demonstrated that as Idemudia's parents engage themselves in a fight, Idemudia rushes up to his father and stands between him and his mother. He grips "the hands of the father", which he (the father) cannot loosen. And finally, he warns the father never to "strike her again" (p. 8). As a consequence of this enactment, Idemudia's father sends Idemudia's mother and her children away. This is a mark of men's resistance against women's cradle influence and antagonism.

### **Female Weight in Ibezute's *Dance of Horror***

*Dance of Horror* is a novel by Ibezute which examines some "familial issues in modern Nigeria" (Okereke, 2017, p. 67). It is set in the fictional Okuroda community of Odigan State, a symbolic delineation of the eastern region of Nigeria, particularly the Igbo nation. The story is about a man, Okonem, the idolater, whose polygamous family is

in disarray as a result of the wives he marries and his special recognition of his biological son, Ahamefuna, over his adopted son, Amaechina.

Ibezute's *Dance of Horror* (like Iyayi's *Violence*) is used to demonstrate how much weight or power women exercise over their men counterparts. In the novel marriage announces a man's acceptance of a woman who will own him for life. For instance, a husband character like Amaechina suffers in the hands of his unnamed wife in the name of marriage. Regardless of the fact that his wife receives the approval of his father and his kinsmen before their marriage, she is portrayed as an oppressive wife. Her overpowering makes Amaechina to disagree with his people's idea of interfering in a man's choice of wife. He laments over his condition thus:

My own wife is a native. You and other elders agreed and approved of her before our marriage. But today, what is happening? Is everybody not in sympathy with me? All our people know her to be a hard woman (p. 67).

Okonem also experiences oppression from his second wife, Victoria. Of course, in the novel, the kind of woman a man marries as wife or keeps as mistress determines the extent of his peace, growth, and agitation. Both Amaechina and Okonem are portrayed as passive husbands who seem to believe that marriage is to be endured rather than to be enjoyed.

Another example of marriage serving as a means of enslaving a man is shown in the post-wedding experience of Ahamefuna, the husband of Emylia. It is illustrated that "since he got wedded to Emylia Ndiok and was now more religious he had been as cold as ice water as far as extra-marital affairs was concerned (p. 113). In other words, through church wedding, Ahamefuna is entitled and bound to only one wife, Emylia, and hence he cannot have any sexual intercourse with another woman throughout his life:

He considered himself living on social isolation to have been excessively loyal to his solemn promise at the altar in the presence of the officiating priest and numerous guests on their wedding day that he would be sharing his love only with Emylia (p. 104).

Ahamefuna wonders how other prominent men "have lovers and concubines here and there" (p. 104) but he has none, because Emylia has tied him with what he cannot tell (p. 104). The inference of this is that the exchange of vows between husband and wife at the church altar before the church congregation serves as a trap set to hold a

man unto a woman called his wife. To show how influential a wedded wife can be, Ahamefuna points out that when a man works in the same establishment with his wife, there is every tendency that the man will be caged by his wife. This is illustrated in his refusal of taking a job at Odingan State University where Emylia (his wife) works as a lecturer. In the words of the narrator:

he could not accept working with his wife in the same establishment where the woman could at every second or minute of the day bump into his office and cage him into not being free or having any privacy (p. 79).

In *Dance of Horror* (2004), there is the use of the woman body to control man and exploit him of his earnings. The novel portrays man as a captive to his woman, whether she is his wife or his mistress. Like in Iyayis *Violence* (1979, p. 89) where men are described as being foolish and cheap because of how they are easily manipulated and fooled by women, in Ibezute's *Dance of Horror* (2004), the husband character, the Director-General (DG) in the civil service, Jonah Johnson, is a personification of foolishness. He happily lavishes all the money he makes on his woman-friend, Lady Isabela, at Dokinab Bubbles Restaurant. In this novel Lady Isabela is an archetypal Jezebel who seduces and lures men, especially big men, into having sex and paying dearly for it. "Any man in a position of responsibility who entered into her grip never left her in his right senses, unless there is spiritual intervention" (p. 105). The likes of the former military administrator of the state and DG Jonah Johnson are, at different times, under her influence. It is indicated that her life story seems to announce that she is "created to rule men" who come "across her way" (p. 108). She is portrayed as a divorcee who had lived with two husbands respectively. It is demonstrated that "she got married at a tender age of nineteen to one of her secondary school teachers" (p. 108). But her control over her first husband is unbearable. Her husband accuses her of "disregard for, and let down on his person" (p.108). Hence he sends her away after eight years of marriage --- suggesting men's resistance against women oppression. Again, her second and final marriage crashes when she is caught making love with his husband's close friend in their matrimonial home. To show how powerful and how much influence she has over any man that comes her way, it is indicated that her sons (she had two sons each for her former two husbands) are sponsored overseas on different occasions" by her male friends. In addition, her sons send her "parcels, letters and money" (p. 109).

This shows that it is women who enjoy the wealth of their men, or even that of their sons.

In the novel, the male character, DG Jonah Johnson, represents husbands that try to revolt against being under the weight or influence of their wives. As a husband, Jonah (like every other husband character in the novel) considers his marriage with Monica as a means of being in bondage. As a consequence, he sneaks out from his wife and switches to his new-found woman-friend, Isabela, who describes him as “a consumable meat” (p. 105). This metaphoric description marks how a woman uses sex to hold her man to ransom. What Ibezute seems to be saying in this context is that when it comes to sexual urge, it is male creatures that run after their female counterparts. He writes that “women are not only great in the game, but highly enduring, more tactical and wiser in pretence when they are hungry for sex” (p. 116). He maintains that:

Such women’s wits have brought many great men—great generals in battle, those in the academia and men of thoughts, great men in politics and government—down from their high positions, on their knees begging a woman for love, notwithstanding her class. It is also true that in this process, many great men have been betrayed, humiliated and fooled. Others have been messed up and delivered into the hands of their enemies (Ibezute 2004, p. 116).

The experience of Jonah speaks volume of a husband who runs into a bigger trouble of a woman as he tries to escape from his wife’s grip. What is seen in this scene is a fight between a woman-friend character (Isabela) and a wife character (Monica). Both female characters battle over who should be in charge of a husband character (Jonah). It is illustrated that through Operation Trace Schema (Ibezute, 2004, p. 138) Monica (the wife of Jonah) together with her “hired troopers” (p. 155) is able to confront Isabela to release her husband. Later her husband returns home.

There is the use of kitchen by woman to rule her man in the world of the novel. For instance, despite the fact that Monica discovers her husband’s extra-marital affair with Isabela, she does not keep malice for him for too long. Instead, she tries to remain in charge of him by taking care of his stomach. Before he leaves for work in the morning she makes sure that he takes his breakfast (p. 171). It is after his breakfast, while driving slowly towards his office, that Jonah intones soberly, thus: “Women are experts

in caging a man. My wife Monica won't allow me to have free movement any longer. Well, it is always like that" (p.172). Soon after that breakfast Jonah turns a new man who cannot be controlled by another woman. In this instance Monica uses the food she prepares and serves her husband – as evoked in Chinweizu's theory of kitchen-power – to get her husband to his senses. He turns "to be a good and caring husband and father after the incident" (p. 172), at least for a while.

However, later, Isabela's style of making love with Jonah serves as a remote control used to keep Jonah to herself. To ensure that Isabela loses her grip on her husband, Monica visits her husband's elder brother in the village and complains to him how Jonah allows himself to be ruled by Isabela. Through the medicine given by a native doctor, and administered by Jonah's elder brother when he visited Jonah in the city, Isabela's relationship with Jonah is dissolved with a bad fight. After the fight, Jonah exclaims thus:

Haba! If it is medicine, I have spoilt it. It is over. This whore has held me to ransom for so long, deceiving me that I am the only one in her life. Bastard prostitute. She calls me Dearest and the Only One. All na wayo (p. 190).

In *Dance of Horror* (2004) a woman exhibits her rule over her man through her cradle influence, which is in line with the masculinist ideology. In this novel, wife characters are created and each of them is depicted as being mindful and in control of her own son. Examples of these wife characters are Okonem's unnamed senior wife and Victoria, his second wife. In this novel, Victoria who is married with 'unwanted' pregnancy bears a son named Amaechina who becomes Okonem's adopted son. However, seven years after Amaechina's birth, the barren senior wife of Okonem gives birth to Okonem's biological son named Ahamefuna. In the novel conflict arises immediately "the senior wife is delivered of a baby boy. The arrival of this boy is seen as a danger to Victoria's son's position in Okonem's family" (Okereke, 2017, p. 67). Because Victoria envisages that Okonem's biological son, Ahamefuna, will have recognition in the family of Okonem than her son, Amaechina, she uses her womb and cradle influence to tell him to undo his half-brother by all means and he succumbs to it. Throughout the episode, Amaechina is portrayed as a man who goes by her mother's dictates. For instance, his mother (Victoria) instructs him to consult a native doctor at Okonofa (his maternal village) who will help to make his half-brother Ahamefuna, go insane and he

obliges to it. Again, after his return from the native doctor's place, it is his mother (Victoria) who tells him to carry out the assignment given to him by the native doctor in the night, to avoid being seen by his adoptive father, Okonem, and he also follows it. Even at the point of his mother's death, he does not doubt his mother's order, which reads thus: "You must get rid of him in any possible way that won't implicate you, if ever you and your children will live in this village and possess your right of heritage" (p. 55).

### **Conclusion**

This discussion has demonstrated that the works of Iyayi and Ibezute, though written at different times, are reflections of the masculinist view of the relationship between men and women. The study has despised the ideological stance of some feminist – that men are oppressive and exploitative to women. It has contended and shown that a woman is control of her man and society around her. Specifically, it demonstrated that it is women who oppress and exploit men, and not the contrary.

The study of *Violence* (1979) and Ibezute's *Dance of Horror* (2004) revealed that men in Nigerian families think more of how to satisfy their women. It brought to light that there are apathetic men or what Awuzie calls "passive husbands" (p. 9) in Nigerian families. These apathetic men or passive husbands live as ceremonial heads and remain as accommodationists. They prefer to live with their oppressive and insolent wife without co-operation. In *Violence* (1979) the husband character, Obofun, is a typical example of an 'accommodationist', while in *Dance of Horror* (2004), Okonem and Amaechina are examples. It is revealed that love is a strong weapon with which a woman gets hold of her man and his property. The study of both novels showed that women use their body to exploit men economically; and that marriage is used to proclaim a man's acceptance of becoming a slave to his wife. This apart, it is also demonstrated and shown in the study of both novels that men are left with hard tasks in the society; that men's desperation for sex increased women's power over them; and that women perpetrate psychological oppression against men. While these are revealed in both novels, in *Dance of Horror* particularly, it is illustrated that a woman rules her man through her control of the kitchen. The wife character, Monica, for instance, uses her kitchen office to lure her husband, Jonah, into submissiveness. By serving her husband good food, Monica is able to win her husband's heart. In addition, the study of *Dance of Horror* showed how

the character, Victoria, uses her cradle influence to control her son, Amaechina, and consequently denies her husband, Okonem, his peace in their polygamous family. In all, the discussion concludes that men are under the weight of women. In other words, women are oppressive and exploitative to men.

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