



Sweetness in the Belly: A Saidian and Post Saidain Post-Colonial Reading

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to offer a postcolonial reading of Camilla Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly* based on the critical theory of Edward Said's Orientalism as well as his advocate, Albert Memmi's post-post-colonial notions. To that end, the study commences with a detailed explanation of Edward Said's theory of postcolonial literature considering the descriptions of "orientalism", "culture and imperialism", "hegemony", "othering". This research also casts light on *Sweetness in the Belly* with Albert Memmi's 'mythmaking' and 'nominal generalization'. To commence with, the researcher believes that the character of Lilly as the alter-ego of the writer Camilla Gibb is consciously trying to depict the people of Africa in a positive attitude. However, using the critical theories, the researcher delves into analyzing the novel with a critical Saidian eye and claims that Lilly represents Africans not as the way they really are but, in contrast, as an imaginary construct which consists of some inferior creatures compared to their European counterparts. Furthermore, although Lilly seems to be considering herself as one member of the African community, she is, in fact, making them an "Other" although this process of Othering is depicted in a way that Lilly is both the other and the one who displays others to the reader. The researcher, at this point, turns towards the question of discourse and argues that the colonial discourse causes nominal generalizations and myths about the Africans and Muslims, resulting in their subjugation and suppression.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Western representation of Muslims and their faith in Islam has often been erroneous and stereotypical. There are chockfull of examples about their representations as backward and religiously violent and many other instances about Muslim women as victims of these acts of violence. The trajectory of such misrepresentations has been far extended after the attacks in the United States on 9/11. In this regard, postcolonial studies has tried to challenge the common denominations in the power relations between the colonized and the colonizer, the homeland and the hostland, the diasporic and the centralized by unearthing the ideological forces behind the representations of the non-Westerners by the Westerners. Writers such as Camilla Gibb, who have been driven into the periphery due to the Western standards of literary creation, are increasingly attracting more critical attention and cast doubt upon the idea of nationalism and cultural unification.

Gibb was born in 1968 in London and she is currently living in Canada. She has studied at different universities including North Toronto Collegiate Institute, the Jarvis Collegiate Institute and American University in Cairo. Finally, she received her PhD in social anthropology from the University of Oxford. It was not until the publication of her first novel, *Mouthing the Words* in 1999 that she was publically known as a novelist. Her second novel was also published in 2002 called *The Petty Details of So-and-So's Life*. However, *Sweetness in the Belly* in 2005 established her position as a novelist with profound multicultural concerns. *Sweetness in the Belly* was shortlisted for Scotiabank Giller Prize, longlisted for the Dublin IMPAC award, and finally won the Trillium Award for best book in Ontario.

Sweetness in the Belly is a multi-layered novel addressing a spectrum of cultural, religious, and social dilemmas via its protagonist Lilly, who is born to hippie parents, but raised at a Sufi shrine in Morocco after her parents are murdered because of their involvement in drug dealing resulting in her

lifelong entanglement with Islam. For the most part, the events in the story take place in Morocco, Ethiopia, and England. As a young woman, she goes to the walled city of Harar, Ethiopia, where she starts teaching the Qur'an to children and finally falls in love with an idealistic doctor. However, recognized as a Western woman, she is always mistreated as a foreigner and utterly ironically, is forced to flee Ethiopia for England, where she faces the riddle of who she is and where she belongs to.

The novel displays consciousness of its attempts at falsifying notions of unity, purity, and solidity of community by the means of the question of social identity and dislocation. Gibb is adamant in exposing the interconnection of discourses of race, gender, class, religion, and ethnicity to refute the myth of unified and pure identity. Accordingly, the novel depicts two divergent cosmos and their concomitant ideologies; the one identified with Europe is illustrated as real and toned with logic; the one associated with Harar is downgraded as primitive, exotic, and unfathomable. But the major point to probe into is that Lily repeatedly intends to be approved by the so-called primitive Hararis. Such a dualism between the European and the African, the Christian and the Muslim, the home and the host can be investigated through the lens of Edward Said's postcolonial postulations. In his writings, he has attempted at revealing the violence against the Easterners in the hands of the Western imperialism and its jaundiced portrayal of the Other or the Oriental. Orientalism, according to Said, pertains to a myriad of discourses and institutions that guarantee a hegemonic and unifying representation of the West, which is, to a great degree, achieved via the "othering" process; "locating" Europe's others in order to define the West as the homely "self" (Said, *Orientalism*, p.17).

Thus, constructability of the Western and non-Western identity in Said's terminology is going to be discussed in Gibb's novel. Moreover, the possibility of resistance against the dominant ideology is to be speculated in this research. The question is whether Lily's struggle to put an end to the prejudiced depiction of the Muslims in the West can be considered as a token of cultural resistance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lisa Grekul in "Innate Civility: Whiteness in Camilla Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly*" criticizes an essay by Binyavanga Wainaina in which he gives advice to Westerners on how to write about Africa as a land of exoticism and far-fetched experiences. However, Grekul refutes this argument and asserts that such an

outlook perpetuates the Western ideology. She takes the instance of *Sweetness in the Belly* arguing that personal experience and encountering the culture upfront is the only way on can write about Africa as done by Gibb (p.1).

"Not Quite Ethiopian, But Not At All English: Ethnography, Hybridity, and Diaspora in Camilla Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly*" written by Hannah McGregor deals with the question of hybridity and ethnography focusing mainly on Lily's character, her hybrid subjectivity and the way she is accepted by the British. McGregor contends that Lily is treated like an Africa as she faces the same difficulties that other black characters encounter in the novel (p.95).

In "Transnationalism in Camilla Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly*" by Esra Mirze Santesso, the questions of identity and nationalism are scrutinized side by side. Santesso argues that the concept of nationalism has proved successful in limiting, labeling, and categorizing people. She rejects such an essentialist view of nation and puts forth the idea of borderlessness. To provide evidence for her argument, she adheres to Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly* and maintains that transnationalism is only possible to obtain through disorientation and stepping beyond the limits of borders (p.132).

In *Complicit Witnessing: Distant Suffering in Contemporary White Canadian Women's Writing* (2013) Hannah McGregor discusses a new trend that Canadian writers have partially initiated. She stresses that these writers teach Western people about the life conditions of distant others. According to McGregor, the white innocence as the trademark of most of Western novels tampers with the reality of minorities from Eastern or African countries (p.74).

3. METHODOLOGY AND THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

This article delves into *Sweetness in the belly* with the help of Edward Said's notions of postcolonialism, Orientalism, and the modern reading of postcolonialism in light of Albert Memmi's notions. In this article, a qualitative reading of almost all previous works done regarding the topic are presented. These article are derived from prominent journals and reviews that can be found with exact referencing in each paragraph. It is attempted to present a new perspective on this novel with applying Edward Said's *Orientalism* as the main source and Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and The Colonized* as supplementary source. Following is a concise

explanation of theories and methods applied in this research.

To commence with, turning to the details of theories, Said asserts that the rich culture and civilization of the East has been undermined and downgraded by European historiography in which the Oriental is always already associated with the inferior: “We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it. It goes far beyond the petty span of the history of our race, which is lost in the prehistoric period at a time when the Egyptian civilization had already passed its prime. Look at all the Oriental countries. Do not talk about superiority or inferiority” (Said, 2006, p. 32). Therefore, the Orient is a construction of different disciplines and functions underlying the Western ideology as all the complexities and intricacies of the Oriental are narrowed down to the simple question of power and imperialism. The “Western cultural institutions are responsible for the creation of those ‘others’, the Orientals, whose very difference from the Occident helps establish that binary opposition by which Europe’s own identity can be established” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2009, p. 61).

In this respect, the discourse of Orientalism is committed to create binary oppositions between the West and the East such as rationality and knowledge/primitivism and darkness. Western civilization has always been regarded as the owner of the highest cultural values, while the non-Westerns are represented as the subjects in dire need of such acculturating parameters or in Said’s terminology, “myths” or narratives on both colonizer and colonized or hostland and homeland. The mythology attributed to the colonized is composed of a long list of faults, foibles, and deficiencies in character, social conduct, and cultural norms. In the works of many Western writers about the Africans and the Asians, there is a roster of stories, anecdotes, and myths in which they struggle to imitate the high standards of the Occident (Memmi, 2016, pp. 205-206).

With this introduction, the main concern of this study is to survey the identity formation of the main character, Lilly, in Gidd’s novel according to Said’s seminal postcolonial concepts including “the Oriental”, “hegemony”, “othering”, and “mythmaking”. Lilly’s attitudes and reactions toward the Muslims, Africans, and English vary radically to the extent that she cannot rely on her national and religious grounds. The opposition between West and East, the essentialist outlook toward the Oriental, and supremacy of the white culture, and the possibility of establishing a hybrid identity are all the targets of scrutiny in this essay.

In this example, Balfour’s statements as representations of British Emperor do not refer only to knowing the history of a place or a country for a long time but it refers to the power that lies behind it and it is the ability to recognize a place; in Edward Said’s terms it refers to:

Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes “the very basis” of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation. But if the special intimacy between governor and governed in Egypt is disturbed by Parliament’s doubts at home, then “the authority of what . . . is the dominant race—and as I think ought to remain the dominant race—has been undermined.” Not only does English prestige suffer; “it is vain for a handful of British officials—endow them how you like, give them all the qualities of character and genius you can imagine—it is impossible for them to carry out the great task which in Egypt, not we only, but the civilized world have imposed upon them.” (*Orientalism* p.34)

The world has always been divided into West and East and this binary opposition is what the western philosophy has always been about and which Orient has been based on from the time of its first appearance. But the problem is that in this division only one side has had the right to talk about reality; that is, in this process, only West has the power to determine what Orient is and what should be real about it. According to Jane Hiddlestone, ‘Colonizer and colonized are pitted against one another in the form of a rigid binary opposition, and there is no possible communication or mediation between them’ (p.36). The knowledge about orient was the product of this cultural and political position, created the orient and its surroundings, mentality, being and structure.

Culture and Imperialism

Firstly, what would be critical to say is the matter of geography as well that later became one of the most important literary concerns as Szeman in his book *Zones of Instability* reveals ‘the areas that Said addresses in much of the rest of the decolonizing world, and especially in the former countries of British Empire, nationalism and transformation of space suggested by nationalism continues to be an important determinant of literary production well into the 1960s and 1970s’. It is defined as a phenomenon that we are taught and also brainwashed to value, respect and learn from (p.10).

Moreover, not only did Said appreciate this correlation, but he also mentioned that 'Imperialism' is undoubtedly 'Culture' and vice versa. At first sight they might be opposite but Said's discussions are pragmatic but not theoretical and these binary oppositions were no longer contrasting but comparative. Critics suggest the importance of the title, *Culture and Imperialism*: 'What is at work in this sense is a critical sensibility that is striving to transcend the paralyzing binary mode of blame on the one side and guilt on the other. The reason for Said's collocating both culture and imperialism within the same thought is pragmatic and strategic, and not just theoretical' (Radhakrishnan, 2012, p.30).

Hegemony

Hegemony is an important concept in colonialism and imperialism because the ability of the colonizer to make impact on the thought, mind and mentality of the colonized is the most important and powerful operation that colonizers and imperialists do in the colonized countries. Since 'Said points out that there is an asynchronous or a disjunctive relationship between our theoretical refutation of nationalism and our continued reliance on the rationale of nationalism at the level of politics and political economy', the empire is not the domination of some states by a single state through exerting power by force and fight but, on the other hand, it is controlling other states by the effective way of cultural hegemony (Radhakrishnan, p.53).

The outstanding features of Edward Said's understanding of culture are the notion of hegemony and its good or bad results and the power of culture to legalize and legitimize. Edward Said in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* follows the same notion and argues:

Historically one supposes that culture has always involved hierarchies; it has separated the elite from the popular, the best from the less than best, and so forth. It has also made certain styles and modes of thought prevail over others. But its tendency has always been to move downward from the height of power and privilege in order to diffuse, disseminate, and expand itself in the widest possible range. In its beneficent form this is the culture of which Matthew Arnold speaks in *Culture and Anarchy*. (p.9)

In other words, whether one believes or not, culture

exerts power ending up in either good or bad results. In the above citation from Said's *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, he cites Matthew Arnold's view about the role of culture having a significant and positive impact on society. Arnold argues that 'The great men of culture, are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to another, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time'.

Othering

Othering as a concept in postcolonial first surfaced in the analyses of western colonialism. It was observed that 'there was a widely articulated conviction that "not-quite-white" ethnics lacked the self-control necessary for fulfilling the appropriate role of a citizen' so this conviction has helped the dominant power to rule quite every aspect of life and it is such dominant power which determines what should be told, should be excluded and how it needs to be interpreted (Traber, 2016, p.40). The discourse of the orientalism, therefore, in order to strengthen and prove the violence of its own actions need to see the oriental as barbaric and savage. For Said, however, it is the binary created by the west which creates new concepts about non-westerners when he utters the following words:

Writers as Carl Peters, Leopold de Saussure, and Charles Temple draw on the advanced/backward binarism so centrally advocated in late nineteenth-century Orientalism. Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerated, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment (Said, *Orientalism* 207).

It can also be said that Othering can be done completely through knowledge and understanding when 'the knowing happens, that the Other is inferior, or antique, or incapable of fitting into the progressive era of Reason: in other words, through the operation of knowledge to deny co-evalness to the Other' (Radhakrishnan, p.97).

Mythmaking and Nominal Generalization

Mythmaking would be dubbed as a violent and dangerous act committed by the colonizer. Within them, there is a hidden power in that act which enables the colonizer to wield power and influence at a greater range and 'this is what Edward W. Said has defined as 'How you supply the forces of world-wide

accumulation and rule with a self-confirming ideological motor. 'To cite an example, regarding the question of religion, what the western writer does is to create a myth about magic, conjuring genes, sorcerers and devil and, by their own mythmaking, they condemn them due to their belief in the supernatural' (Memmi p.19). In other words, western white writers have repeatedly reproduced the same or similar myths whenever it comes to the question of African's origins, birth, love, death and almost anything they can think of.

The title of a large number of books written by western whites is utterly suggestive about their attitude towards the non-westerners. A quick review will show that most titles of works about non-westerners, if not all of them, include words or phrases which show and suggest negative ideas, outlooks and mindsets toward their subjects. In this regard, there are many writers who take generic and holistic approaches and use, for example, titles that tend to generalize everything about them. Radhakrishnan emphasizes 'whereas a secular solidarity motivated by affiliation seeks to build a community based on shared and negotiable differences, fundamentalist nationhood deploys spurious notions of origin, forever discrediting refugees, exiles, immigrants, and basically any group that is not identified as part of the original providential covenant between a mythical people and their mythical god/s' (Radhakrishnan p.82).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Orientalism in *Sweetness in the Belly*

It has recently been a controversial issue when a white person writes about non-whites. Almost all scholars, Hannah McGregor among all, give a complete reaction towards this fallacy and emphasizes 'the insistent embedding of authorial bodies in foreign locales offers an embodied link between the "us" of the implied readership and the "them" of the subject matter' and they agree that even writers with the best intentions writing about non-white writers fall into a trap that their ideology has set for them and it is the question of privileging their ideas, structures, morale, ideology, race and people (McGregor, p.5).

One of the main critical issues in writing about nonwhites by whites is the question of times; that is to say, white writers tend to place the other cultures in a different time and they prefer to show their backwardness through attributing to them characteristics that are reminiscent of past. In fact, they are required to show how much they are secluded from the modern time so that they can perpetuate

their colonizing. Not only does this fact show us some traceable clues but Grekul also mentions that the story "comes to its climax, the life Lilly leads in London become more vivid" she would become more suspicious of whatever she once called values and depict her real understanding (Grekul, p.111). In contrast, Gibb describes her time in Ethiopia as existing not in a specific time which is between past and future:

My white Face and white uniform give me the appearance of authority in this new world, though my experiences, as my neighbors quickly come to discover, are rooted in the old. I'm a white Muslim woman raised in Africa, now employed by the National Health Service. I exist somewhere between what they know and what they fear, somewhere between the past and the future, which is not quite the present. (pp.8-9)

Hegemony and Diaspora in Gaining an Identity

As the novel unfolds, Lilly becomes an instance of a subject that is affected by diaspora. Although Lilly's parents have been nomads in search of nothing, Lilly has gained an identity of herself in the name of Islam and she has become someone who has faced diaspora. Said in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* argues the power of culture as a device to create dominance and it is observed that Lilly takes shelter of Islam since it is the most considerable pillar of the culture of the local people through which she might find the existence of her ideas (p.16). However, Lilly's parents, Alice and Philip, are different in terms of their choice of inhabitation due to the fact that they had chosen Africa themselves while Lilly had to flee the country without any options of her own:

For them, the journey ended in Africa, while for me it had only just begun. After several months in Tangier, where I'd played in the streets of the medina while they lay about naked and high in the unbearable heat of our room in a crumbling hotel, we made our way south, to the Sufi shrine of Bilalal Habash on the Moroccan edge of the Sahara.(pp.9-10)

Lilly does not seem to have any root at all and all her remembrances of her childhood are according to herself some 'conversations'. She has been constantly dislocated from place to place and this becomes her personality. This displacement has been defining character as we read the novel:

Nomads, my father called us, though there was no seasonal pattern to our migration. I was born in Yugoslavia, breast-fed in Ukraine, weaned in Corsica, freed from diapers in Sicily and walking by the time we got to the Algarve. Juts when I was comfortable speaking French, we'd be off to Spain. Juts when I had a new best friend, the world was full of strangers again. Until Africa, life was a series of aborted conversations, attachments severed in the very same moment they began. (p.10)

The feelings and dialogues occurred among characters at the beginning of the novel reveal what Said mentions as 'making distinctions' and the adversities to adapt to a new place. Lilly's life is separated by a great break when her parents are killed and now she has no options except to live where she is which is Africa. Considering all these facts, Lilly has "the ability to decide that race is not relevant" and that is why she sees the world as a stranger (McGregor, 2013, p.47). This makes her empowered to complain about her current situation and speaking a European language suited her so that she could find her best friend.

Orientalism and False Expectations in Lilly's Observations

When Lilly enters Harar for the first time and sees the people, she behaves as a white foreigner who sees everything far below her expectations and too disturbing:

I wanted to disappear, to blend into the stench in the air, melt into the high white walls of the compounds that flanked us on each side, be an observer, not the observed. My life was now in the hands of a woman who was leading me left and right and right and left through tangled streets until I was sure we had come full circle. (p.41)

Here Lilly wishes she had been an observer which in fact is; that is to say, Lilly is apparently fed up with the behavior and kind of living of the people and she wishes she had finished with such people which do not seem to have any sense of reality. Admittedly, Lilly does not see any physical beauty and the only thing she sees is the bad condition of the place and the ugliness of the people. It is clear that the term Said uses 'barbarianism' which is mostly viewed

through the eyes of dominant powers is at work. Moreover, Lilly is the only person who commences expressing her ideas to talk about the binary she may feel but a bit dramatizes the reality since the power is in her hand despite her little understanding of the whole cultural differences and values (Said, *Orientalism* p.34). Lilly seems to be viewing this scene as a barbarian scene and it conveys a feeling of malaise in being among such people and such a place:

We came to a less congested part of town, a rundown neighborhood where the compound walls were crumbling and dust colored. Makeshift shacks made of tin siding and wood scraps had been erected between broken walls. The streets reeked of urine, and there were people missing limbs who could not even be bothered remarking at the sight of me. (p.41)

At different points in the novel, Lilly seeks to evince her superior place over the others and one of them is when in one of the first scene of the novel, she helps Amina who is an Ethiopian refugee to bear her child during a rainy night in an alley located behind a hospital in London which is called Lambeth Hospital. Lilly goes on to talk about the history of the hospital and during this story she declares her coming from a different history, identity and culture and in this way she attempts to prove herself as the center and the other women as marginal.

Othering and Contradictions in Black and White Dialogues

Lilly's existence is like a motley of contradictions; she is both white and black and neither of them at the same time, she is both African and European and neither of them, she is both Muslim and Christian and neither of them and finally she is both at the center and at the margin while neither of them. Said as one of the pioneers of introducing Othering in postcolonial literature contends in case White standards 'We' is regarded as a main criterion and everything against the standards can be what he calls 'Othering'. However, Gibb with the complex uncertainty showed by Lilly's thought, a new othering procedure is at work. That is to say, in the sense of identity, she seems to be an Other who dominates not on the ends of the spectrum but in the middle while the middle is a void place which does not give full meaning to her life. Moreover, even until the end of the novel, this hybrid character, Lilly, finds nowhere to belong to as Daniel Traber states 'A hybrid is built upon fragments and disparate parts, manifesting itself as a decentered identity. By

withdrawing from rigid lines of social identity the hybrid is not easily contained within any single category' (p.62). England is the exact place where her parents were born and called home but it is not a place that she can call home; on the other hand, Africa is a place where she was raised and brought up and not surprisingly, it is not a place that she can call home either (Said, *Orientalism*, pp.209-211). Once in the novel, she likens the trips to Africa to those colonizers who wanted to tame the country:

It felt like betrayal, but in truth it was simply Muhammed Bruce's lament for the passing of an era. A time when Europeans had roamed the earth in pursuit of adventure, largely oblivious to the lives and laws of the people in the countries they picked through like cherries. (p.250)

Albert Memmi has tried his best to exemplify a privileged one who admits the colonized but is a colonizer, when Lilly tries to forget about the reality of being black and covers her eyes so as not to see all negative points to be an African. In other words, Lilly even forgets her parents and sees Great Abdal and Muhammed Bruce Mahmoud as what she has had. As a result, this is what Memmi says 'no matter what happens, he justifies everything' and this is exactly what Lilly did (p.51)

Culture and Imperialism in Lilly's Judgments

When Lilly talks to an Indian doctor called Robin, she tells the story of her upbringing and she talks about Muhammed Bruce Mahmud and the way played the role of her parents and led her to study the real thing she needed. Lilly had studied works by Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Rumi and other works like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and also Arabian Nights which have shaped the ideas and ideology of Lilly in a way that is not similar to those of Africans and that she used to live with ;however, Lilly finds these learnings enjoyable at first as Albert Memmi in his book *The colonizer and the colonized* stresses that for colonizers 'no matter what happens he justifies everything—the system and the officials in it ... he is interested only in creating a position for himself, in obtaining his share' (p.52). Here is an example:

Muhammed Bruce's choices were more deliberate than I've ever realized. He supplemented my diet of Islam with doses of other realities. He must have envisioned a time when I would have to make my way in the wider world; the books he presented offered lessons about war and morality and disease and love and betrayal and,

perhaps most important, survival. Under the sea, at the center of the earth, on another planet, alone on a desert island, as a person hunted, in war, as a giant among little people, in the future, in a world upside down, a world through a looking glass, a world gone mad. (p.247)

As we see here in this excerpt, at first it is apparent that Said's observation of our response towards texts should not be the text only. The texts should be analyzed from hegemony of cultures, politics of the colony and the colonized. In this excerpt which is also stressed by Radhakrishnan, the usual belief towards black and Muslim people is observed. Gibb as white writer either consciously or unconsciously declares the norms of skepticism by the white. Lilly who repeatedly takes shelter of Islam starts questioning the values she even taught to people and even doubts whether they are from an unreal world or not (p.29). Lilly is once again judging Islamic countries and England and gives England the superior position. For her, they are only the western works of literature which take human beings much closer to reality and the things that one needs in the outer world are those written by western writers; they are only such books that help one to be able to survive in difficult situations.

When Lilly arrives at England, she describes the people there and how they treat the Africans but she never argues that she shares their beliefs about the Africans. In this regard, Szeman in his book *Zones of instability* describes such issue as 'resistance' which once described to the world of post colonialism by Said and says "Resistance is rather a way of preserving or defining the integrity and autonomy of one's own community against threatening outside forces" (p.26). Although she talks as if she does not believe in what is said about them and apparently does not approve of that, it can be contented that what Lilly relates is what she thinks due to her superior status in England compared to that of black people which can be dubbed a resistance. For instance, she talks about Amina's baby not by her own husband but a man who has raped her in Kenya as a mark of Africa; in fact, she sees Africa as a place where women are raped and Africans who rape women left alone:

"He must have been afraid that I, this dirty Galla, would give birth to someone who looked like him," she told me. "But it was the end of Africa for me, in any case," she said, wiping her hands across the Formica table as if to obliterate the past. "I

would have died and gone to hell rather than stay.”And then came Sitta, with that mole like a continent stamped on her cheek. And the fact that Amina chose to see that mark as Africa. (p.234)

In Gibb’s account, as Lisa Grekul in her article ‘Innate Civility: Whiteness in Camilla Gibb’s *Sweetness in the Belly*’ points out that, Lilly is the most suffered character when Lilly, “by contrast, has nothing: no husband, no children, no future to look forward to, no reason to hope. The suggestion is that she suffers more than any other character”. The objectives of strategy are manifold; that is to say, it includes many points where all others except white Europeans have been stigmatized due to the strategy they have implemented (p.17). Finally, it has been effective and efficient only through the last phase of their strategy which is control. They act of controlling whatever might happen in the colonies will strengthen and solidify their own position and status as superiors.

Subject and Nominal Generalizations of the Whites

One of the most important aspects regarding the existence of the others through the eyes of white westerns would be the fact that they tend to generalize about almost anything. That is to say, there is an inherent aptitude among them to see the black people as a unity where no change can be seen (Memmi, p.211). For example, when they are described they are called primitive and they disregard the many different differences which exist among the nations of Africa, the cities of countries and from person to person. One way or another, this is the exact same way that Lilly sees the African people when she talks about being a member of their community as ‘It is clear in several texts that the search for an identity emblematic of an anti-“civilization” narrative simply relies on defining these varied Others through stereotypes buttressing the mythical norm’ (Traber, p.15). Followed by that, Gishta tries to change Lilly through giving her an Islamic appearance by piercing her ears, using henna to dye her hair and nails and also using honey for her arms. For Lilly, these are things used by Muslims to assimilate her and she goes on showing Muslim generalized as follows:

So the trousers were not simply a fashion statement. I had been gently chastised; conformity is induced through gifts. Through flattery. And gossip. Once I was wearing these trousers, the remaining rumors seemed

to subside. I was now fully dressed. (p.130)

In addition, as this quote illustrates, Lilly argues that believing in the evil eye and the fact that all people are frightened by the evil eye that may cause danger is something shared by all people and this is another mark that Lilly attributes to the totality of the African people. In the same vein, Lilly seeks to depict another false characteristic of the African people and to generalize that and Albert Memmi also mentions that the colonizer force their ideas since it is not sufficient for them to be the privileged one, but they should also dictate the inferior role of the colonized so in order to show this ideology, nominal generalization also takes its power to dictate the world the role of the colonized through social matters like novels and any literary pieces. In this novel Gibb unconsciously sees African as misogynists (p.214). Many of the students in Quran decide to take the courses taught by Sheikh Jami’s apprentice called Idris and as a result she has fewer students to instruct. When Lilly comments on that fact, she refers only to the myth that Africans are misogynists and do not see women as the level of men while there are surely many other reasons for that fact. Obviously Idris has been one of the best students of Sheikh Jami’s and since all people praise Sheikh, they also praise his student and send their children to his classes to learn Quran; however, Lilly sees it as nothing more than a sign of misogynist attitudes and speaks Idris when he tells that men are privileged in his country:

To my face parents said, “Times are uncertain; we would rather keep them home,” but then, as I shortly discovered, my students had been turning up at the Bilal al Habash Madrasa instead, their teacher none other than Idris—Sheikh Jami’s other apprentice, a man who, in our couple of encounters, had not hidden the fact that he despised me. “When times are uncertain, people prefer the authority of a man,” (p.359)

Lilly believes that she has been an other to the Ethiopian society and attempts to show this on many occasions in her narrative; many times in the novel, she seeks to show the superior position of the white race, community and people through different strategies that she implements in her stories. However, when she migrates to England where she seems to belong to, there are many troubles that she encounters. At the exact time that she arrives in England, the English nationalism discourse is at the peak of its power during 1980s and it seems that Lilly

is also called an other due to her Islamic appearance. Muslims in England have so-called Friday Prayers and there she is insulted by many people for being a Muslim:

The world beyond is, of course, full of alien encounters, contradictions that people cannot or do not wish to reconcile. When Amina is dropping the children off at school. Friday prayers, the one time a week I wear a veil. Would you look at 'is cunt! A white fu'in Paki! A lout with a lager can mock-triggered to his head. Master race. Go' it? (p.165)

Here lies the greatest contradiction of the story when Lilly who has been feeling the superior position regarding her status in Ethiopia is called an inferior by the very same people she believes she is one of them as this reaction towards black-skinned people traces back to history and it soon became part of white ideology as it is mentioned that 'The Middle Ages were characterized by a symbolism that associated otherness with blackness, wildness, and the monstrous. In Christianity, there had developed associations between darkness and evil (Rattansi, 2011, p.17). This illustrates the consciousness, ideology and racism of the British people who see themselves almost above all other people and a sense of hatred towards Islam and Muslims.

Mythmaking and Essentialism in the White Discourse

Albert Memmi in his book *Racism* (2000) mentions that 'nothing can describe well enough the extraordinary deficiency of the colonized' and then insists that black culture should be portrayed in a dark manner so that the colonized and the colonizer admit its mythical unreal ideology (pp.205-206). Lilly is rather someone who takes advantage of everything she has to gain a higher position in every society. While she used Islam and Islamic leanings to be assimilated in the black Ethiopian society although she felt superior to them, here she has the real source of power which her race and skin. While in London, Amina had no option for saving herself due to her black skin, Lilly is able to use her white skin to be assimilated in a society which she deems superior. Lilly even goes so far to argue that Lilly had better not wear the Islamic veil since it gets more attention:

She dons a heavier, darker veil, and even though she says she feels more protected, I fear it also draws more attention. She kisses the children goodnight, leaving lipstick on their foreheads and a trail of Chanel No. 5. (p.142)

Although Lilly seems to have sympathy for the black community in England, she justifies their racism every time by comparing it to those of black Ethiopians. According to Albert Memmi in *Racism*, a defined system is behind this movement as he emphasizes 'racism, as the systematic attempt to justify the invasion and domination of a people proclaimed to be biologically inferior by another group that thereby judges itself superior, dates from the birth of colonialism' and asserts biological differences are centered (p.185). Therefore, as is observed, Amina's daughter Sitta has a black cheek mole that attracts almost everyone on first seeing her, especially those of little white kids. Lilly tells us of a fight between Ahmed and Sitta when Ahmed makes her angry by making fun of her mole; However, Lilly does not talk about British kids tease Sitta and uses Ahmed as the one who ridicules her and exactly after that she travels back to Ethiopia where they used to ridicule each other:

Ahmed's been teasing her about her mole, saying it looks like an ink stain. It's not the worst of what kids say. I've heard other Ethiopian kids call her nig nog, Galla, Shankilla. They have twice as many cruel words as their parents: the insults of both the old world and the new. Sitta buries her face in her father's neck, and Yusuf strokes her cheek. (p.352)

On many and different occasions, Lilly points out to the question of race and its impact on the way people see each other. However, almost all the times that she touches on that issue, she does not indict the white people for their biases against color but she addresses that question in an African context. This is exactly what Memmi states and believes that a colonizer rejects the idea that the colonized ones should not be deemed even a person and 'you cannot count on them' so this belief is when the colonizers find themselves the righteous to judge them (p. 211). For example, instead of focusing on the way whites see black people different from themselves, she argues that the Harari people tended to see Aziz as an other due to his too black skin. She tells of the fact that those people used to call Aziz as 'black savage, African, barbarian, pagan' which make Lilly annoyed because Aziz is her lover. Such negative adjectives are used by Hararis against Aziz but nowhere in the novel Lilly points to those adjectives to be used by white people against black people.

5. CONCLUSION

This study delves into *Sweetness in the Belly* mainly with the help of post-colonial points and theories of Edward Said's *Orientalism* as well as Albert Memmi's criticism of post colonialism when is applied in a society. The notions of cultural hegemony as well as imperialism are used to display the power of culture in making a new identity and British Emperor to directly influence the cultures in the world. At the beginning of the novel, the understanding Lilly's conversations are in favor of Ethiopia and its people since she is recalled as a nomad whose character is shaped in this culture. However, by applying what Edward Said first invented as oriental notions, other layers of meanings are meticulously analyzed that reveal that Lilly's dominant white ideology made her an 'Other' to her roots although she repeatedly states that she belongs to nowhere. Furthermore, new analytical postcolonial concepts, mythmaking and nominal generalizations are discussed when Lilly allocates negative adjectives to Muslim and Black people. It is displayed in this article that white writers who are concerned about non-whites could face dissimilar facts that their creations come from the dominance of their western ideology. This study would be considered unique when it comes to its neo-othering and hybrid characteristics of Lilly. That is to say, *Sweetness in the Belly* was chosen to be applied by more challenging notions of post colonialism due to changes occur during the course of novel even if analysis of even black characters are concerned. All in all, the colonized and the colonizers represent quite a novel features in the world of post-colonial literature.

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