



Dynamics of Signification: A Study of the Freeplay of Signifieds in Pakistani Anglophone Essay

Rija Ahsan*, Sarah Ishfaq**

ABSTRACT: *This paper aims to conduct a deconstructionist analysis of Aesthetics of Incompleteness, a collection of Shoaib Bin Hassan's prose writings. The study delves deep into literary and linguistic intricacies to explore the freeplay of meanings, and to reveal how signifieds are in a constant state of flux. The objective of this research is to explore the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signifieds. For this purpose, Hassan's creative employment of language is specifically brought into discussion. As this paper emphasizes the freeplay of meanings and rejects the idea of the fixity of signifieds, it employs Deconstruction and Poststructuralism as the theoretical frameworks to deny structuralist metanarratives. The research is based on deconstructionist theory of Derrida, and poststructuralist ideas of Barthes, Barry, and Leitch. Analyzed in the light of their philosophy, this paper contends that postmodern Anglophone literature defies the grand narrative of fixed meanings, and offers an alternative perspective of textual analysis. This study brings insight for further research on Pakistani Anglophone literature to explore innovation in the dynamics of signification offered by postmodern writers.*

Keywords: Meanings, signification, freeplay, deconstruction, flux

Introduction

Shoaib Bin Hassan is a Pakistani Anglophone writer whose prose writings are known for the extraordinary witty flavor and embedded humor. This research linguistically deconstructs his anthology of essays titled *Aesthetics of Incompleteness* to prove how meanings are in a constant state of flux, and prove the text as a poststructuralist entity. It unearths literary and linguistic conflicting realities to highlight a decentered approach in the text. Since poststructuralism accepts language as a disoriented entity, the primary objective of this research is to explore variety and multiplicity of meanings.

* Lecturer in English Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore (Corresponding author e-mail: rjaahsan@gmail.com)

** Lecturer in English Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore

His stylistic and linguistic innovations have been acknowledged largely by critics as the techniques employed by him are the hallmark of his writing style. Highlighting this aspect of his prose, Amer Rashid Sheikh, general secretary REMA, writes in the Preface of another book by Hassan titled *A Passage to Pakistan* that his essays are “remarkable not alone for their diversity and eclectic tenor, as also for their slick semantics and the fusion of divergent cultural symbols and icons, all of which add up to a narrative gathering energies at every turn of the page” (Sheikh, 2006, p.12). This analysis points out the diversity of themes brought forth in these essays, and his treatment of language.

The richness of language, expression and literary thought in Hassan’s writings has also been highlighted by his contemporaries. “The angular light of his verbal and literary repertoire”, writes a Pakistani poet, Athar Tahir, “brightens the subjects and illuminates the layers of meanings in nice, nimble, nuanced sentences” (Tahir, 2006). This view rightly points out the multiplicity of meanings in Hassan’s work and directs us towards the poststructuralist nature of the primary text as signifieds are unfixed and subject to flux.

The aim of this paper is to deconstruct the primary text by employing the poststructuralist ideas of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Peter Barry. Both Deconstruction and Poststructuralism deny the Structuralist idea of fixed signifieds for one signifier, and can be taken as similar philosophies since critics hold the viewpoint that “Poststructuralism must be thought of as Deconstruction, and not the opposite” (Williams, 2005, p. 25). This research draws on Derrida’s concepts of Differance and Supplementation highlighting the play of differences between signifieds, and the play of substitution of meanings, Barthes idea of Writerly texts, and Leitch’s differrance.

This paper contends that the primary text provides a textual space which can prove to be “the origin or production of differences and the differences between differences, the play of differences” as discussed by Derrida (Leitch, 1983, p.42). Meanings in the text “occupy the middle point between total absence and total presence ... the play of substitution fills and marks a determined lack” (Derrida, 2009, p.157). Being a poststructuralist text, *Aesthetics of Incompleteness* proves to be a clear example of ‘differrance’ which, according to Leitch, denotes three meanings: (1) “‘to differ’ – to be unlike or dissimilar in nature, quality, or form; (2) ‘differre’ (Latin) – to scatter, disperse; and (3) ‘to defer’ – to delay, postpone. The first two

significations mark out spatial distinctions, while the third makes reference to differences in temporality” (Leitch, 1983, p. 41). The difference in signifieds or the existence of binary opposites is highlighted by the first definition of the term. The second definition implies multiplicity of meanings where no universal signified is present but signifieds are scattered according to their context. The third suggests postponement as the actual meanings of terms in the text are often postponed to give space to the underlying ones.

This research answers the following questions:

1. How does language in the primary text appear as a disoriented entity as suggested by poststructuralist discourse?
2. How does multiplicity of meanings make the text a decentered entity?

Literature Review

Poststructuralism believes in a deconstructionist reading that should include the investigation of meanings which even the writer is unaware of. “Writer writes in a language”, states Derrida, “and in a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely ... And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses” (Derrida, 1974, p. 158). The process of unfolding language as a range of meanings leads to the act of revealing the hidden interpretations of language as he says that deconstructionist reading “attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight” (Derrida, 1974, p. 158). The primary text for this research can also be analyzed from this stance to unearth a variety of meanings in a signifier.

The paper also quotes Barthes, who has developed critical ideas regarding both Structuralism and Poststructuralism, yet only the latter philosophy has been discussed in this analysis. Barthes’ idea of ‘Writerly’ texts is particularly relevant herein as it describes a text which “the reader can write along with the scriptor; its signifiers can be set going toward infinity; and its pleasure can be worked up and experienced in an orgasmic activity” (Leitch, 1983, p. 114). The primary text for this research serves as an apt example for this idea as Hassan lets his readers decipher the underlying multiple meanings of his witty phrases. This paper offers an insight into multiple meanings encompassed in a single expression, and unearths how the narrative defies structuralist notions of fixity of signifieds. Barthes’ poststructuralist

philosophy endorses this concept further by introducing the controversial, poststructuralist notion of 'The Death of the Author' which is also the title of his essay. His announcement of the death of the author is "a rhetorical way of asserting the independence of the literary text and its immunity to the possibility of being unified or limited by any notion of what the author might have intended, or crafted into the work" (Barry, 2007, p. 66), which further strengthens this paper's contention of free play of meanings and text as a decentered entity.

The poststructuralist analysis, thereby, brings forth such dynamics of language which are unperceived by the author, and supports the vastness of language and its ability to represent a "universally felt anxiety that the language will express things we hadn't intended, or convey the wrong impression, or betray our ignorance, callousness, or confusion" (Barry, 2007, p. 62). This linguistic skepticism is because of the quintessential ambiguity that language carries in itself in the form of variety of signifieds for a single signifier. This linguistic angst lies at the basis of poststructuralist literature which defies structural order to highlight this anxiety. This is the point where deconstruction comes to forefront to explore the ambiguity and vastness of language itself.

This doubt or uncertainty does not take place randomly; it is rather caused by exploring the tussle between signifieds since "the deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text" (Barry, 2007, p. 71). This reveals that signifieds in deconstruction are consistently at war with each other because one signifier may contain a variety of them. This concept is analogous to Andrew Benjamin's idea of contestation as he states: "The letters, due to the simple fact of their presence, make a demand. The nature of that presence, however, makes a further demand. Taken together these two demands can be interpreted as 'contesting'" (Benjamin, 2008, p. 87). Identical is the case with the primary text. Due to this reason, and the aforementioned linguistic ambiguity, "a text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying" (Barry, 2007, p. 72). This idea goes in accordance with Barthes' concept of 'The Death of the Author'.

Moreover, Barry employs the imagery of liquid to define this situation. He holds the notion that "the verbal sign, in its view, is constantly floating free of the concept it is supposed to designate. [language] involves a rather obsessive imagery

based on liquids – signs float free of what they designate, meanings are fluid, and subject to constant ‘slippage’ or ‘spillage’” (Barry, 2007, p. 64). This indicates that meanings, like a liquid, can take various shapes or just as a liquid takes the shape of its container, words can offer meanings according to their context. This also makes the text lack a definite centre where language exists as a free entity and gives way to the freeplay of signification.

In the light of this notion, it can be said that the vast interplay of meanings and the wordplay in the primary text for this paper make this framework applicable. Moreover, the absence of center is grounded in this fact highlighted in Nietzsche’s famous remark that “there are no facts only interpretations” (Barry, 2007, p. 63), which suggests that reality is a relative phenomenon which depends on its interpretation. This philosophy becomes apt in the case of Hassan’s prose writings where meanings are in a constant flux depending on their context.

Research Methodology

The primary text for this research is Shoaib Bin Hassan’s anthology titled *Aesthetics of Incompleteness* compiled in 2006. The secondary sources include various books and articles on Deconstruction, otherwise known as Applied Post Structuralism (Barry, 2007, p. 70). This research employs poststructuralist ideas of the following critics: Barry, Derrida, Barthes and Leitch. The research has been conducted in the light of the theoretical ideas of these critics and through examples quoted from the primary text for the development of my argument. Thereby, it involves a subjective textual analysis of Hassan’s prose writing through the framework of applied poststructuralism.

This is an exploratory and qualitative research which primarily analyzes the multiplicity and variety of meanings, and explores the linguistic and thematic aspects of the text. The methodology employed in this paper is based on the key concepts of differance, contestation, and freeplay of signifieds. This analysis apply these concepts in the primary text and traces textual examples in the form of figurative expression to prove the poststructuralist approach of the writer. Through a content based investigation, this research explores how meanings are different from what they apparently seem to be; how different signifieds exist at war with each other; the ways in which meanings are delayed or scattered; and the repetition of the difference between them. For this illustration, particular focus has been laid on meanings, recurrent symbols, figurative descriptions, and contextual significance of words. It

includes a comprehensive reading of the text to unearth its linguistic patterns to derive meanings from literary devices, techniques, tone, style and composition. On the whole, the methodology involves taking a theoretical idea as a stance and proving it with various instances and quotes from the primary text, and deriving an inductive conclusion from this interpretation.

Data Analysis

As meanings in a poststructuralist text are always in a state of flux, they can either have a completely different meaning from the prevalent one depending on the context of the term, or their meaning can vary from one place to another depending on their intertextual significance. Such variety of meanings generates an environment of freedom for the reader who plays an equally crucial role in the development of meanings in a text as a writer does. Barthes calls such texts the “writerly texts” which “the reader can write along with the scriptor; its signifiers can be set going toward infinity; and its pleasure can be worked up and experienced in an orgasmic activity” (Leitch, 1983, p. 114), because the sign – which is a combination of signifier and signified – is always in a state of slippage and spillage (Barry, 2007, p. 64). This section illustrates how this spillage of signifiers is evident in Hassan’s writings suggesting a whole range of connotations different from what the text apparently says.

To unearth the multiplicity of signifieds, a poststructuralist text often offers the reader a complete space where signifiers can be “worked up” (Leitch, 1983, p. 114). One example of such dynamics of the signifiers is Hassan’s use of the word ‘mischief’ and ‘limelight’ in the following extract. “By 1782”, writes Hassan, “America won its freedom. Though one of its leading lights, promoter and prompter, Tom Paine sailed back to Britain, leaving Americans to enjoy all the limelight. His bit of business, mission or mischief done” (Hassan, 2006, p. 28). On an apparent level limelight refers to America’s existence as a new state on the world map, while on a deeper level, it hints at the power and glory that the United States of America have achieved in the contemporary times being the only superpower since the advent of 21st century. In a similar way, as a mischief causes harm or trouble, the freedom of America was a mischievous act as its consequences can be seen in 20th and 21st century in the form of atomic bombs, war on terror, and hegemonic control over the world. Thereby, signifieds constantly “float free of the concept they are supposed to designate” (Barry, 2007, p. 64).

Writing about the incident of atomic bombings on Japan, Hassan states: “About the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: nicknamed Fat boy, Little Boy – were not only good jokes in themselves but, like fat Falstaff, were a constant source of joy and jokes for all around. ‘Little boy’ was stuck with a photograph of naked Rita Hayworth to cover, perhaps little Boy’s little nakedness and shame like fig leaves (Hassan, 2006, p. 59). Herein, the terms ‘jokes’ and ‘joy’ carry a meaning different from their prevalent connotation as the tone suggests irony because the nicknames symbolize a child’s play whereas the incident is considered to be one of the most disturbing and grotesque events in the history of mankind. Hassan writes in another chapter that: “Fat boy and Little boy. By nicknaming, Americans were kidding themselves, and perhaps the rest of the world. No manhood, only black goggled gum chewing kid hood for them as a nation” (Hassan, 2006, p. 133) which suggests a contrast between the seriousness of the action and the entitlement. Jokes and joy, on a deeper level, are suggestive of multiple connotations of the idea of nakedness or nudity. Since human nakedness is covered by the clothes which are an emblem of our culture and civilization, separating one’s self from which, the crude human nature becomes exposed. This symbolization of an uncivilized state goes in accordance with the idea of war because war shows a crude and barbaric side of human nature. Therefore, the nudity of little boy refers to the nakedness of human barbarity. The irony in these lines is created through the fact that a naked entity is being covered by something that is itself nude, casting a satire on the highly civilized American nation – the super power of the world. Moreover, the biblical reference to fig leaves takes the readers back to the incident of Adam and Eve who, after eating the forbidden fruit, became exposed and endeavored to cover themselves with fig leaves; however, just as fig leaves failed to cover a newly acquired sense of physicality, the picture of a naked actress failed to cover the nude grotesqueness of the act. This analysis shows the variety of signifieds that the term ‘nakedness’ suggests adjusting to its context. Employed in this manner, the term can be taken as a sign which “is constantly floating free of the concept it is supposed to designate” and is subject to “constant ‘slippage’ or ‘spillage’” (Barry, 2007, p. 64). The term, thereby, like a liquid, takes the shape of its container or the context.

Along with a multiplicity of signifiers, language can also suggest the complete opposite of what it appears to suggest. While continuing the theme of nuclear bombings, Hassan writes with a tinge of sarcasm: “The destruction of Hiroshima was clean, quick, one-go affair, capital intensive, entirely sinless – no looting, no

plundering, no raping. Rounding it off with a prayer: ‘O, Our Father in Heaven, Give us our daily bread and more Hiroshimas’” (Hassan, 2006, p. 59). The words clean, quick and one-go imply opposite connotations: though the act was clean as there was no looting or raping just as it happens during war yet it proved to be a clean and massive massacre; it was quick as there were no war prisoners or cell tortures yet the repercussions and aftereffects were faced long after the incident; it was sinless as it did not involve looting and plundering yet it physically and psychologically affected generations of humans; and happening in one-go, it brutally clean-swept the city of Hiroshima. Thereby, the three terms do not carry positive connotations as they imply. The rounding off of the act with a prayer apparently shows a religious approach yet the contents of the prayer shed this façade bringing forth the actual motives: daily bread and more Hiroshimas symbolize the need for sustenance and power respectively. These two are the basic animalistic needs associated with the law of the jungle, which go in contrast with a humane and religious approach. This argument can be supported with the ideas of Cudon who thinks that “A text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying” (Barry, 2007, p. 72). The above mentioned excerpt can be taken as an instance for this aspect of the theory where what is said is completely different from what it implies.

The difference between the prevalent signified of a term and its implied meaning can also be discussed in terms of supplementation which is a middle point between total absence and presence of meaning by substituting signifiers. Derrida states: “The play of substitution fills and marks a determined lack” (Derrida, 2009, p. 157); this can be understood through the following example from the primary text: “Copernicus (d. 1543) voiced the heretical view that Earth was not the fixed centre of the universe. Written in Latin, it was all Greek to most of the mankind” (Hassan, 2006, p. 4). The lack of apprehensibility is suggested by employing the term Greek as an adjective rather than a noun. Since Greek language and philosophy is considered to be the oldest in the world, the word suggests a difficulty in comprehensibility. Moreover, the Bible was first translated into Greek language (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017) which shows its religious significance; thereby, when a heretical view was given in an orthodox, church-governed society, it was understood in terms of theological philosophy rather than as a purely pagan and scientific research. This background illustrates that the multiplicity of the signifieds that ‘Greek’ as a signifier carries in it, is generated by supplementation of meaning. The empty space for all those meanings is filled by the term ‘Greek’ which is used in juxtaposition with Latin, immediately

giving the idea of a language or tongue; yet it also suggests the absence of an exact or direct signifier. It can, therefore, be said that the signifier is substituted herein which marks the absence of the term that is replaced but marks a presence by filling the gap through another one.

The concept of supplement suggests the absence of one entity as the exact representative of a term, yet it is replaced by another term that ensures presence suggesting that the meaning is supplemented by another entity. An instance of this concept is the following excerpt: "Once apples used to be apples and onions, onions. Now onions cost more than apples. The educated, the cultured, the sophisticated like apples have gone down, the sharpers, the shopkeepers, the smugglers, the loudmouths have gone up" (Hassan, 2006, p. 454). In the light of this example, it can be said that apples emblemize refinement and sophistication whereas onions due to their several layers and coarse surface symbolize shrewdness and corrupt behavior. This is so because apples are likened to the cultured and civilized people of society whereas onions stand for business-minded or cunning folk. Hassan holds the viewpoint that in the previous times, intellectual, cultured and sophisticated individuals were more valued and were considered to be a prized possession in society as they were the upholders of moral and cultural values, while cleverness was considered to be a negative trait of personality. Since times have changed, now the one who knows the tactics to earn money even if they include unscrupulous means, are praised more, and the price of onions has gone up. In the given example, onions and apples serve as the signifiers for two kinds of people. Since they appear as symbols rather than the actual representation of the signified entity, a gap or an absence appears here, the linguistic space of which is partially shared by their presence. Thereby, this supplementation includes the absence of a precise term for cleverness and civility, and instead supplies onions and apples act as substitutes.

Meanings, in a poststructuralist text, along with being substituted, are also delayed or dispersed. This idea is called *différance* which, according to Leitch, has three meanings: to differ, to scatter or disperse, and to postpone, whereby "the first two significations mark out spatial distinctions, while the third makes reference to differences in temporality" (Leitch, 1983, p. 41). This idea can be applied to Hassan's language in the light of the following extract: "Here a dog is a doggy, dismissive thing, untouchable and unclean. Out there in the Western world, a dog is a dog and more than a dog. Clean, faithful, respected and respectful, companion and

companionable both in life as in cultural imagery” (Hassan, 2006, p. 90). The two words ‘dog’ and ‘doggy’ are usually taken as synonymous or the same having identical meanings; however this example portrays them as carrying opposite meanings. Doggy appears to be a derogatory term which demeans or rather undermines the character of the animal; whereas dog appears to be an honoring and gratifying word. This dichotomy suggests the different ideas associated with the animal both in East and West; the former generally considers it to be an entity associated with filthy streets and lumps of garbage, thus unclean and untouchable; while the latter perceives it as man’s most loyal pet from the animal kingdom. Relating it to *différance*, first, the signifieds of the two apparently identical terms differ from each other; second, meaning is dispersed between them as the signified is divided between both terms by saying ‘a dog is a doggy’; third, when each of the term does not convey the immediate signified but holds it to offer a different connotation, the meaning is delayed or postponed, and only appears later with the help of the explanation given in the sentences following the statement. Therefore, since *différance* marks “the origin or production of differences and the differences between differences, the play of differences” (Leitch, 1983, p. 42), the above mentioned example highlights the difference between signifieds, and the difference between the different meanings of the term dog or doggy. In this way, a constant tussle goes on between the signifieds.

Another instance of *différance* is Hassan’s description of the character of his Pathan fellow in England who stuck to the petty affairs of life and did not struggle to rise above them. The author describes his situation by commenting: “Dust thou art and dust thou must remain” (Hassan, 2006, p. 477). First, the meaning is delayed or postponed by the employment of ‘dust’ to signify his petty-mindedness because dust symbolizes a primitive state of existence as man is considered to be made of it, and remaining dust suggests that no evolution or refinement is achieved by him. The postponement of meaning occurs due to the use of a highly symbolic signifier rather than an overt expression. Second, since the given statement gives another implication which is that human beings belong to humble origins therefore modesty can serve as their best attire, the meaning is dispersed between both signifieds, highlighting their difference. The given statement, due to its linguistic and thematic disposition, hints at the Biblical reference from the Genesis: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Noble, 2005) which suggests the futility of physical embellishments in worldly life. However, the connotation that the

author creates by the use of such words delays the actual meaning by offering an emblematic expression.

The difference between signifieds, according to Derrida, generates a closure which “does not have an end [fin]. The closure is the circular limit at the interior of which the repetition of difference is repeated/ rehearsed indefinitely” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 83). This difference is repeated when one term is employed while carrying different signifiers. Writing about D.H. Lawrence and H.G. Wells in one of his essays, Hassan writes: “The day the man died, the same day Wells the writer died. No longer read, an extinct volcano. The day the man died, Lawrence the writer became more alive, more kicking” (Hassan, 2006, p. 100). In the first clause of the former sentence, ‘died’ is used in literal terms, whereas the second clause suggests its implied meaning that is, he was not famous anymore, and his fame as a writer died with him. The opposite goes for Lawrence who became more famous after his death or it can be said that death herein is suggestive of a more lively existence in terms of fame and praise. Analyzed from this stance, it can be said that since the term ‘died’ generates different signifieds, the linguistic structure of these sentences gives rise to a closure in which this difference is repeated and reveals their constant tussle. This contrast can also be taken as the “warring forces of signification within the text” (Barry, 2007, p. 71).

In a similar fashion, the forces of signification appear to be at war in the following example: “Thus they have ‘washed’ their hands of ‘washing’ business or mania. In Britain eighty five percent houses have a TV set but only forty five percent house have a bath tub which may or may not be in use” (Hassan, 2006, p. 79). In the double meaning of ‘washing’, one suggests literal washing implying personal hygiene whereas the other highlights the renouncement of interest in the domain of sanitation and its use. The satirical expression describes the irony that the nation exceeds in power and modernization yet the condition of personal hygiene or cleanliness is pathetic as the practice of taking shower is not quite common in the West as it is in the East hinted at by the word ‘mania’. The dichotomy between the literal and idiomatic use of the term ‘washing’ again illustrates the disparity between the two signifiers for a signified. Johnson’s viewpoint that “the deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text” (Barry, 2007, p. 71), is

apt in case of this instance as the signifieds act as two forces at war within the text which acts as a “closure” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 83).

These warring forces of signification can be traced in various essays by Hassan as wordplay is a hallmark of the author’s linguistic style. He writes: “Though not geographically, Norway has moved into European cultural mainstream, is no longer in the cold ... Europe is known for its strong centripetal forces” (Hassan, 2006, p. 54). Herein the author has played upon ‘cold’ and the idea of centripetal forces. Though the climate is moderate despite the geographical location of the country, coldness signifies a marginalized status as opposed to the warmth of the cultural exchange and mainstream of other European countries. By becoming a part of it, Norway has not changed its geographical place but has culturally moved to become a part of the center, suggesting a double signification of ‘cold’. Analogically, centripetal force is a phenomenon in physics which refers to an attraction which physically pulls entities towards a center; in case of Europe, the attraction that lies in the strength and security of the Union of the European states acts as a centripetal force for most of the countries. Since this force is not physical, the scientific idea has been politicized which suggests a different signification from the public meaning.

Analyzed from this stance, it can be said that the primary text serves as a closure at many places. Hassan often juxtaposes similar words with different meanings to incorporate an element of humor in his essays. Writing a letter to his friend, he explains that the post-office workers mistakenly stamped their slogan on the front side of a painting of the English painter William Turner, sent by his friend. Commenting on this situation, Hassan states: “Turner will turn in his grave” (Hassan, 2006, p. 447) on encountering this. In this statement, the juxtaposition of ‘Turner’ with ‘turn’ gives off the image of a person who is capable of turning wood on a lathe, as the profession suggests; while turning in the grave symbolizes restiveness or anxiety. The play upon the idea of turning through the placement of these words again emblemizes a play of differences or a contestation of signification.

There are certain other examples in the primary text where one signified combats against the other. One instance of it is that the author uses a term to imply a whole range of characteristics which it carries rather than its absolute, apparent meaning. One instance of this is: “Man of indomitable will, principles and integrity, the Jinnah was by temperament, training education and lifestyle ... a better ‘Englishman’ than most of the natives of England” (Hassan, 2006, p. 114). The

qualities that were associated with Englishness and considered to be the standard of British character in 20th century include strong and unshakable determination, unchangeable principles, honesty and truthfulness which are taken as gentlemanly values. Jinnah possessed these qualities more than any Englishman in his circle, which were partially natural in his personality and partially acquired by education and training leading to a principled lifestyle. Thus the term 'Englishman' contains duality of signification since personal characteristics as one signified exceed in importance than nationality according to this sentence; in other words, it signifies a character rather than nationality. The contrast or contestation of meaning in this example can be understood by bringing into discussion the views of Benjamin who thinks that "The letters, due to the simple fact of their presence, make a demand. The nature of that presence, however, makes a further demand. Taken together these two demands can be interpreted as 'contesting'" (Benjamin, 2008, p. 87). The simple presence of 'Englishman' demands implication of a person whose nationality is English, yet the nature of that presence, that is, the placement of the word determines its context and generates the required signified. Thereby, if the demands of the presence and nature of presence are dissimilar, the signifieds are considered to be at contest.

The contestation of signifieds establish a certain kind of relationship not only between two or more signifieds but also between what the writer signifies and what the reader derives from it. The interpretation of the latter can transcend the bounds of what the writer intends to convey. Derrida explains it as: "the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses" and that the deconstructionist reading "attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight" (Derrida, 1974, p. 158). This reveals that the reader, through linguistic analysis, unravels hidden implications in a text which the writer may not think of. One example of the relationship between what the writer commands and what he does not command can be taken from the following excerpt: "In the present day Lahore in every secretariat, and other attached or detached office, an uttered sentence has three submissive sounding, 'Sirs' placed, as Aristotle said, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end" (Hassan, 2006, p. 28). This repetition of 'sirs' suggests more signifiers than just submissiveness. On the one hand, it hints at the flattery-culture which is practiced in most of the government offices in the country which are largely notorious for bribery, flattery and nepotism. In such an environment, flattery exceeds in importance than merit and hard work, and resultantly becomes a crucial

part of the job of junior employees. On the other hand, it symbolizes the nation's history of colonization where the 'gora-sahib' or the white colonizer, on the basis of superiority, was always to be flattered by the natives who worked under him. The repetition of 'sirs' suggest that the colonial practices are still at work in the country even if it is long since the British left. Thereby, this variety of the signifiers of the expression suggests that there can be more signifieds than those which the writer weaves into the narrative.

Language can be highly emblematic suggesting something entirely different from what it appears to be offering. Such is that case with Hassan's linguistic style. "All history", he writes, "is contemporary history. All great literature is contemporary ... Even a blade of glass is a weapon or you are not well read in literature" (Hassan, 2006, p. 65). Though history refers to the description of past or previous times which go in contrast with contemporary times, yet this statement signifies that since history always repeats itself and plays a crucial role in gauging the need of the present times by considering the happenings of the past, history remains as alive as the present due to the universal lessons it gives which serve in all times. Similarly, all literature is significant in the present because true art transcends the bounds of space and time, and remains alive. Language, on deeper connotations, can signify a simple blade of grass as a weapon through the play of signifieds. Thereby, the difference between the initial signification and the delayed meaning marks the poststructuralist nature of a text.

In the light of the above mentioned analysis, it can be said that a poststructuralist text contains a multiplicity of signifieds. This shows that meanings are always in a state of flux; one signified cannot remain tied to one signifier. The various dynamics of signification include the postponement of meaning, substitution of signifiers, and the difference between various signifieds for a single signifier. The multiplicity of meanings is also generated through the differences between the apparent and intended meaning, as well as the dichotomy between what the writer intends and what the reader interprets because texts can often be entirely different in meaning than what they appear to say.

Findings

Through the above analysis, this research has revealed that since meanings are in a constant state of flux, it can be declared that either two different signifieds are at contest with each other or the meaning is dispersed between two or it is

delayed with the help of a substitute as in the case of supplementation. The multiplicity is based on the repetition of these differences or a contestation between them. Employing the above discussed theoretical notions to unearth the multiplicity of signifieds, this paper suggests that due to the arbitrary nature of the relationship of signifiers and signifieds, one signified cannot remain tied to a particular signifier, and their connection is subject to change. Thus meanings are unfixed and can contextually vary.

Conclusion

In the light of the above analysis, this research concludes that meanings are in a constant state of change and are subject to “slippage and spillage” (Barry, 2007, p. 64). The multiplicity of signifieds in this paper is explored by studying and illustrating various dynamics of signification. First, it has been contended that language can suggest something entirely different from what it appears to say. Second, it shows that signifieds can be largely different from the concept which is generally associated with their signifiers. Third, it illustrates the idea of supplementation where meanings are neither totally absent nor completely present but a substitute is presented to fill the empty space of the absent term. Fourth, it discusses the unfixed nature of signifieds through the concept of *différance* which symbolizes a delayed/postponed, scattered or differed meaning. Thereby, this microcosmic analysis of the poststructuralist nature of a text leads to the inductive conclusion that postmodern Anglophone literature defies the grand narrative of fixed interpretations, and offers an alternative perspective of textual analysis.

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