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Editor's Preface

On behalf of our authors, reviewers, editorial board, and editorial team – I warmly welcome you to third issue of *ETKI: Journal of Literature, Theatre and Culture Studies*.

I am proud to present the fourth issue of *ETKI: Journal of Literature, Theatre and Culture Studies*. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the editorial board and the refereeing committee, especially the issue writers, for their help in delivering the second issue of this journal. I am equally grateful for the many authors who offered candidate contributions to this second issue – and for the many more colleagues around the globe who consistently provided critical but supportive reviews. Many of these reviewers were drawn from our Editorial Board, whose broader support has likewise been essential.

ETKI, like many scientific and academic journals that have pioneered literature and drama studies, aims to host self sacrificing and qualified works that have not had the chance to be published but must be delivered to readers and literature/drama experts. Each work that is filtered from the theoretical and practical knowledge of the authors and passed through the filter of field expert referees and editors will be included in the scope of this journal, which aims to close a gap in the world of literature, theatre and cultural studies. I wish *ETKI* to be beneficial to the academic world, and I wish it to guide our dear readers, field experts, professionals, undergraduate and graduate students in literature, cultural studies and the arts of stage, performance, theatre and drama.

Önder Çakırtaş
Editor-in-Chief

Editörün Önsözü

Yazarlarımız, hakemlerimiz, yayın kurulu ve yayın ekibimiz adına – *ETKİ: Edebiyat, Tiyatro ve Kültür İncelemeleri Dergisi*'nin üçüncü sayısına hoş geldiniz.

ETKİ: Edebiyat, Tiyatro ve Kültür İncelemeleri Dergisi'nin ikinci sayısını sunmaktan gurur duyuyorum. Bu derginin dördüncü sayısının yayımlanmasında emeği geçen başta sayı yazarları olmak üzere, yayın kuruluna ve hakem heyetine en içten teşekkürlerimi sunarım. Bu ikinci sayıya çeşitli katkılarda bulunan birçok yazara ve sürekli olarak eleştirel ve destekleyici incelemeler sunan dünya çapındaki birçok meslektaşına aynı derecede minnettarım. Bu hakemlerin çoğu, her zaman desteğini esirgemeyen yayın kurulumuzdan seçilmiştir.

ETKİ, edebiyat, tiyatro ve kültürel çalışmalara öncülük etmiş birçok bilimsel ve akademik dergi gibi, yayımlanma şansı bulamamış, okuyuculara ve edebiyat, tiyatro, kültür incelemeleri ve drama uzmanlarına ulaştırılması gereken özverili ve nitelikli eserlere ev sahipliği yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Edebiyat, tiyatro ve kültür dünyasındaki bir boşluğu kapatmayı hedefleyen bu dergide yazarların teorik ve pratik bilgilerinden süzülerek alanında uzman hakem ve editörlerin süzgecinden geçirilen her esere yer verilecektir. *ETKİ*'nin akademik dünyaya faydalı olmasını diliyor, siz değerli okuyucularımıza, alan uzmanlarına, profesyonellere, lisans ve lisansüstü öğrencilerimize edebiyat, kültürel çalışmalar ile sahne, performans, tiyatro ve drama sanatlarında yol göstermesini temenni ediyorum.

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Navigating Ethno-Religious Postnormality in Nigeria: Readings in Ahmed Yerima's *Pari*

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Abstract

Drama has contributed a great deal to the development of the entity called Nigeria. Playwrights in Nigeria have used the dramatic medium to navigate and interrogate issues concerning family, economy, culture, politics, and religion little wonder why the development of any society can be traced to the dramatic contents in distinct periods of their existence. Ahmed Yerima has carved a niche for himself in the Nigerian theatre space. Having written several plays that mirror major tribes of the country, he sells himself out again as a true Nigerian in *Pari*; a reaction to the recent political, economic, and philosophical anomalies in Nigeria predicated upon ethnicity and religion which this paper reads from the lenses of postnormality. As propounded by Ziauddin Sada, the hydra-headed concept of postnormality is couched around three major strands: Chaos, Contradictions, and Complexities, which can be seen in every facet of the Nigerian society. This paper brings the theory of postnormality to bear in the ethno-religious interrogation of *Pari* using the content analysis approach. This paper observes that the complex, contradictory and chaotic face of Nigerian democracy, is largely predicated upon the mutating ethno-religious ideologies introduced by 'ethno-religious entrepreneurs' as a strategy to negotiate political power in the nation. It concludes that more than anything else in the socio-political parlance of the nation, Nigerians must jettison ethnicity and religion as yardstick for leadership assessment and focus on ability, efficiency and capacity of politicians if we must make anything out of our latent democracy.

Keywords:

postnormality,
chaos,
complexity,
contradictions,
Ziauddin Sada,
Pari,
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Nijerya'daki Etno-Dini Postnormallikte Gezinmek: Ahmed Yerima'nın *Pari*'sinde Okumalar

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Özet

Drama, Nijerya denen teşekkülün gelişimine büyük bir katkıda bulunmuştur. Nijerya'daki oyun yazarları: aile, ekonomi, kültür, siyaset ve dinle ilgili konuları ele almak ve sorgulamak için tiyatroyu araç olarak kullanmışlardır. Herhangi bir toplumun gelişiminin, varoluşlarının farklı dönemlerinde dramatik içeriklerle izlenebilmesine şaşmamak gerekir. Ahmed Yerima Nijerya tiyatro dünyasında kendine bir yer edinmiştir. Ülkenin belli başlı kabilelerine ayna tutan birçok oyun yazmış olan yazar, bu makalenin postnormalite merceğinden okuduğu, Nijerya'da etnisite ve din üzerine kurulu son dönem siyasi, ekonomik ve felsefi anomalilere bir tepki niteliğindeki *Pari*'de gerçek bir Nijeryalı olarak kendini yeniden satıyor. Ziauddin Sadar tarafından ortaya atıldığı şekliyle, çok başlı ve çok sorunlu postnormalite kavramı üç ana unsur etrafında şekillenmektedir: Nijerya toplumunun her alanında görülebilen Kaos, Çelişkiler ve Karmaşıklıklar. Bu makale, postnormalite teorisini, içerik analizi yaklaşımını kullanarak *Pari*'nin etno-dini sorgulamasına taşımaktadır. Bu makale, Nijerya demokrasisinin karmaşık, çelişkili ve kaotik yüzünün, büyük ölçüde 'etno-dinsel girişimciler' tarafından ülkedeki siyasi gücü müzakere etme stratejisi olarak ortaya atılan etno-dinsel ideolojilerin değişmesine dayandığını gözlemlemektedir. Bu çalışma, ulusun sosyo-politik dilinde her şeyden çok, Nijeryalıların liderlik değerlendirmesinde etnik köken ve dini kıstas olarak kullanmaktan vazgeçmeleri ve gizli demokrasimizden bir şeyler elde etmek istiyorsak politikacıların yetenek, verimlilik ve kapasitelerine odaklanmaları gerektiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

postnormalite,
kaos,
karmaşıklıklar,
çelişkiler,
Ziauddin Sadar,
Pari,
etno-dini,
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Introduction: Welcome to the Postnormal Times

Everything seems to be in a state of flux, nothing can be trusted. All that we regard as normal is melting away right before us. The post-normal times theory attempts to make sense of a rapidly changing world, where uncertainty is the dominant theme ...(Sardar, 2019)

Since the last decade, studies about futures gained prominence, fueled by unprecedented changes in the system of things that were hitherto perceived as normal. These changes, consequent upon boisterous interactions and unending complexities in the workings of the society, have plunged the world into what Ziauddin Sardar (2010) considers the ‘postnormal times (PNT).’ These interactions and unending complexities are the drivers of the crises which reinforces the tripod of PNT which are complexities, contradictions, and chaos otherwise called the three C’s of PNT. Hence, when we are welcomed to the PNT, we are welcomed to a period “when all is uncertain, nothing is predictable” (Gardner 139) and “little or nothing can be trusted or gives us confidence... the spirit of our age, is characterized by uncertainty, rapid change, and realignment of power, upheaval and chaotic behavior.” (Sardar 435)

Postnormality unlike other epochs – classic, modernism, and postmodernism – is characterized by deep ambiguity, rapid change, and uncertainty so much that the future is feared; the continuity of systems and boundaries is non-existent. The fear of the future is a very significant feature of postnormality and the future according to Sardar “is associated with the loss of power, paradigmatic angst, and potential collapse of society, civilization and the ecosystems of the Earth. Part of the fear comes from the fact of the epochal shift itself and the realization that return to ‘normal’ is not a viable option.”(*On the Nature of ...* 18)

PNT is not merely another ‘post’ as in the case of post-modern, post-liberal, and post-ideological concepts used for analysis and deconstruction, but a diagnostic and prognostic medium for assessing and predicting outcomes in studies about futures. In the times before now – *the normal times* –, there was confidence in our values and facts as well as the fact that we can take time to make credible and appropriate decisions but in the PNT, “the future seems like a runaway train barreling into the unknown.” (postnormaltim.es/what-postnormal-times) The ideologies of postnormality should be understood from spatial context and time; the reason being that what might seem postnormal in one place might not be in another.

Generally, however, “the world is confronting a host of old, dying orthodoxies: modernity, postmodernity, neoliberalism, hierarchical structures of society, institutions, and organizations: top-down politics; and everything else that has shaped and defined the modern

world.”(postnormaltim.es/what-postnormal-times) In the words of Galbraith (2014) we have approached the “end of normalcy” given the complexities, chaotic and contradictory features that prompt the workings of the present society. Complexity is the first feature of PNT as it presents a different phenomenon from what hitherto was viewed as the norm or normal. This is brought about by the intricate intersections of several systems, philosophies, and structures that drive contemporary times. These independent parts connect and interact with each other, and are characterized by uncertainties, multiple perspectives, and prone to chaotic behavior.

Contradictions are another feature of the PNT which speaks to logical inconsistencies within the complex systems that drives chaotic outcomes. “Contradictions often present the first signs that a system is moving towards complexity, chaos, and eventually postnormality.” (<https://postnormaltim.es/essentials/3cs>) Chaos being the last force that drives PNT is the outcome of complexities and contradiction. It refers to many independent variables interacting in many ways within the network of complex systems. At the height of the chaos, a complex system can collapse or mutate into another form of complexity or a new order. These features give postnormality away as manufactured normality or what Sardar and Sweeney (110) in the *Three Tomorrows of Postnormal Times* read as “changing change” which leaves more questions than answers.

Postnormal Reading of Nigeria's Ethno-Religious and Political Climate

We will anchor on the premise of Sardar and Sweeney's conclusion above to run a diagnosis and prognosis of Nigeria's future given the present interactions and overlapping of the ethnic and religious complexities, contradictory and chaotic the emissions that shape the nation's political landscape. Thereafter, we intend to interrogate Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* using the canons of postnormality as established in Nigeria's religio-political workings to evolve a strategy for navigating the current turbulent, chaotic, and unpredictable terrains of postnormal Nigeria.

The multi-ethnic face of the Nigerian nation-state qualifies the nation as a complex system and the ethno-religious diversities which characterize this complex system exude contradictions and chaos. The ethno-religious interactions and interference in the political and economic space of Nigeria have produced conflicts which in turn have recently threatened a collapse of the Nigerian state such as the current clamor of secession and mutation of others such as the terrorist inclinations of certain ethnic and religious groups. Today, “the Nigerian political space has itself become a theatre featuring the comedy of manners and comedy of errors designed by macadamized electioneering processes and illuminated by tribal and religious wrangling over leadership.” (Abakporo, 161) The mutating and conflicting ideologies of Islam, Christianity, and traditional religion within the nation's political and ethnic evolution have further challenged the

attainment of nationhood. Jegede (53) confirms this perspective thus;

Sustainable and lasting religious peace across the nation has been aborted times without number owing to the recurrent cases of religious conflicts. As those religious conflicts linger on, distrust and suspicion became the order of the day, especially between the adherents of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria.

The battle for ethnic and religious superiority overrides the leadership landscape of Nigeria so much that within the evolution and transitions in government, power tussle has dragged along ethnic and religious lines which threatens the survival and unity of the nation and seems to align with the prediction of Carol Lancaster that “political divisions would increasingly fall along ethnic or regional lines, heightening tensions, and ultimately threatening national unity (Cited in Ake, 94). Cases of power tussle along ethno-religious borders are replete in Nigeria’s history; a reference point is captured in the International IDEA (82) report;

[...] Now the government of Olusegun Obasanjo is raising fears about a reversal from Muslim to Christian dominance of the security forces and state structures ... His government is reported to have removed most of the Muslim commanders in the armed forces and replaced them with Christian officers. A chapel has been constructed in the statehouse in Aso Rock, previously there were three mosques and no church in the complex ... These factors might have been conjugated in the minds of Muslim activists’ fears about a Christian ‘hidden agenda’. The attempted introduction of the Sharia legal system by some states in the federation might therefore be an attempt to checkmate what they consider to be a Christian threat.

From the above report, there seems to be an ethno-religious undertone to the governance of the entity called Nigeria. Corroborating this idea also is the statement of the Mustapha Jokolo, the Former Emir of Gwandu (19) “We [Muslims] have been pushed to the wall and it is time to fight.... Obasanjo is trampling on our rights and Muslims must rise and defend their rights. The more we continue to wait, the more we will continue to be marginalized.”

It is within this framework that one can agree with Felbab-Brown and James (2012) that the north has seen far more ethnic, tribal, and religious violence, often manipulated by politicians for selfish political gains — especially in areas where neither Muslims nor Christians are a clear majority. Reactions to the above resulted in the adoption, funding, and enhancement of the terrorist base of Boko Haram. Besides that, Obasanjo’s perceived suppressive ethno-religious acts above found a counter-reaction in Buhari’s administration with the 2015 registration of the country with the Islamic Coalition against terrorism formed by majorly Islamic countries at the instance of

Saudi Arabia to fight international terrorism... barely two weeks after stating that Nigeria was not a member (Nwabughio, 2016) and forceful retirement of defense chiefs, a majority of whom are Christians. This confirms Serra's position that in PNT, "there is seldom a direct cause and effect relationship. Nowadays phenomena are the result of complex networks of causality in which many causal factors are intermingled." (Serra 249)

Theatre and Society

Theatre in particular acts as a mirror of life with every event recorded therein in all its manifestations, the theatre can enclose the cosmic as well as every day human existence. The theatrical event can provide an occasion for the validation of all that is religious, political, economic and social within the community. Theatre have maintained fidelity with the dialectic socio-political and cultural outlook of various cultures. The visual and performative of several African communities are reflective of their socio-cultural, religious, economic and political realities from the pre-colonial periods till present. Drama overtime, have been used to mirror the realities of a people and their struggle to grasp, interrogate, project and negotiate their identities, place and culture. Drama according to Adie (2013) underwent a flurry of experimentation to fully grasp its potential. Through theological and mythical education, theatre was converted from a setting for just domestication and entertainment to a radical platform that fosters critical thought, consciousness, and empowerment. With reference to several recent South African plays, Krueger (2007) evaluates the theatre as an ideal place for inquiries into the cultural negotiations involved in the delineation and transformation of identities.

The dynamic nature of drama and other theatre forms have also been deployed towards projecting or interrogating certain religious tenets and virtues. According to Crowe (2013), insofar as religion and the arts both strive to understand and give meaning to human existence, it may be said that they have always been linked, and that they form part of the cultural roots. However, it is frequently suggested that theatre has a particularly intimate relationship with the ritual side of religion. Several dramatists in Africa such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Tewfik Alhakim, and Wole Soyinka among others have captured the intricacies and impacts of the new religions (Christianity and Islam) to indigenous African communities.

Theatre has also been utilized in socio-political negotiations within a society. Plays such as Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures*, Femi Osofisan's *A Restless Run of Locusts*, Gloria Ernest-Samuel's *The Beautiful Masquerade* and Iyorwuese Hagher's *Swem Karagbe* among others are representations of the political climate in Nigeria both at the local and international level. Several critics have also maintained that the art must always keep tabs with the socio-political climate of

the society and that artists must ensure to align their works with the prevailing socio-political realities of their societies to remain relevant. (Achebe (1983); Boal (1979); Asigbo (2008); & Ebo (2008)) Theatre artists are therefore advised to work for change. By doing this according to Agu (2005), they ought to take the topic of discussion off the stage of the theatre and confront society heads-on. Theatre practitioners have not been effective in doing this, and they may require new perspectives to introduce theatre to a broader arena where arguments are currently resolved dialogue or the gun.

In the line of these ideologies, Nigerian drama have continued to be inundated by socio-political issues. The several issues (such as poor educational background of politicians, corruption, macadamized democratic processes, skewed religious philosophies, insurgence, banditry and ethnicity) that have pervaded the political landscape in Nigeria, have caught the eyes of theatre artistes in the nation. Recently, one can hardly find any dramatic text about Nigeria that avoids the socio-political intricacies of the nation, but Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* illuminates the most current issues that threaten national growth, peace and development: Religion and Ethnicity. Issues of leadership in Nigeria have largely been drawn along the lines of ethnic and religious conduits which *Pari* captures as will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

Postnormality: Nigeria's Ethno-Religious and Political Climate in Ahmed Yerima's *Pari*

The new nation called Nigeria should be the estate of our great-grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent the change of power. We use the minorities of the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us, and never allow them to have control over their future. (Sir Ahmadu Bello)

The process of transition across ethnic and religious borders in Nigerian leadership kill the idea of continuity as an important key in governance by creating “threatening uncertainties for groups and opens up a range of transitory political opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs.” (Gurr 85) These religious approaches to governance with underlying tribal markings paved the way for the sordid face of Nigerian leadership, the enthronement of her corrupt over layer, and an array of its negative effects on the masses wherein Ama, a major character in *Pari* concludes that “This country is dying” (Yerima 31)

The focus in this discourse will be the structures put in place by religious and ethnic entrepreneurs to advance the power struggle within the Nigerian space. Ethnic and religious entrepreneurs as used in this work denote the power structures that benefit from such religious and

ethnic upheavals or what Onapajo (59) describes as “religious capital.” The chaos that emanates from these ethno-religious complexities and contradictions in recent times compel on to rethink the place of religion in national unity and development. It also lends credibility to the assessment of Asigbo (37-38) that “this is a country that thrives best in controversies. Besides, as our people say, every crisis is an opportunity for us the leaders to feather our nest... we can go to sleep with our two eyes closed knowing our agenda is continuing.”

The carnage and its devastating impacts by the Boko Haram Islamic sect are the rubrics of chaotic religio-political manifestations which stimulates Yerima's documentation of *Pari*. The sect according to Vanguard (2009) stands to oppose western education and its negative effects on Islam as well as the social and political ills associated with the western domination of the Nigerian state. Campbell (1) sees the sect as “a radical Islamist movement ... that combines a sectarian, radical Islamic agenda with violence. Its stated goal is the establishment of a Sharia state... and opposes the Islam of the traditional northern Nigerian establishment, which is broadly tolerant.” In a more elaborate sense, Thurston (5) put it this way;

[...] The sect's theology and politics encompass more than hatred for Western influence. Its worldview fuses two broader ideas. First, there is a religious exclusivism that opposes all other value systems, including rival interpretations of Islam. This exclusivism demands that Muslims choose between Islam and a set of allegedly anti-Islamic practices: democracy, constitutionalism, alliances with non-Muslims, and Western-style education. Second, there is a politics of victimhood. Boko Haram claims that its violence responds to what it sees as a decades-long history of persecution against Muslims in Nigeria. Boko Haram sees state crackdowns on the sect as the latest manifestation of such persecution.

This scenario is captured in the traumatic experiences of Ama, the mother of the eponymous character, *Pari*. The play tells the story of the mayhem, trauma, and colossal losses of lives and property in the wake of the Boko Haram insurgency in Chibok which led to the abduction of two hundred and seventy girls, and their experiences in the Sambisa Forest believed to be the haven of the Boko Haram field marshals. The sect according to Thurston (2017) is a revolution against the complex religious and political environment of Nigeria. In the play, *Pari* is one of the girls, a Christian that was abducted by Boko Haram. The play opens two years after their abduction in 2014, to reveal the religious trauma of her Christian mother, Ama praying in the Islamic way in hope that the God of the insurgents will return her daughter to her. In her words;

Ama: From now on, I swear by Allah, this is what I want to do... if you take what is

mine forcefully, and claim that it is right in the sight of a god... your god... and get away with it, then I want to know why? I want to know what language your god understands ... when he sleeps... I just need to find a way to talk to him... speak his language like they do. Wear His hijab like their women do... kneel before Him, grovel if I have to and by whatever other means they used when they broke into the Chibok school, dragged those poor girls out, loaded them into trucks and drove them out ... (Yerima 9)

The entire play is permeated with abnormal and desperate shuttling between Islam, Christianity, and traditional religion fueled by a collapsed system within the matrix of a decayed political climate. The willingness to transfer or negotiate faith and dedication in exchange for redemption, happiness, and fulfillment by the above character in the face of the terror of terrorism questions the potency of these religious ideologies and the place or persona of the God factor in the face of persistent trauma arising from religious chaos.

How far can one remain dedicated to religion amidst persistent insecurity crises that have become the reality of the Nigerian nation-state? The commodification of faith and worship as well as the trivial reification of the concept of God in the play places question on the place of religion in the leadership of a people – should ethnicity and faith matter in the contemporary running of public office and service delivery to a people, especially in complex religious entities like Nigeria? Questions like this, seeing the interaction of chaotic faith and the colossal loss of lives and property in the play, one is drawn to Mark Juergensmeyer's (2003) thought that perhaps God had terror in mind in his dealings with mankind.

The Christian Ama (14), in the face of her devastating realities of living without her only child for two years, gives up her faith in Jesus because according to her “I want my child back and if Jesus is going to allow this to happen to me then I am done with him. I shall remain with the Prophet until I find my poor lost child.” Not long, however, having prayed the Muslim way and adopted the name ‘Khadijat’ (8), she consults Shaagu, the seer who further diminishes her faith and reliance on the newly adopted religion even when Ama boasts thus;

Ama: That was why I became a Muslim like the abductors of my daughter. Allah will hear my pleas a little bit louder now... Allah is enough! The Limam says that he sees the deepest secrets of the soul of man.

Shaagu: Does he?... why then has He not listened to your cries? Why have you not seen your daughter in two years? Your daughter whom I say will return soon (Yerima 24)

The abduction of her daughter and consequent reliance on, and practice of a postnormal faith (admixture of Christianity and Islam) is revealed in her financial preparations for the church prayers “this is only enough for the church members. Where will I get the money for the special prayers for the Saadaka in the mosque?” (Yerima 17). Her attachments to both faiths, however, did not make her and her relations immune to the terror of these terrorist attacks. The attacks on villages of Mubi and Uba by the dreaded Boko Haram sect in the play saw the burning of churches and the killing of pastors including Tada’s little cousin Reverend John who was posted to pastor the church. The character was killed while reciting the Lord’s Prayer which further pushes Tada’s faith to the extreme and heightens the religious contradictions that permeate the play. This is seen in his response to Hanna who admonished him to take solace in God thus;

Tada: When will Christians fight back?

Hanna: God is our strength

Tada: ...Which one? The one that allows people to kill? Or the one that smites the meek with a muteness to die? Which one?

Ama: I don’t believe God exists anymore. Even on the day, we chose to honor and remind him of our plight, he allowed them to kill Sister Vero’s young husband. Get up my dear husband, don’t waste your supplications. God has since walked away from here... all hope is lost on him now. (Yerima 19-22)

The return of the long-awaited *Pari* (Yerima 34) did not meet the expectation of the traumatized parents as their once radiant angel is reduced to a “shadow of herself”. She returns with a child and in the narration of her ordeals to her parents grieves that “in two years, your little girl became a woman and then she became a mother.” (Yerima 40) The abducted little girls are shared among the Boko Haram fighters in the Sambisa Forest, forcefully converted to Islam, forcefully married, thingnified, and sexually abused severally until some like *Pari* (Yerima 37-39) saw their awkward realities as a way of life as revealed in her comment that “I became his girl. I guess when the soul is trapped, it adjusts.” Shaagu the priest in his divination of the experiences of *Pari* (Yerima 27) laments “Never have I seen fear and pain mingle into a paste of raw mental sickness.”

In the face of her dreaded realities in the forest and the survivalist acceptance of the new faith, all Christian doctrines and ideologies she had nurtured were put on the furnace of survival where she either embrace Islam or she would die like one of them as *Pari* (Yerima 36) narrates “One day, they said we all had to get married, we resisted it. One girl who screamed her refusal and was blindfolded and... killed. Those who lived or survived like me were living carcasses...” The

radical approach in the ideologies and life of the Boko Haram sect and the traumatic realities they posed on the Christian abductees was the final straw that broke the Camel's back on Pari's Christian faith and beliefs as she submits;

Pari: God got tired of looking after me. He must have walked away to tend the souls of our dead friends... I took the chain with the cross. With my teeth, I cut it into pieces, bent the cross until I could not recognize it, and then I dropped it in a pit latrine with my sad past... And besides, Ama had lied... the day you gave me the chain, you said that if I was ever in trouble, should pray... and rub the cross with my fingers until Jesus would come and save me... Jesus refused to come... so I gave myself and my heart to him (Ibrahim)... (Yerima 36-39)

The question that comes to mind following this willing and forced conversion from Christianity to Islam by Ama and Pari her daughter would be – Is it greener on the other side? Yerima's position in the play is clear with the return of Ibrahim, a Boko Haram fighter who had taken Pari as his wife and had escaped in search of Pari and his child. His narrations point towards the fact that over time, the God concept and personality faded away as they too watched God abandon them and their cause which could further the above concerns of Juergensmeyer's (2013) terror in the mind of God. In his words;

Ibrahim: What about him?... we had predicaments strewn all over ... and God stood silently by. We were ready to burn and blow up the sky where we believed He lived in smugness and allowed life to pass us by. Even after a while, the promise that we would go straight to aljanna faded... With time the aljanna we believed was what we created ... we were the gods in the aljanna we created with guns and bombs, even Allah was afraid of us... (Yerima 47)

Ibrahim's thought above revealed a deviation or perhaps a mutation of the sect when realities and survival come face to face with religious beliefs. The manipulated or manufactured ethno-religious ideologies by ethnic and religious capitalists over time metamorphosed into a full-blown terrorist unit that has left mayhem and disaster in many parts of the North since 2012. It is no doubt that these manufactured ideologies were born from misinterpreted ethnic and religious ideologies for the political use of power brokers in the North. These ideologies overtime were proven to be the lies of faith; misguiding and harmful to humanity as crystallized in Ibrahim's dialogue with Ama thus; "**Ibrahim:** Pity. I am sorry. A thread of sacred faith lies that I believed would save me on judgment day derailed my senses and unwittingly, I became a harbinger of death... but with each passing day, it dawned on me that I was the fool." (Yerima 50)

Their abandonment of those ethno-religious capitalists who formed the militant group contributed to its mutation into an independent terrorist organization. After the power brokers have used them to discredit and dethrone President Goodluck Ebele Johnathan, the Northern cabals should have restored peace by ideologically rehumanizing and disarming the militants, retrieving their weapons, and reintegrating them into society.

Perhaps they were too carried away by their reclamation of power and left their militant groups to themselves which made them feel abandoned, hence their mutation into an independent organization, finding new reasons to advance their cause and consequently, turning on those whom they were supposed to protect. They have become too difficult to contain and according to Brechenmaker (2019), proven remarkably adaptable in their tactics hence, the ethno-religious entrepreneurs denied their involvement with the group and their activities. Ibrahim's dialogue with Pari's parents supports this claim

Tada: And the government? They deny knowing about you. The former Local government Chairman says you even killed four of his brothers.

Ibrahim: ...Well, this is a different story from what really happened. The irony is that they created us, nurtured us for their own good at first ... and after, they dumped us. Where did we get the arms? Where? From them, the military and black market. Where did we get the monies we spend? Who fueled our anger? ... See how well they lie now that they do not know how to quench the fire they selfishly lit. Pity. (Yerima 48)

The contradictions and chaos that beset the leadership and security situation of the nation fired by the embers of ethnicity and religion have gained international recognition which implies that the fire lit by these religious and ethnic capitalists has blazed beyond their control; the beast they created has outgrown its cage and today, ending the Boko Haram crises has been placed on the front burner of local and international authorities; a feat which has gulped lots of funds from local and international pockets with a seemingly little or no progress in dislodging the militants and ending the crisis.

The hydra-headed impact of the crises on the lives and economy of the nation is also of significance. Today, due to the ethno-religious gimmicks of the Northern authorities which this paper reads as a conglomeration of ideologies concocted to fulfill the wish of Sir Ahmadu Bello in the epigram above, Nigeria has been torn apart along ethnic and religious lines which currently threatens the unity of the nation. The Nnamdi Kanu's Biafra and Sunday Igboho's Oduduwa nation secessionist ideologies are counter-responses born from this postnormal ethno-religious

manipulation of Nigeria's nascent democracy.

Pari is an espousal of the root of Nigeria's leadership and security woes funded by ethnicity and religion that have so far forced the masses to have to lose "faith in the leaders as a panacea for freedom." (Nwosu and Kelechi 272) In the play, leaders only play out an ethno-religious script with their positions in the country which informs the commodification of the common man; the thought that his voice and actions can be bought. On the other hand, they use the money to mask their inefficiencies and ineffectiveness to engage serious issues in the country. This can be seen in the devaluation and commodification of the Chibok girls by the government in the play who paid the parents of the abducted children Sixty-four thousand naira; a feat which Pari's mother refers to as "Blood money given to me as compensation for having lost my dearest daughter..." (Yerima 11)

Perhaps, the government has helped the terrorists to negotiate the sale and abuse of the girls with their parents. Today, the clamor for secession is brewing as an ethno-religious response from the South and West as a response to the Northern ethno-religious Jihad drama on the Nigerian landscape. It is not only Northerners who suffer in this radicalized ethnic and religious activities of Boko Haram, the entire nation also suffers shortage in the food supply, dwindling foreign investments, increasing unemployment rates, loss of lives of citizens, and the negative view of Nigeria in the foreign scene as a terrorist state.

Navigating Ethno-religious Postnormality: Deductions from Yerima's *Pari*

In contrast to these ever-accelerating catastrophes, today's politics is beset by an inability to generate the new ideas and modes of organization necessary to transform our societies to confront and resolve the coming annihilations. While crisis gathers force and speed, politics withers and retreats. In this paralysis of the political imaginary, the future has been canceled. (Williams and Srnicek)

The current face of Nigerian democracy reflects the complex network of effects and responses stemming from religion and ethnic coffers. This research attributes the entire gamut of Nigeria's leadership woes and its corrupt affiliations to twisted ethno-religious ideals. In concise expression, the plot of Nigeria's politics is couched around ethnic and religious supremacy; or what can expressly be read as the government of/for the tribe and religion rather than a government for humanity as confirmed in Sir Ahmadu Bello and Emir of Gwandu's statement afore expressed in this paper.

It is in this consciousness that the researcher envisions through Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* that ethno-religiosity has not been fair to Nigerian democracy since independence; the radicalized clamor for religious and ethnic supremacy since independence has become the ill wind that has

crippled the giant of Africa. Through the study text, Christianity appears as a religion of docility on its adherents, shutting down their capabilities for violence, hence a victimization ideology while the manipulated teachings in Northern Islam are used to push ethnic ideologies of supremacy geared toward domesticating political power in the North and Islamization of the country.

Against the foregrounding of jihad against the state and the unfaithful as encoded in the religious practice of Islam, Christians are supposed to live in peace with all men, pray for their enemies and turn the other cheek when slapped which proves Falola (50) right in the assessment that “loyalty to religion is often more important than loyalty to the state among Nigerians.” The seeming alertness to religion and consequent docility or irrationality of citizens to affairs of the state and humanity is a major factor to contend with in Nigeria. More than ever, given the assiduous nature of the proliferation of violence in the nation, it is difficult to evolve pragmatic strategies for restoring peace.

A similar study by Kumsa and Subrt (755) on the causes of Islamic fundamentalist violent movements in postcolonial Nigeria does not “suggest any decision and do not provide any final conclusions – they admit the uncertainty of the current situation in Nigeria.” This is in concordance with the ideals of Serra that “to be honest, we do not know how to shape viable policies for postnormal times” (Kumsa and Subrt 249) and with the uncertain nature of the chaotic emissions of ethno-religious postnormality, “the concept of building peace with a terrorist group can only be conceived of outside the box” (Fyanka, 4) and with a charge of Sardar, the father of PNT that

Imagination, and its broader umbrella, creativity, are essential ‘to imagine our way out of the postnormal times.’ As the old ways of thinking and doing are failing, creativity is as a vital resource to envision and develop alternatives... today creativity is viewed increasingly as a relational, collaborative everyday/everyone/ everywhere process that is not limited to the arts and sciences... The change in creativity is both driven by, and in turn itself drives, social trends and social change. (Montouri and Gabrielle 358)

On the above notions, this paper will attempt to imagine our way out of ethno-religious postnormality with support from images drawn from the study text. First, there is a need now to rethink the place of ethnicity and religion in piloting the affairs of the current Nigerian state. It is against this backdrop, that this paper advocates that the humanist ideology be explored henceforth to steer the nation out of her current chaotic political, ethnic and religious potpourri, knowing that postnormality for us will become the norm for the generations to come. (Sardar and Sweeney,

2019) While the pregnant young Pari runs for her life, she delivers twin babies in the forest but seeing the dehumanized humanity the future holds for the female child based on her experiences, she “tore off a long piece of her hijab... and strangled my child... buried her in a shallow grave by the stream” (Yerima 41) Her action above sets the platform on which this research explores humanism as a panacea for invading ethno-religious postnormality.

“Tearing off a long piece of the hijab’ for this work is symbolic because it reads decolonization of ethno-religious ideologies that betray peaceful coexistence and which have hitherto halted the progress of the nation. The tearing of the hijab being a head-covering worn by Muslim women signifies cutting through the overlayer of long-held faulty ethno-religious doctrines, opening our eyes to the reality of our existence as humans and making concerted efforts to improve our humanity. Strangling and burying in Pari’s action above is interpreted here not as the total detachment from ethno-religious ideologies, but the laying aside of the harmful manipulated ideologies that emanate therefrom to embrace its true humanistic ideals and teaching in line with the changing times. Ethnicity and religion in their current manifestations so far have proven to be ineffectual in piloting the affairs of the complex Nigerian nation-state. Subjecting Nigeria to humanist assessments, given the persistent ethno-religious chaos, we have become far less humane if not bereft of humanism, and are “growing alone. We had left the people we set out to fight for behind. Each time we turned back we left devastation.” (Yerima 51) The entire plot of the play has played on anti-humanism, the privileging of self-more than the common good.

Power brokers and religious entrepreneurs utilize these manipulated ethno-religious ideologies to psychologically invade adherents to support their political goals irrespective of the negative impacts on the unity and security of the nation. They also utilize it to mask their ineffectiveness and inability to understand and pilot the affairs of the nation; cause distractions that further discourage youth involvement and interest in the affairs of the nation; and coerce younger generations into all manner of violence in the name of economic survival as reflected in the current trends of ritual killing, kidnapping for ransom, militancy, necrophilia and bestiality rituals. The ethno-religious postnormality in Nigeria should be traced to the radical admixture of religion and ethnic ideals into “a paste of raw mental sickness” (Yerima 27) that needs to be cured by humanism.

Humanism stresses the importance of human values and dignity. Rather than looking to religious traditions, humanism focuses on helping people live well to make the world a better place. The humanist ideology is based on liberal human values which place the end of moral action in the welfare of humanity rather than in fulfilling the will of God. On the platform of humanist ideologies, there are values for life and the conscious efforts to better the living conditions and

peaceful coexistence of humanity. The humanist essence cuts across race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. The humanism approach is solicited as the force that will help steer us out of the PNT. When adopted, it will aid in evolving “novel platforms for inciting peaceful resolutions of the inherent issues that fuel terrorism...” (Fyanka 4) Within the threshold of humanism, “we need to acknowledge that no one is in control, at least not in a democratic society... those who think that only governments can deliver, cause or achieve whatever needs to be done, are deluding themselves.” (Serra 249)

Piloting the affairs of state from a humanist perspective would ensure good governance, equity, and transparency which according to Ukiwo (115), “would restore governmental legitimacy, inter-ethnic and religious harmony and promote democratic consolidation.” Humane ideologies will open up necessary creative and imaginative modalities for policy implementation to ensure peace and stability of the nation; the kind of policies that will consider and involve “different perspectives and competing, even contradictory, interests... our interests are not served by focusing on what ‘we desire’; our goals will be contested, just as we would contest ‘their goals’; and only through a process of contested negotiations a positive outcome can be realized. (Serra 249-250) At the moment, under the auspices of humanist thought, peaceful methods to combat security issues by inclusively engaging in dialogues before policies are made, reorientations, ensuring fairness and equity in distributing resources, as well as ensuring that the locals are involved in the monitoring of projects awarded in their locality.

Conclusion

The complexities, contradictions, and chaos that currently besiege Nigerian society are heavily linked to a strong outplay of ethno-religious antics. The clamor for leadership positions in the country along ethnic and religious lines has constituted a major block on the road to Nigeria’s development with the hydra-headed manifestations of corruption and purposelessness in government. This clamor has put the nation on the palms of ethno-religious cabals that continue to fleece the nation and enforce dehumanizing, witch-hunting, and purposeless policies that continue to cripple the giant of Africa. The persistent focus of government on inhumane ethno-religious ideologies and loyalty to ethnic and religious capitalists have seen the polarization of the nation through the “abdication of its responsibilities and also has not lived up to expectation ... of securing lives and properties as a precondition of securing economic growth and development” (Abdulkadir 13).

To make headway in the pursuit of peace and unity in the nation, given the persistent chaos over the years, is to embrace humanism in governance and followership. In the humanist

ideologies, lie the modalities for navigating the PNT through inclusive governance, adequate policy-making, and equitable distribution of national resources which revives the economy and restores peaceful atmospheres in which foreign investors can partner for job creation and improved livelihood of the masses. In concise terms, the corruption that has besieged the Nigerian landscape, electoral fraud, and the dwindling economy are by-products of the chaotic emissions of ethno-religious power tussle; a postnormal feature that the humanist ideals will greatly affect when adopted and implemented on the Nigerian landscape. When we are humanity-driven, we are largely done tackling the fundamental issue with Nigeria: the ethno-religious misnomer.

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Jim Corbett, the Hunter-conservationist: Hunter or Conservationist?

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Abstract

Jim Corbett's hunting narratives have always enthralled lovers of the wild. His works portray a bygone era of pristine natural beauty and abundance of fauna in a country where today many of the species have gone extinct or are on the verge of extinction. The works of Jim Corbett, while recording the serenity of Indian jungles and the majesty of its fauna, have also presented through his brilliant narratorial prowess the classic struggle between man and nature. The author of this paper intends to see past Jim Corbett's hunting narratives and analyse his claims to be a hunter-conservationist. The author of this paper seeks to probe into the psychology of the White Sadhu to see what motivated him to become a hunter: Was it poverty? The abundance of game in the area? A tradition of big-game hunting in the family? A desire to emulate the social class that extolled the virtue of hunting? A desire to belong? Or his perception of nature as subservient to human needs? The author intends to analyse the words and acts that may appear humanitarian in essence, but carry within them seeds of injustice. The various works of Jim Corbett are unapologetic, and since they are so carefully crafted, an average reader may very well get enamoured with Jim Corbett, without paying heed to the environmental injustice. The author of this paper has aimed at finding the chinks in the armour of Jim Corbett's environmentalism and uncovering the mind of a hunter.

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Avcı-Çevreci Jim Corbett: Avcı mı, Çevreci mi?

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Özet

Jim Corbett'in avcılık anlatıları vahşi doğa severleri her zaman büyülemiştir. Eserleri, bugün birçok türün neslinin tükendiği ya da tükenmek üzere olduğu bir ülkede, bozulmamış doğal güzelliklerin ve hayvan türünün bol olduğu geçmiş bir dönemi tasvir ediyor. Jim Corbett'in çalışmaları, Hint ormanlarının dinginliğini ve faunasının görkemini kağıda dökerken, aynı zamanda insan ve doğa arasındaki klasik mücadeleyi de parlak anlatım becerisiyle ortaya koymaktadır. Makale yazarı, Jim Corbett'in avcılık anlatılarının ötesini görmeyi ve onun avcı-doğacı olduğu iddialarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makale yazarı ayrıca White Sadhu'nun psikolojisini ele alarak onu bir avcı olmaya neyin motive ettiğini anlamaya çalışmaktadır: Yoksulluk mu? Bölgedeki av hayvanlarının bolluğu mu? Ailesinin büyük hayvanları avlama geleneği mi? Avlanmanın erdemini yücelten sosyal sınıfa öykünme arzusu mu? Bir yere ait olma arzusu mu? Ya da doğayı insan ihtiyaçlarına boyun eğen bir varlık olarak algılaması mı? Özünde insani görünen ancak içlerinde adaletsizlik tohumları taşıyan söz ve eylemleri analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktayız. Jim Corbett'in pek çok çalışması müdanasız niteliktedir ve çok dikkatli bir şekilde hazırlandıkları için ortalama bir okuyucu, çevresel adaletsizliğe aldırış etmeden Jim Corbett'e hayran kalabilir. Bu makalenin yazarı, Jim Corbett'in çevrecilik zırhındaki çatlakları bulmayı ve bir avcının zihnini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

avcılık,
çevrecilik,
doğa,
insan eti yiyen,
doğayı koruma,
imparatorluk.

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Introduction

The name Jim Corbett is revered by the wildlife biologists and enthusiasts who study Indian wildlife. Known as the *White Sadhu*¹ by his beloved Kumaonis, his is a legacy of the benevolent patriarch of Choti Haldwani who stood, with gun in his hands between the dreaded man-eaters and the poor natives, helpless in the face of the onslaught of nature. For their deliverance they looked towards the White Sadhu, their own Carpet Sahib who ventured deep into the tiger land, on foot and often unaccompanied, to slay the beast. At least this is how his adventures have been represented in his six books by him, as well as in scores of critics who have studied hunting narratives. The hunting of man-eaters was essential to protect the people of Kumaon and their livestock which formed a large part of their economy. However, it is also essential to investigate the veracity of Jim Corbett's claim to be a conservationist and champion of wildlife first and then a hunter by reading his books from an environmental perspective or dimension. A study of Jim Corbett as a hunter-conservationist from an environmental perspective may open many debates on the correlation between the racial identity of Jim Corbett and his attitude towards the natural world. It is not that the natives never indulged in hunting. They did, so in the strictest sense, Jim Corbett alone should not be bearing the burden of anthropocentrism. However, the author wants to point at the differences in circumstances, background, upbringing and education that existed between the Corbetts and the natives. The idea of the trophy was a European import. Killing for relics from an exotic space would define their masculinity in a land that was beyond their comprehension. It was, to some extent, ritualistic. The natives, on the other hand, would engage in environmentally destructive practices like poaching for sustenance. What was survival for them, was sport for the sahibs. The author intends to find out if Jim Corbett was carrying out imperialist ideologies in his treatment of wildlife, that is, if he was furthering the project of imperialism, viewing the jungles of India as an extension of the colonial domain. The author intends to explore the myth of "*White Sadhu*" to see if the naturalist was indeed keen on conservation, or on using nature as a mere backdrop against which a blue-blooded imperialist engaged in blood-sport like his predecessors.

Jim Corbett: Hunter or Conservationist?

When we look at Jim Corbett's childhood, it appears to be far from easy, with fourteen siblings who were raised on the meagre salary of Postmaster Christopher William. His mother, Mary Jane was a shrewd homemaker who efficiently looked after the household arrangements with the help of her daughter, Eugene Mary Doyle while also keeping an eye on the education of her children. Indeed, at the Corbett's one would find books on a variety of subjects: literature, medicine, grammar and so on. Jim grew up to be an ardent admirer of James Fennimore Cooper

¹ "Sadhu" in Hindi means sage, or hermit.

and his Leatherstocking Tales. Nutty Bumpoo was Jim's hero and his romantic view of nature can be attributed to his early and continuous exposure to Cooper's novels. Starting his journey as a hunter with a catapult, he progressed to using bows and arrows, graduating as a boy scout with a muzzle loader first and then a rifle that he got from the Sergeant Major at Oak Openings in 1885. The tradition of hunting was already there in the Corbett household since the poor economic condition at the Gurney House required that the larder was stacked with game animals. Jim was initiated into hunting by Tom, his elder brother who was an avid hunter and greatly admired by Jim. However, his real education in jungle lore came from Kunwar Singh, a poacher who took Jim under his wing and made him acquainted with the birds and beasts of the jungle, and with its geographical features. He taught Jim how to survive in the forest, something that greatly benefitted the young hunter who later in his career hunted many man-eaters using that knowledge. About his time under the tutelage of Kunwar Singh, he writes:

Times without number when returning from a shoot I called in at Kunwar Singh's village, which was three miles nearer the forest than my house was, to tell him I had shot a chital or sambhar stag, or may be a big pig, and to ask him to retrieve the bag. He never once failed to do so, no matter how great a wilderness of tree or scrub or grass jungle I had carefully hidden the animal I had shot, to protect it from vultures. We had a name for every outstanding tree, and for every water hole, game track, and nullah. (Corbett, *My India* 23)

Jim Corbett the hunter was a product of his environment. American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner explained how the environment of a child, that is, their social environment affects their development, through his Ecological Systems theory. A child's exposure to several Microsystems, ranging from school to family and peer group affects the way in which they react to his social environment. The dominant social and cultural values too have a direct influence on the way they act or behaves. Being one of the youngest children of his family, he was often bullied by his siblings and their friends. In *Jungle Lore*, he mentions how he was tasked with guarding the clothes of the girls of the family as they bathed in Ramsay's canal, and duly warn them of the approaching men:

This handicap, of being the youngest of the males, saddled me with tasks that I disliked intensely, for, we were living in the Victorian age and when, for instance, the girls went bathing in the canal that formed one boundary of our estate...it was deemed necessary for them to be accompanied by a male whose age would offer no offence to Mother Grundy (Corbett, *Jungle Lore* 6).

D.C. Kala has rightly pointed out that it might have been a traumatic experience for Jim

[...] but this biographer shudders to think what the sights and sounds in the canal did to the child's psyche--the clinging nighties, dark groins and the banal talk revolving round the two boys, Neil and Dansay, both frequent guests of the two families and 'madly in love with the girls' (Kala 22).

The symbolic castration happening via his exclusion from the games of the canal, and his bullying by Dansay when he set young Jim for a failure might too have contributed to his becoming a hunter. Hunting has always been considered a masculine sport. The boy's journey to manhood thus would be complete after the attainment of mastery over hunting. Gun, as a phallic symbol would have to be acquired by Jim to qualify as a man, a consciousness strengthened by the opinion of Kunwar Singh, who examining Jim's weapon lauded him as a man: "You are no longer a boy, but a man; and with this good gun you can go anywhere you like in our jungles and never be afraid..." (Corbett, *My India* 19). Later, when he was an adult, while yet to bag his first man-eater, he became friends with Eddie Knowles whose association with the army, through his brother, ignited the spark that was dormant in Jim: a desire to join the army of the Empire and go to wars. The conventional association of manhood with the army might have contributed to his obsession with enlistment and to his perception of the jungle as a battleground, a substitute for the actual battlefield, where he would engage in a war with nature that manifested itself in man-eating tigers and panthers.

Jim Corbett's journey from being a boy scout to a hunter of repute that marked his journey to adulthood, to being a man was influenced by his identity as a domiciled European. Even though he wrote *My India* to fondly recollect the memories of his beloved Kumaonis, it is imperative that he was deeply aware of his racial position. He with his expertise in Garhwali and Hindi languages of the natives on one hand and his desire to mix with the men and women of his own racial stock, kept oscillating between two distinctive identities of slave and master. He was a pariah for the blue-blooded British civil servants who, even though many of them had cordial relations with him, would never consider him as their equal. To them, he served a purpose, a purpose that was akin to that served by the natives to Jim when they served as his trackers and beaters in a hunt. The fearsome exotic space with its dangers and thrills required an expert guide, and the colonial officers found that in Jim. He remained an outcast to the British elites. Martin Booth, in his biography of Jim Corbett, entitled *Carpet Sabib: A Life of Jim Corbett* writes:

Jim was domiciled and from this social position stemmed much prejudice in the first half of his life. Young women out from England looked down upon the likes of the Corbetts not only because of pure snobbery but also practicality. To marry a domiciled man was to commit oneself to the same state of permanent expatriation and a few young women

viewed a lifetime in India without many misgivings. It was one thing to do just a tour of duty there but quite another to be resident. (Booth 92)

An awareness of this social position of an Anglo-Indian--a position divorced from the mainstream British culture--and a desire to be called 'one of their own' was also a driving factor in his hunts. Imperialist masculinity had to be imbibed to belong. The British masters were hunters. They viewed it as a sport. Jim Corbett had exposure to the works of hunters like William Rice, A.A. Kinloch and Captain Thomas Williamson. Major Henry Shakespear, in *Wild Sports of India* extols hunting as a virtue that must be inculcated in an early age so that the children could become responsible citizens and public servants:

Ye anxious parents, who perchance read or hear the title of my book, with a full determination and dread resolve that your boys shall not pursue or obtain it, bear with me a little while, while I explain to you, that my making them shikarees, or hunters of the large game of India's magnificent forests, you are keeping them out of a thousand temptations and injurious pursuits, which they can scarcely avoid falling into, if from no other cause them ennui or thoughtlessness. Induce them, if possible, to become fond of field sports. This will keep them fit for their duty as soldiers, both in body and inclination. (Shakespear 2)

Jim Corbett's exposure to such literature --the library at the Gurney House had many well-known as well as lesser-known books on *shikar*² -- at a tender age might have shaped his anthropocentric attitude that related to his Eurocentric beliefs. The child Jim Corbett might have believed that hunting not only filled the larder of the house with meat, but also made individual growth possible. The accounts by the European hunters before him would have instilled in him a perception that to qualify as British, he must emulate them, and engage in the sport himself to gain recognition as his subjectivity would be construed from his interaction with the *grande autre*, that is, the English society.

Jim Corbett's perception of the 'Indian' nature can be assessed in the light of his allegiance to the Crown that almost borders on servitude. He was obsessed with participating in wars on behalf of the Crown. He volunteered to fight in the Boer War (1899), the Afghan War (1919) and World War I without much success. However, he received a wartime commission as a Captain and led a troop of over five thousand at Flanders in 1917. He again volunteered for the World War II, but this time he trained the troops in jungle warfare. Martin Booth writes about his ardent wish to be of service to the Crown in the World War I:

This was a very strange feeling for Jim. India was his home. He was domiciled. And yet, like

² 'shikar' in Hindi means hunting, and a 'shikaree' is a hunter

most of his breed, he was fiercely patriotic and 'British' and related to Great Britain even though he had ever seen it in faded photographs or steel engravings in editions of the Illustrated London News. He was intensely curious to see the Tower of London and the Heroes of Parliament from which stemmed the flow of history and the power of the Empire. (Booth 96)

Hence, it hardly was a matter of surprise when he went out of his way to arrange for hunting expeditions for European dignitaries such as Lord Linlithgow in 1945. D.C. Kala in his biography of Jim Corbett notes how wary the old hunter was about the success of the shoot. It was, after all, his chance to be of service. D.C. Kala provides an eyewitness account of a participant of the hunt, Panwan Gusain who recounted how 'Carpet Sahib' explicitly instructed them to behave well and let the Viceroy be first to gun down the tiger, or Corbett's reputation would suffer in England (Kala 65). Therefore, one can very well see that a tiger's body or its corpse became a site on which allegiances were sealed. It is significant to note that Corbett's hunting days were almost over by that time. He hunted occasionally, primarily for the larder, but his age was catching up to him, and it was a phase when Jim Corbett was more inclined towards conservation and wildlife photography. In the author's note to *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, Jim Corbett writes:

There is, however, one point in which I am convinced that all sportsmen--no matter whether their viewpoint has been a platform on a tree, the back of an elephant, or their own feet--will agree with me, and that is that a tiger is a large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage and that when he is exterminated--as exterminated he will be unless public opinion rallies to his support--India will be the poorer, having lost the finest of her fauna. (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* xi)

Considering this statement, the arrangements of royal hunts in the forests around Kaladhungi, and later in Africa seem like acts of assuaging the conscience in favour of the desire for acknowledgement as a true emissary of the Empire. His statement to Lord Wavell also appears paradoxical when seen in the context of his actions: "Two years ago, Lord Wavell asked me the same question about tigers that you have done, and I told him that in my opinion there were 3000 tigers would survive, I said that except in sanctuaries and one or two Indian states tigers would be wiped out in ten years" (qtd. in Kala 101). Jim Corbett's plea for conservation in the later stages of his life appears to be borne out of his realisation of the fact that he was getting too old to chase game, and that his relevance in the scheme of things was in jeopardy. In his doctoral thesis entitled '*Call of the Wild*': Representation of Nature in Game Narratives Set in India, the author noted, "It might well have been his old age and failing health that made him desist from undertaking the hazard of stalking and late night vigils since he never advocated for wildlife preservation with such veracity in

his prime as he did in his later years” (82-83).

India became independent on 15 August, 1947, and the Corbetts left India for Africa on 11 December, 1947. The Corbetts were not sure if they would be welcomed in the new regime. According to Maggie, Jim Corbett's sister,

After independence came in India and our British friends were leaving, we began to realize that it would be very difficult for us to remain, especially as when the time came for one of us to be taken, the contemplation of the other having to leave on alone in Gurney House, our home for nearly all the years of our lives and so full of memories, could not be faced” (qtd. in Kala, 130).

Jim Corbett himself said to a villager, “Your independence has come, who cares for us now” (qtd. in Kala, 129). Jim Corbett's position as the city-father, his influence on the Kumaonis and his many friends among the influential Indians would not have put the Corbetts into any jeopardy under the new regime. In all his writings, especially in *My India*, he has emphasized repeatedly his 'Indianness' and his love for the country and its people, his own people. The fact that he felt unsure and unsafe in the new socio-political environment compels the author to think that he only felt confident about his existence in India as a member of the ruling class, no matter how low in the hierarchy his own position was, among his peers. His quick departure raises questions about his sincerity and honesty in writing those books where he has expressed his love for the people of India and his camaraderie with them. As a man who even knew the Viceroy and several rajahs of the land, he was in a perfect position to effect changes regarding the way people looked towards the animal world. He could have been influential in the formulation of wildlife laws and policies of the newly formed State that never hesitated in acknowledging his contribution to conservation, as can be very well seen in the renaming of Hailey National Park as Corbett National Park in 1957. After he left hunting for good, he was very much active as an Editor of *Indian Wildlife* with Hasan Abid Jafri, writing articles on conservation; lecturing about nature, forests and the animal world in schools and colleges of Naini Tal; and photographing animals in their natural surroundings. He left for the new hunting avenues in Kenya which was still a British colony. It was as if the quiet life of a naturalist never suited him, but he had to resort to it not just because he was getting old, but the world was getting new. The image of the hunter with a gun that calls to mind the imago of a patriarch was perceived by him to be under threat. Subhasis Biswas in “Indian Forest: Looking through the European Literary Expressions” writes:

Photography never became Corbett's genuine hobby. We have enough evidence that he was mainly a hunter, and not a photographer even after 1930. One of his hunting trips was

well documented by an army officer Lionel Fortesque. Corbett accompanied by his faithful servant Moti Singh and Fortesque, accompanied by his Indian servant James, made a shooting trip to Pangi and Chenab valley. They hunted a number of animals. Although Corbett had his camera with him he rarely used to photograph the animals. Lord Strachwana gifted a camera to Corbett. But it was actually in return of Corbett's help in the organized hunting of two tigers in the Kumaon forest area. (Biswas 98-99)

While examining the hunting memoirs of Jim Corbett, collected in three books: *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, *Temple Tigers and More Man-eaters of Kumaon*, and *The Maneating Leopard of Rudraprayag*, the author has come across many incidents that actually discredit Jim Corbett as a naturalist. Not only these books but also his autobiographical accounts in *My India* and *Jungle Lore* are replete with instances that situate Corbett with the colonial hunters before him who hunted for trophy. Jim Corbett was indeed the 'White Sadhu', the saviour of the masses in many ways. He put an end to the scourge of man-eating at Kumaon on many occasions, much to the detriment of his health and danger to his life. However, the Bachelor of Powalgarh and the Pipal Pani Tiger bring out the sportsman in him into the light. Jim must have killed a lot of tigers in his lifetime, but not all of them were man-eaters. They were beautiful specimens and were hunted as trophies. The hunts arranged for the royalty did not result in killing man-eaters but normal tigers. In *The Bachelor of Powalgarh* he admits to being impressed by the huge size of the tiger and seduced by the prospect of bagging the trophy. However, he hid behind the veil of humanitarian effort to save a poor herdsman from worrying about his buffaloes that might soon be devoured by the great tiger. It is important to note that Jim Corbett killed the tiger at a time when, as per his claims, he had become saturated with hunting and was more inclined to photograph tigers: "I have earned the reputation of being keener on photographing animals than on killing them, and before I left my friend he begged me to put aside photography for this once, and kill the tiger, which he said was big enough to eat a buffalo a day; and ruin him in twenty-five days" (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* 80). After killing the Pipal Pani tiger he writes:

Pleasure at having secured a magnificent trophy--he measured 10'3" over curves and his winter coat was in perfect condition--was not unmixed with regret, for never again would the jungle folk and I listen with bated breath to his deep throated call resounding through the foothills, and never again would his familiar pugmarks show on the game paths that he and I had trodden for fifteen years. (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* 135)

The writer's anthropocentric view is evident in coming to the aid of people who had injured the tiger, thus turning him into a cattle-killer, and instead of rebuking them for their actions and raising awareness among them about the need to preserve the wildlife and kill only, when

necessary, he skinned the animal with great enthusiasm.

Another case in point is the Temple Tiger of Dabidhura which remains one of his few failures as a hunter. The tiger in question was not a man-eater. But his elusive nature, almost mythical abilities to escape scores of trophy hunters and the priest's conviction that the tiger had a charmed life, and no human could slay him triggered Jim Corbett's desire to bag the trophy at any cost. The obsession with hunting this particular tiger can be attributed to the imperial arrogance that would brook no challenge from an animal that was associated with the cunning of the native, or with the trope of the rebellious native on one hand; and on the other the anthropocentric arrogance that considers the birds and beasts to be beneath man in the Great Chain of Being or Scala Naturae. The fact that he cares more about the trophy than anything else can be emphasized by the fact that at the time when he was obsessively looking for the Temple Tiger, the Panar leopard was wreaking havoc. He took a break from the hunt of the leopard to go after the tiger of Dabidhura for the sport of it. The humanitarian Jim Corbett did not find it necessary to save the poor natives from the leopard's terror. Not only that, but he also undertook many fishing and hunting trips amid important hunting expeditions with his European buddies. In a letter addressed to Maggie on 3 November, 1925 he wrote: "I have seen lots of pheasants but the going is bad and it is very difficult to get men; however, if I have my own ten men, and if I can get another five, we should make something of a bag" (Corbett, *My Kumaon: Uncollected Writings* 36). That time he was also on the most difficult hunt of his life, of the Rudraprayag leopard.

Jim Corbett's environmentalism cannot be understood in all its aspects unless we consider his days with the railways (1894-1939). He joined Bengal and North-Western Railway in 1894. Martin Booth writes that as Fuel Inspector for Bengal & North-Western Railway, Jim Corbett was responsible for the felling of five hundred thousand cubic feet of timber and clearing over five hundred acres of land (Booth 72). The act of felling timber resulted in a lot of casualties for the animals living in the forests where he worked. Even though Martin Booth says that Jim Corbett was saddened by the lot of the animals that were orphaned or driven out of their homes, he believed that the act of felling was necessary for the sake of modernism that was to be ushered in by the railways. Moreover, the railways were an imperial project that began in 1853 and was an indispensable medium through which the entire country was connected and managed by the imperial government. Given his allegiance to the Crown, Jim Corbett did not hesitate to remain at that job for nearly two decades. It is true that he tended to the animals that were injured by the felling. It is also true that while at his job with the railways, he hunted a lot of game. In fact, all his man-eaters were hunted while he was an employee for the railways. The menial and masculine job of toiling heavily every day for the railways might have motivated him to pursue another masculine

endeavour, that is hunting. At Mokameh Ghat where he was stationed, he hunted mainly for meat as meat was hard to come by and the labourers would be pleased to have meat in their diet.

Sharing meat or sharing game in those days was considered necessary to form social bonds or express social solidarity. In the areas where Jim Corbett hunted man-eaters, he had to rely on the information provided by the local villagers about the movements and haunts of the animal. He had to rely on their cooperation as trackers and beaters as well. For this reason, he had to shoot an occasional ghooral, deer, or peafowl so that they could have meat in their diet as they were too poor to purchase meat from the market. In *The Champawat Man-eater*, Jim Corbett writes:

The village was situated on the top of a long ridge running east and west, and just below the road on which I had spent the night the hill fell steeply away to the north in a series of glassy slopes; on these slopes I was told ghooral were plentiful, and several men volunteered to show me over the ground. I was careful not to show my pleasure at this offer and, selecting three men, I set out, telling the Headman that if I found the ghooral as plentiful as he said they were, I would shoot two for the village in addition to shooting one for my men. (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* 7)

In this regard, Jim Corbett was a provider in the role of a patriarch. He was like a game warden for the forests of Kaladhungi. D.C. Kala writes that Jim Corbett “enforced shooting laws and even preached sports ethics to a party of hunters whom he caught leaving a wounded tiger in the vicinity. People treated him with awe, for Carpet Sahib even knew the Viceroy” (Kala 64)! In his role as a provider for the people of Kumaon, he would often share game animals with them. Ram Datt Sati, a resident of Kaladhungi recalls how once Corbett gave him his own bag of game as the former had no luck with hunting that day, saying “One should not go home empty handed” (qtd. in Kala, 65). D.C. Kala mentions how once he sent a man to a forest officer with a message after the officer had shot a leopard: “You have killed my leopard” (Kala 64). To this the officer replied, “I did not see a dog collar and did not know it was yours” (Kala 64). Jim Corbett believed himself to be the protector of the forests and believed that his instructions or orders should be followed by those who ventured into the forest for hunting game.

Jim Corbett's crusade against the man-eaters of Kumaon may very well be a 'White man's burden' to bear. As a representative of the Empire because of his racial status, he believed it to be his solemn duty to protect the people who, being his tenants, can very well be assumed to be his subjects. The people of the hills constituted the 'Other' against which the 'Self' of the coloniser would always be pitted, and in this interaction, his subject position was formed. The people of Kumaon always looked towards the sahib for protection against the forces of nature in the form of

man-eaters and cattle-killers. One may very well imagine what effect that gaze of the Other would have on a domiciled white man whose entire life was dedicated to serving the Empire and being one of 'them'. Thus, he rose to the occasion that would not only allow him to obtain the allegiance of the local people but would also strengthen the position of the Empire in the region, for it was one of them who was protecting the natives, not the native rulers and *zamindars*. The news of the great white hunter at the rescue of hapless natives would spread like wildfire in the world as it did with the leopard of Rudraprayag that remained a hot topic in the Western media for eight years (1918-26) and was even discussed in the House of Commons. The case of the Panar man-eater also got highlighted in many newspapers all around the world. Jim Corbett was doing the work of the Empire in many ways. He was building the reputation of the Empire and that too at a time when the whole country, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, was getting united in the struggle for independence. Jim Corbett's Naini Tal was almost untouched by the larger socio-political happenings of the nation. The people would happily celebrate George V and Lord Linlithgow, since Jim Corbett's exploits had assured the natives of the good intentions of the Empire and had earned their gratitude. To cite an instance among many, in *The Mohan Man-eater*, Jim Corbett's act of mounting guard while a local woman filled her pitcher in the man-eater's territory earned him a friend who conveyed his benevolence to the villagers whose gratitude he earned in no time. Similarly, in *The Chowgarh Tigers*, a woman who had lost her grandson to the tigress, offered her milch buffaloes to be used as baits, even though those few buffaloes comprised all her material possessions.

Jim Corbett was serving the Empire in another way. The arrival of a man-eater would disrupt the economy of that place and the treasury of the government would also take the blow as the inflow of taxes would stop. That was why the requests for hunting would primarily come from regional administrative authorities or even higher up the official chain of command. Jim Corbett had the onus of restoring order. For instance, he would mount guard while the crops were hurriedly cut by the villagers. He would toil night and day so that the Rudraprayag leopard could no longer terrorise the pilgrims, and hence not disrupt the tourism of the place.

Jim Corbett was a gifted writer, and he portrayed himself as the saviour of the people of Kumaon by writing moving accounts of the sufferings of the people who were affected by the scourge of man-eating. He did so to show the natural world, represented in the tiger as an unforgiving, cruel and unfair destiny, and to represent himself as a Godlike entity that would exact revenge on behalf of the villagers. For example, in *The Chowgarh Tigers* he writes: "The major wound consisted of two claw-cuts, one starting between the eyes and extending right over the head and down the nape of the neck, leaving the scalp hanging in two halves, and the other starting near the

first, running across the forehead up to the right ear” (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* 47).

In *The Panar Man-eater* – hunted between 1905 and 1910 – he writes about the pitiable condition of the young woman who was mauled by the panther: “In the heat of the small room, which had only one door and no windows and in which a swarm of flies were buzzing, all the wounds in the girl's throat and on her breast had turned septic...” (Corbett, *The Jim Corbett Omnibus* 224). This narrative strategy of graphic representation of pain that evokes revulsion in the reader, is useful in portraying the animal world as an evil force, justifies the killing of the animal, and establishes the credibility of the hunter as a representative of the ruling class.

Conclusion: Is the Myth Real?

It is, however, undeniable that Jim Corbett worked towards conservation more fervently than his contemporaries. His lectures, essays, and many of his writings make passionate pleas for conservation. His writings on the fauna of the country, the descriptive pieces are the veritable sources of information on wildlife. He would often be found preaching to the villagers at Kaladhungi and Choti Haldwani about the importance of conservation and living harmoniously with the denizens of the forest. However, it is the ambivalence in Jim Corbett that is important to consider reaching the heart of his writings. On one hand, he was the champion of Indian wildlife, and on the other, he was a European hunter looking for recognition as the rightful ruler of the land and a true emissary of the Empire that upheld its masculinity through hunting. Jim Corbett was an enigma that has remained unsolved. His love for nature cannot be denied, but that love doesn't appear to be borne out of the realisation of democracy in the creation of the almighty, but a natural acceptance of man's superiority over nature that establishes man as the lord and nature as his faithful subject.

The myth of White Sadhu has remained with the residents of Choti Haldwani and Kaladhungi. Many writings on Jim Corbett appear to be a little hesitant in dismantling the myth. May be this has got to do with the fact that Jim Corbett's life is one that can be taken as a lesson for the people who read his works and get inspired to become environmentalists. The reason why his trophy hunting anecdotes are not much referred to in critical essays and other discourses on Jim Corbett may be seen as an attempt to keep his legacy alive as a white ascetic who remained pure all through his life, as pure and pristine as the jungles where he felt at home.

Since Nainital at the time of Corbett was divorced from the political upheaval in the mainland, the people in that area never really got into considering the Corbetts as outsiders. He was a Sahib, fluent in the native languages and sympathetic to their needs. He, in general perception, had a halo around him. He was chaste, unmarried and without any 'visible' material

greed. He would happily drink from their cup, smoke with them, and miraculously heal them using 'strange' potions and drugs. For them, he was one of them, yet above them in many respects. The myth originated from the word-of-mouth accounts of Corbett's benevolence, something that strengthened Jim Corbett's own claims as a conservationist. The people of Jim's India hardly knew or understood the mind of Jim Corbett, or his struggles to belong in the hierarchy. After all, in India, people rely the most on godmen to solve their problems, and Jim Corbett was there, the whiteness of his skin magnifying the purity perceived by the Kumaonis.

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