

# THE THEME OF MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SENSE OF DISTORTED IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN TAN TWAN ENG'S *THE GIFT OF RAIN*: IN THE VIEW OF TRAUMATIC THEORY OF IDENTITY CRISIS

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## Abstract

While the growing body of research on Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain* (2009) focuses on the protagonist, Philip Hutton's traumatic condition, Chinese identity, and ambiguous identity, this study focuses on the complexity of Philip's interactions between various cultures. The current study investigates the impact of the multiculturalism theme and its impact on the sense of distorted identity and belonging in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain* in the View of Traumatic Theory of Identity Crisis in the novel. Scholars who have studied multicultural portrayals in diverse literary texts, such as Khan, Tiwari, Sheoran, and Tan C. S., have discovered that multicultural situations lead some ethnic groups to lose their traditions and identities. As a result, the multicultural situations represented are seen negatively. However, this study has found that identity creation is described as sharing experiences and having historical experiences by engaging and negotiating with people. In contrast, the sense of belonging is defined as feeling linked and associated with a group of persons. The findings also revealed that multiculturalism had a detrimental impact on Philip's identity and sense of belonging since he completely lost his Chinese roots and, subsequently, his British identity after absorbing Japanese culture. The process of multiculturalism that Philip experiences shows that the new cultural practices he creates consist of his own traditional culture and the foreign culture he has acquired. This means that Philip still retains his traditional culture and identity. Therefore, this study concluded that the multicultural characteristics of society may have a detrimental impact on individual cultures, resulting in distorted identity appearance and a loss of sense of belonging. In another text, a contrary conclusion revealed that Philip retains his original identities and traditional cultures while adopting and blending a new culture with a foreign one.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, Distorted Identity, Traumatic Culture.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tan Twan created novels focusing on multiculturalism and its influences on identity and belonging. *The Gift of Rain* was produced during the period from before the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Malaya until fifty years after the end of the Japanese occupation (1995). The protagonist, Philip Hutton, is a half-Chinese, half-British who experiences various challenges in the Japanese occupation of Malaya. Tan Twan Eng,

the novel author, described the trauma after occupation; he described the Japanese occupation as the most significant event affecting Malaysians' lives (Idar, 2014).

In another interview, the author indicated that the novel's primary focus is to describe the traumatic situation of the protagonist, Philip, and reflect the forgetting and remembering daily events (McEwen, 2013).

This novel also focuses on the impact of occupation on Philip's Chinese identity, as he made efforts to preserve his identity and save the Chinese culture of society, especially after blending into the new foreign culture (Goh, 2013). As a result, the traumatic case of the protagonist, Philip, is one of the most prominent issues discussed by scholars. Goh, for example, analysed Philip's traumatic condition through his memories, the narrative style of the novel, and the element of reincarnation (Fai, 2013). However, Goh does not study the effects of trauma on Phillip's culture and identity. Although Tan CS examines Philip's identities, he only focuses on how Philip defends his Chinese identity under Japanese domination (Goh, 2013). Philip also, in the novel, reconsiders his identity, ancestral roots, religion, and culture to preserve his Chinese identity against the hegemony of Japanese culture (Tan, 2010). This shows that although Tan CS examines Philip's Chinese identity and culture, he only views it as Philip's act of defending his Chinese identity (Tan, 2010).

This novel additionally describes the impact of multiculturalism on the sense of distorted identity, as it describes Philip's cooperation with the occupied entities, the Japanese, and the differences between their identities at the beginning of the novel and after the Japanese occupation, which reflect the marginalised identity of Philip (Holden, 2009; Holden, 2012). The article produced by S. Hall also identified the relationship between "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." This article clarified that cultural identity is the concept that connects the sense of belonging between the future and the past. In other words, it is a matter of "being" and "becoming" (Hall, 1990). The first part of this study examined the roots of multiculturalism in the novel. Previous studies discovered that events of multiculturalism could affect a character's identity formation and the creation of distorted identity features (Tan, 2010; Khan, 2014; Sheoran, 2014).

This study proposes to investigate Philip's cultures and identities from a different perspective, which is to study how Japanese culture prompted Philip to rediscover his Chinese culture and Chinese and British identities. More importantly, this study argues that it is crucial to discover why Philip continued to practice Chinese, British, and Japanese cultures when he resisted Japanese domination. Holden points out this ambiguity in Philip's cultures and identities. Because Philip is half-British and half-Chinese, Holden describes him as a racially ambiguous protagonist (Holden, 2009). He also depicts Philip as ethically problematic since, while saving many people's lives, he works with the Japanese. These uncertainties highlight Philip's marginalisation (Holden, 2012). Holden, on the other hand, has solely highlighted Philip's marginalised identity, which is the representation of his identities at the start of the novel and throughout the Japanese occupation. In S. Hall's article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", he claims that Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' and of 'being'. It belongs to both the present

and the history. It does not exist already, transcending space, time, history, and culture (Hall, 1990). Cultural identity is not fixed. It is impacted not just by historical events but also by the practised cultures. As a result, this study argues that Philip's identities change once the Japanese occupation ends after fifty years. In conclusion, while arguments on *The Gift of Rain* are expanding, there is still a significant shortage of scholarship concentrating on Multiculturalism and its impact on his sense of distorted identity and belonging (Ng, 2016).

Previous research on *The Gift of Rain* has not addressed how Japanese culture motivates Philip to rediscover his old cultures and identities or why he continues to practice both his traditional cultures and Japanese cultures even while rejecting Japanese hegemony.

Furthermore, previous research has not examined the impact of trauma on Philip's culture and identity, as well as the changes in his identities after the Japanese occupation ends after fifty years. To address these gaps, the intricate relationships between Philip's traditional and foreign cultures are investigated by examining how Philip obtains foreign culture and merges it into his traditional cultures. In other words, this study investigates multicultural portrayals and their impact on the novel's sense of distorted identity and belonging.

For example, Khan, Tiwari, Sheoran, and Tan C. S. discovered that multicultural situations in literary works induce characters to seek or experience identity crises (Khan, 2014; Tiwari, 2013; Sheoran, 2014). Instead of adopting the same viewpoint, this study highlights the good aspects of multicultural portrayals. Onghena agrees, saying, "[n]ow is the time to stop referring to [cultural] diversity solely as some sort of disturbing "other," an intruder with the potential to destabilise our security" (Onghena, 2008). As a result, multicultural images are not viewed negatively in this research. Even though research on multicultural representations has explored the portrayals of hybrid aspects, these studies have only focused on the end product.

For example, Zainul Din, See Tho, and Cheah investigate the portrayals of hybrid elements and are only interested in the representations of hybridity, such as the characterisation and writing styles used to foreground hybridity. The issues are conveyed through these hybrid elements, such as multicultural nations, nationalistic tendencies, and post-colonial sentiments (Din, 2008). On the contrary, research into the processes of individuals absorbing foreign cultures and blending them into their original cultures to develop new cultural practices must be more extensive. As a result, the current study takes the lead in exploring cultural relations (Ng, 2016).

## 2. RESEARCH PROBLEM & QUESTIONS

Several challenges have appeared worldwide in managing cultural diversity in the last decades, specifically in multiculturalism legalisation (Banting, 2012). Although there is a continuously growing interest in the concept of multiculturalism in different contexts, there needs to be studies that focus on the impact of multiculturalism on the sense of distorted identity and belonging, especially in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*. Previous studies

clarified that a sense of identity and belonging is not a static concept, as they are mostly affected by the practised culture and the surrounding historical events. Moreover, despite the growing interest in *The Gift of Rain*, scholars should have focused on investigating the complicated relations between the cultural and traditional origin of the novel hero, Philip, and their impact on his identity. Previous studies did not consider how the existence of multiculturalism during the Japanese occupation impacted Philip's identity and sense of belonging to the traditional culture. Additionally, past studies did not focus on investigating the effect of trauma on the identities and culture of the novel hero. Therefore, addressing this topic will cover the existing gap within contemporary literature. This study will investigate the history and roots of multiculturalism and its impact on the sense of distorted identity and belonging. The main question in this study is:

**How does multiculturalism affect the sense of distorted identity and belonging in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*?**

Additionally, the other sub-questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- What factors could influence multiculturalism in shaping distorted identity and sense of belonging in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*?
- What are the roots and history of Multiculturalism in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*?
- What is the Traumatic Theory of Identity Crisis, and how does it impact identity and sense of belonging?

### **3. MULTICULTURALISM**

To research the protagonist's complicated relationships between traditional and foreign cultures, a concept that examines acquiring and blending foreign cultures into conventional cultures must be used in this study. Alvarez analysed concepts such as hybridity, multiculturalism, and the melting pot (Alvarez, 2006). By contrasting these concepts with the idea of multiculturalism, she discovers that hybridity models only highlight the harmonious result of cultures. In contrast, multiculturalism emphasises the tenuous relationships between cultures and the painful negotiation process. As a result, the notion of multiculturalism is used in this work. The definitions of cultural pluralism differ, as anthropology uses the concept of cultural pluralism to denote groups whose lifestyles vary widely from others, in comparison to biological diversity, which is believed to be necessary for the survival of life on earth in the long term. Cultural diversity may be vital to humanity's long-term survival, and preserving indigenous cultures may be as important to humankind as preserving species and ecosystems for life. The ideologies and policies of these multiple cultures vary widely, ranging from advocating equal respect for all different cultures in society to a policy of encouragement to preserve cultural diversity, reaching policies and powers that address people of various ethnic and religious groups as defined by the group to which they belong (Alvarez, 2006).

According to Allolio-Näcke in the Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology, multiculturalism derives from "multiculturalism," a word created in 1940 by a Cuban anthropologist called Fernando Ortiz (Allolio-Näcke, 2014 pp. 1985-1986). Ortiz uses "multiculturalism" to characterise the many phases and repercussions of cultural interaction among populations brought together by European colonial expansion into the Caribbean in Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar (Ortiz, 1995). He claims multiculturalism depicts "the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another" (Ortiz, 1995, p. 102).

Multiculturalism, in particular, "does not consist merely in acquiring another culture," as the word "acculturation" implies, but also "necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation" (Ortiz, 1995, p. 102). Last, multiculturalism includes "the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation" (Ortiz, 1995, p. 103). However, Rama comments in *Writing Across Cultures: Narrative Multiculturalism in Latin America* that Ortiz's concept of multiculturalism does not pay enough attention to "selection and inventiveness that must always be part of the mix in any case of cultural plasticity, for such a state testifies to the energy and creativity of a cultural community" (Rama, 2012, p. 22).

Rama emphasises that a country's indigenous culture is not passive or doomed to tremendous losses; it is equal to the foreign culture that enters (Rama, 2012). On the contrary, "[i]f the community is alive," it will choose aspects from both foreign and traditional cultures, even lost or destroyed traditional cultures (Rama, 2012, pp. 22-23). As a result, the community's primitive values, which had nearly been lost, might be recovered. Furthermore, Rama thinks rediscovering fundamental values might enhance its defence against alien cultures. As a result, the detrimental effects of multiculturalism may be avoided, and society could proceed through a combinatory system in which new items are produced to suit the autonomy of the cultural system. Rama argues that multiculturalism entails losses, selects, rediscoveries, and incorporations (Rama, 2012, p. 23). Similarly, Pratt defines multiculturalism as a process in which subjugated individuals select to varying degrees what they accept into their own and what they utilise it for while having no control over what emerges from the dominant culture (Pratt, 2007). As a result, she believes multiculturalism is a scenario in the "contact zone." She emphasises in "Arts of the Contact Zone" that "contact zones" are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt, 1991, p. 34).

As a result, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that multiculturalism involves "the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropolises" (Ashcroft, 2013, p. 213).

As a result, postcolonial literature is the most thorough example of multiculturalism (Ashcroft, 2001). As a result, the term multiculturalism, which refers to a cultural phenomenon, may be applied to literature. However, many academics have used the term multiculturalism in their literary studies. Nonetheless, these literary studies are focused on Latin American texts. Scholars such as Shaw, Alvarez, Hambuch, and Read, for example, used the notion of multiculturalism to examine images of Latin American

cultures and discovered that multiculturalism occurs in Latin America due to colonisation and post-independence changes (Shaw, 1996). This is why Latin Americans have been exposed to European and North American civilisations. Previous researchers, however, have maintained that Latin Americans do not leave their traditions but instead use a transcultural approach to modify Latin American languages and cultures. As a result, they argue that the notion of multiculturalism, which allows them to investigate cultural tensions across different cultures, is appropriate for analysing Latin American literary writings (Read, 2002).

This research contends that the term multiculturalism applies to Latin American and Asian literary works. Asian literary texts have also been researched utilising the notion of transculturalism in recent years. For example, Pereira-Ares, Kaur, and Thornber used multiculturalism to analyse Asian literature and discovered that languages and cultural practices are translated and negotiated as different cultures collide (Kaur, 2011). This condition obliterates national and cultural boundaries. As a result, Pereira-Ares suggests that transcultural identity is formed due to multiculturalism (Pereira-Ares, 2015). Because the notion of multiculturalism is compatible with Asian cultures, this research applies it to the Asian-set novel *The Gift of Rain*.

#### **4. IDENTITY AND HUMAN BELONGING SENSE**

Defining the cultural identities of individuals is recognised as a complicated process in the globalisation era and the continuous global cultural flows (Sassen, 2006). Ting-Toomey (2005) defined identity development as having socio-cultural interactions with others. One of the main factors that could influence individual identity is the surrounding culture, which could reflect an issue in multicultural nations. Therefore, constructing identity is realised as a complex process that is discussed widely in previous literature. Hall (2003) defined identity creation as sharing experience and having historical experience through interacting and negotiating with others. Hall's (2003) definition generally describes factors that could define identity, such as ethnicity, race, nationality, and gender. Therefore, identity markers could be divided into psychological and physical features. In summary, a sense of identity can be generated according to the interaction of these identity-creation markers and other individual features such as religion and language. Therefore, identities cannot be considered fixed or static; they are socially constructed concepts.

Moreover, Hier, Boloria, & Singh (2006) indicated that identity is a contextual concept that is not generated in a constant place or time. Jurva & Jaya (2008) also described identity formation as a process of ethnic and national identity creation. The power of constructing individuals' identities could be defined according to the ways of perceiving culture and the way of using cultural identity markers to put limits between society belonging and not belonging to individuals (Hall, 1992). Therefore, the identity formation process can be specified according to the culture perceived in the society.

The previous discussion regarding identity and identity formations is connected to another variable that this study also focuses on the "sense of belonging". This variable is connected to the ancient roots of the human motivation theory, which was generated by

Maslow (1970). Maslow (1970) presented belonging demands as the third need after physiological and safety demands. This concept reflects individual demands to be connected with others. This concept has several definitions. For example, Strayhorn (2012) defined belonging as having sufficient social support within a surrounding group having a connectedness sensation, or guaranteeing acceptance, respect, and feeling grateful within a group of individuals. Strayhorn (2012) also clarified that there is a deep connection between social identities and a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging reflected several essential outcomes on a personal level, such as better engagement within a group, better achievement, optimal performance, and happiness (Strayhorn, 2012).

On the other hand, the sense of belonging was measured according to the perceived cohesion factor, according to Bollen and Hoyle (1990), which represents a moral feeling of being a member of a group of individuals. This definition focuses on measuring the perception of individuals regarding feelings of cohesion. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) considered a sense of belonging as an affective and cognitive feeling that plays a fundamental part in any group. The scale of perceived cohesion created by (Bollen and Hoyle, 1990, P. 485) included three questions that focused on a sense of belonging directly, which are; "I feel a sense of belonging to \_\_\_\_\_," "I feel that I am a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ community," and "I see myself as part of the \_\_\_\_\_ community". Other studies focused on this concept in the school context, such as Goodenow (1993), who defined this concept as students accumulating feelings of being personally respected, accepted, supported, and belonging to others within the social environment of schools. Carol Goodenow also developed the most widely used scale of belonging in the school context, the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM). This scale measured students' sense of belonging according to two main factors: situational and individual traits factors. She also clarified that a sense of belonging directly affects students' efforts, motivation, and contribution within a group of individuals and personal achievement (Goodenow, 1993). Alkan (2016) also added that a sense of belonging could impact individuals' depression and adjustment matters.

In summary, identity and a sense of belonging are recognised as essential elements in various life sectors and have been studied widely in various research fields. Additionally, they have a wide influence on individuals' outcomes. Furthermore, the literature indicates that multiculturalism could influence individuals' sense of identity and belonging.

## **5. THEORY OF CULTURAL TRAUMA AND IDENTITY. THE SENSE OF DISTORTED IDENTITY AND CULTURE**

The novel clarified that multiculturalism negatively affected Philip's identity, as his half-British, half-Chinese identity makes him culturally marginalized by society individuals. According to Philip's statement, this is clear: "Because of my mixed parentage, I was never completely accepted by either the Chinese or the English of Penang, each race believing itself to be superior" (Tan, 2009, p. 28). Philip also found neglected by his family and was exposed to a harmful description of his identity as boys at school described him

as “a mongrel half-breed” (Tan, 2009, P.35). Hence, he abandoned his British and Chinese identity, and tried to find his unique place in the life scheme (Tan, 2009).

The novel events, later on, clarified more clearly the impact of multiculturalism on generating Philip’s distorted identity, as he lost his Chinese roots and identity, which appeared clearly when he shows respect to his mother and aunt, Cheng Beng and Yu Mei respectively, when he said “Your grandfather was wrong when he said you would forget your roots”. Moreover, the British identity is almost forgotten by Philip; he says that he “has nothing to do with China or England. [He] was born between two worlds, and belongs to neither” (Tan, 2009, pp. 36-37). However, it should be mentioned here that Philip has not lost his British culture and identity, as he lived in a British family and practised British culture (Tan, 2009).

The distorted identity of Philip, the sense of not belonging and not being connected to anything, was also developed (Tan, 2009). Then, the character Endo, who appeared, a Japanese person who rented Philip’s father’s island near Philip’s house, became the one Philip turned to when needed, as he felt similar to his culture and identity as Endo did not have British or Chinese identity. Endo’s character is considered the main reason for Philip’s acceptance of multiculturalism and acquiring the offered Endo’s Japanese culture, as he provides Philip with a sense of belonging, as mentioned by Tan Twan Eng interview when he said: “Philip wants ... to find a place to belong to... a place where we are fully accepted for what we are and how we think” (Weinstein Books, 2008).

After meeting Endo, the acculturation stage of Japanese culture appeared. The sense of distorted identity and culture was noticed when Philip's character started directly acculturating to the Japanese culture and language, as Philip “immediately returned without thinking” (Tan, 2009, p. 31). After that, Philip’s Chinese culture was replaced with the Japanese identity; as he started to learn the Japanese language and culture, such as “Endo-sensei...– teacher. ...He wanted me to learn to speak Japanese, and to read and write the three forms of Japanese writing: hiragana, katakana, kanji” (Tan, 2009, p. 41).

It should be mentioned here that the transculturation process often loses the origin culture, which could be recognised as “deculturation” (Ortiz, 1995). This is clear when Philip loses his Chinese identity in addition to losing both Chinese and British identities when the deculturation stage happens. Before Japanese culture was acculturated, Philip’s Chinese culture was lost, consequently losing the Chinese identity. Furthermore, after having Japanese culture acculturated, the Chinese identity totally vanished.

Moreover, Philip also faced the disintegration of the British identity while accumulating the Japanese culture. When he got more involved in the Japanese culture acculturation, his British identity was further lost:

“...I sat and listened again to the traditional English hymns that had formed the music of my boyhood... “I will not cease from mental fight; Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand...” He... “I cannot agree. The sword must always remain the last option.” ... He made me promise him that I would never forget that. (Tan, 2009, p. 55)



When Endo encourages Philip to live his life in his way, he distorts Philip's British identity since a British view is represented in the lyrics. Therefore, Philip's British identity is minimised. Edward, Philip's eldest brother, said: "Over seven hundred lives were lost. British lives," he added, as though those had a greater value" (Tan, 2009, p. 159). Philip does not differentiate between British and German identity. Therefore, in the novel events, Philip does not show any angry or sad feelings regarding the British death, unlike his brother Edward, which reflects the inexistence of Philip's sense of belonging to the British identity. As a result, this showed that when Philip acculturates the Japanese culture, deculturation and British identity loss have been noticed in Philip's character.

After that, Philip began to miss his traditional culture and Chinese identity, as it is accepted that when accelerating new culture in one community, both foreign culture and traditional lost culture were used to choose the best cultural elements of the community (Rama, 2012). This circumstance encourages the rediscovery of the traditional values in each community. The deculturation stage that Philip faces makes him return to Chinese family culture:

"I had planned never to see him [grandfather] again after this meeting, but ... now this strange tale had made him human, a man with a history... I could not be indifferent to him now... (Tan, 2009, p. 124).

As Philip's opposition to his Chinese heritage weakens, his grandpa helps him to rediscover numerous aspects of Chinese culture. Buddhism, a popular religion among the Chinese, is one of them. Philip discovered Buddhism through his aunt. However, he is unfamiliar with it because he practices Christianity with his paternal family. Endo has reintroduced Daruma and Zen Buddhism to Philip before he sees his grandpa. As a result, he accidentally rediscovers the Chinese common religion. This demonstrates that Tan C. S., who claims that Philip rediscovers Chinese religion solely to preserve his Chinese identity against Japanese rule (Tan, 2010), ignores the Japanese culture, which also helps Philip rediscover Chinese religion. However, Philip's rediscovery of this common religion among the Chinese through Endo is too tiny for him to listen to his grandfather's account, which gives more details about Daruma, "... Bodhidharma was an Indian monk who had travelled all across China (Ng, 2016).

... He went as far as Japan..." (Tan, 2009), pp. 111-112). Philip does not realise that Daruma and Bodhidharma are the same people until Endo points it out, "Philip, they are the same person," he said" (Tan, 2009), p. 218).

Thus, while Philip's rediscovery of Buddhism, a common religion among the Chinese, begins unconsciously when he acculturates to Japanese culture and is supplemented by his grandfather's narrative, it is completed by Endo, the one who leads Philip to undergo Japanese culture acculturation. This suggests that acculturation to Japanese culture indirectly drives Philip to recover forgotten Chinese cultural values. Reincarnation is another component of Chinese tradition that Philip rediscovers through his grandfather's story. Because Philip is unfamiliar with Buddhism, he is also unfamiliar with the notion of reincarnation, which is a prevalent belief among Buddhists, or more precisely, in the

Malayan context, a common belief among the Chinese. Likewise, Endo introduced this Chinese cultural belief to Philip earlier than Philip's grandfather after meeting a fortune-teller:

"...what happened before you lived? Where were you then?" ... "You have another life. After the end of that life, you were reborn to this life. And so it will go on and on until you have redressed all your weaknesses, all your mistakes."..." Perhaps after a thousand lifetimes, you will reach Nirvana."...It is a state of enlightenment. Free from pain and suffering and desires, free from time." (Tan, 2009), pp. 51-52)

Later, Philip's grandfather brought up the concept of reincarnation when he explained that the reason he disagreed with Philip's parents' marriage,

"... I had been warned that she could not marry him." "Warned? By whom?" "A fortune-teller at the snake temple in Penang." I held my breath, and a feeling of unreality came over me as the memory of the day I spent with Endo-san at the temple uncoiled itself inside me... "Is this why, after all these years, you finally decided to speak to me: to warn me of some fortune-teller's words...?" He shook his head. "I am not asking you to do anything against your wishes or reason. I have learned over the years that life has to take its path... Nothing could have changed it." (Tan, 2009), pp. 124-125)

This demonstrates that Philip's reincarnation rediscovery begins with Endo and is supported by his grandpa. On the one hand, Endo educates Philip about making amends before attaining Nirvana; on the other side, Philip's grandpa tells Philip that everyone lives a predetermined life. These two ideas are linked since one's current existence is predestined to correct the faults done in the previous incarnation. Through Endo and his grandpa, Philip rediscovers Buddhism and reincarnation, two popular cultural beliefs among Malayan Chinese.

Philip also returns to his British identity in the cultural acculturation stage as he reconciles with his family. He returns to a good relationship with his father, Noel, through utilising the Japanese culture, and more specifically, the material art methods that he gained from Endo:

"Lead the mind, Endo-san had said. Now my father... his thoughts for the moment taken where I wanted them to go... "I did love your mother, you know," he said. "People thought I had gone native... But they didn't understand what she and I felt for each other." "I know," I said, trying to hold on to the fragile connection that had, unexpectedly, grown between us" (Tan, 2009, pp. 164-165). Philip's acquisition of Japanese culture and Endo's acculturation helped him to rediscover his relations with his relatives.

Although the successful rediscovery of the Chinese and British identities, Philip needed to be able to incorporate the assembled new neoculturation of Chinese and British cultures into Japanese culture.

In summary, Philip appeared to explore the multiculturalism concept by investigating different forms of narration (Ng et al., 2016). Tan Twan Eng, in his novel, explained that multiculturalism could cause identity and culture loss. Society's multicultural features

could negatively affect individual cultures and cause distorted identity appearance and loss of sense of belonging (Fai, 2013).

Philip discovers that he was conceived out of love. This allows a tenuous tie to build between Philip and Noel, forging the father-son bond. Later, Philip realises that he has never been abandoned or marginalised by his father: "For the first time in my life, I felt we were each a living part of the other." And I knew, thanks to the knowledge I gained from Endo-san, that he had loved me from the moment I was born, even during the years when I had isolated myself from him and my family. That was one of the most precious things Endo-san had given me: the ability to love and recognise being loved (Tan, 2009), p. 204).

Because of Endo's teachings, Philip can recognise his father's affection for him. As a result of Endo's lectures, Philip has been able to reconnect and strengthen his relationship with Noel as father and son. Moreover, during the rediscovering phase of the deculturation stage, Philip reconciles his connection with his siblings. Similarly, Endo is responsible for Philip's reunion with his brothers: "I was not close to my siblings before I met Endo-san..." (Tan, 2009), p. 28). This is because:

... Endo-san had transformed me through his lessons, which I knew were partially responsible for this growing insight into my relationship with my family... In strengthening my body, Endo-san was also... fortifying my mind. It was a process that offered me the ability to bridge the conflicting elements of my life and create a balance (Tan, 2009), p. 181)

Philip can connect the contradictory components of his life, which pertain to his Chinese and British cultures and identities, after enduring Japanese cultural acculturation through Endo's lectures. McCulloch agrees, stating that Endo's physical and mental routine helps Philip overcome his otherness (McCulloch, 2008). This explains why Philip transitions from someone who isolates himself from both the Chinese and British populations to someone who can readily tell his British family members about his interactions with his Chinese family members:

...I told him [Philip's elder brother, William] about my visit to my grandfather... He hooked an arm around my shoulders and squeezed. For a moment, I was a young boy again, and he was the big brother... (Tan, 2009), pp. 182)

Philip no longer considers himself to be an outsider in his own family. Thus, Endo's education in Japanese culture has indeed assisted Philip in rediscovering his ties with his brothers. During the deculturation stage, Philip rediscovers his British identity as a member of the Hutton family after repairing his ties with his father and siblings: "After years of travelling by road, distancing myself, I had finally returned to my family... "It was like coming home" (Tan, 2009), p. 202). As a result of Endo's lectures, Philip has discovered his British identity as a member of the Hutton family.

During the deculturation stage, Philip rediscovers his Chinese culture and Chinese and British identities, and he identifies as belonging to both nationalities. This scenario causes

Philip to go through a neoculturalization stage. According to Ortiz's definition of "neoculturation" as "the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena" (Ortiz, 1995, p. 103), Philip mixes Chinese culture into his British way of life and produces new cultural practices. As an example:

"Take care, my brother," he said. "I will. You watch out for danger," I said... "I'll say some prayers for you at the temple." He smiled. "You'd better watch out yourself; you are turning Chinese." Thinking of the duality of life, I asked – more to myself than to anyone else: "That's not such a bad thing, is it?" (Tan, 2009), pp. 247-248)

Philip's decision to pray at the temple for his buddy Kon demonstrates that he has absorbed a Chinese custom into his British culture. Philip's choice to use "Philip Arminius Khoo-Hutton" as his full name indicates that he has effectively completed neoculturation to build a new multicultural identity incorporating all three cultures. As a result, Philip has effectively completed the neoculturation of Japanese, Chinese, and British cultures.

### **The Archetypal Characters of Immigrants after Occupation In light of the Homi Bhabha and Lacan theory**

For Lacan, language is the basis of culture. The infant's entry into language marks his transition from the biological being to the human subject. Drawing extensively on philosophy, linguistics, and political and anthropological theory, Lacan developed Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of his theory of language as a symbolic structure. In Lacan's theory, language constitutes the human subject. The interpretation of the connection between culture and subject has made Lacan's work crucial to political theory. In particular, political theory appropriates Lacan's model of the relationship between the collective and the individual to explain the relationship between political and subjective structures (O'Brien, 2017).

In Lacan, and especially in his essay on Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*, the concept of trauma is used frequently and in connection with literature. From a Lacanian perspective, trauma can be defined as the loss of unity with the mother, the entry of language into the symbolic order, and the loss of the phallus. Fear of castration is Lacan's original trauma. It is something that forever shapes and characterises the subject. It is also something that the subject does not experience. In Lacan's theory, trauma is the root of the subject. All operations of desire, substitution, and petty fantasies can be seen as compulsions of repetition in Lacan. The subject does not master all these experiences, but they produce the subject. In this respect, an individual's entire life can be seen as a compulsion to recurrence. Again, there is tension: on the one hand, trauma is the universal component of the psychoanalytic theory of subject matter. On the other hand, certain types of traumas that threaten the normal functioning of the psyche lead to more severe symptoms and difficulties become more focused attention, especially in forms of mass trauma (NG, 2016).

Tan's first novel attempts to connect the disparate histories and ethnicities that merge and compete before, during, and immediately after the Japanese occupation of Penang through the retrospective gaze of the central character, the Eurasian Philip Hutton. Unlike

several marginalised characters who appear prominently in much of Malaysia's earlier postcolonial English-language writing (two examples are Lee Kok Liang's *Mutes in the Sun* [1963] and K.S. Maniam's *The Return* [1981], both of which depict characters existing in interstitial circumstances), Philip Hutton is oxymoronically representative of both the centre and the periphery.

Though he is socially privileged, his mixed Chinese-British origin places him in the ethnic interest of Penang society in a milieu that emphasises racial purity. He is monetarily favoured by birth but unmoored by his troubled sense of belonging, predating yet pertinent to Southeast Asia's expanding middle classes. Born with the titular gift of rain, which is both a blessing and a curse, Philip is quick to identify with multiple and competing Occidental and Oriental cultures and systems of belief: Western Christian principles are intertwined with Japanese Zen and Daruma philosophies, which are seen to flower from Chinese Bodhidharma traditions. The Penang *Tan Twan Eng* evokes a microcosm of hybridity, threatened by the push for ethnic purity so prevalent on both sides of the globe in this period:

It was only starting to occur to me what a strange place I had grown up in – a Malayan country ruled by the British, with substantial Chinese, Indian, and Siamese influences. Within the island, I could move from world to world merely by crossing a street.... One could easily lose one's identity and acquire another just by going for a stroll.

Finally, as Philip realises in the face of British colonialism and Japanese imperialism's strong demands for racial purity, it is "the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 38) that determines his identity. The ultimate acceptance of his full name - Philip Armenius Khoo-Hutton - denotes the acceptance of his ethnic diversity, with those seemingly opposing forces within his identity finally interacting, if not in perfect harmony, then in acquiescence to the multiple cultural layers and intermediate spaces between that which constitutes his hybrid self and that which constitutes his hybrid location.

Ironically, the agent for this harmony stems from his relationship with his teacher, Endo-san, and his observations of the contradictory nature of Japanese culture and occupation: resistant to Western imperialism yet instrumental in the brutal colonisation of other Asian countries under the guise of Asian "co-prosperity," depictions of calculated Japanese barbarity are juxtaposed in the text with images of cultural refinement and attention to aesthetic detail. *Tan's Penang* is a strongly patriarchal world full of overt binary tropes of dominance and submission as well as hidden references to homoerotic yearnings, with female characters existing only on the periphery as reacting foils to the dominating male discourse. Endo-san, as mentor and betrayer, supplies the Orientalist pattern of exoticisation and eroticisation, which is emblematic of the Japanese cultural hegemony to which Philip bows. Philip fantasises about a life of obedient domesticity and instruction with Endo-san while understanding the dangers of openly disclosing his relationship to him and, by extension, latent sexual attraction with him (Holden, 2012):

Thoughts floated by like intoxicated butterflies: of taking care of him, preparing his meals, spending the rest of my life learning under his guidance; thoughts which would always remain thoughts, never becoming real, when even to acknowledge him in public was fraught with risks. (187)

For the most part, Philip's sense of cultural and sexual dislocation drives him to want the security that the teachings and philosophies of Aikijutsu and Zen, channelled via Endo-san in an intimate surrogate relationship, provide. This connection is strained further by Philip's choice to serve the Japanese dictatorship during the Occupation, which he excuses in paternalistic terms of caring for his family. Still, he is also motivated by his crush on his instructor.

In the sense that power is not always a unitary, hierarchical relationship between ruler and ruled and that power can emerge from below, the central relationship, and indeed its value as a metaphor for Malaya's period under Japanese rule, takes on a more fluid dynamic than the simple binary of subjugator/subjugated. Philip is the site of physical and metaphysical submission to Japanese power in his relationships with Endo-san and the Japanese imperial army, but he can also be read as a site of problematic resistance in his role as collaborator and interpreter because "discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* 100-01).

Like Philip, Malaysians have long struggled with a tense feeling of belonging and togetherness, particularly among marginalised Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian nationalities following the post-independence UMNO bumiputra edicts. *The Gift of Rain*, in locating its narrative before 1957 independence, offers the opportunity to position "past Malaysian identity along the lines of connection and conjunction, attempting thereby to make less visible the 'sutures' of a multi-ethnic society" (Menon, 2013, P. 38). Such an opportunity should imply a reconstruction of significant historical moments and their role in continuous and growing national narratives. In this context, I will investigate the protagonist's stance toward self-determinism and predestination in the book. Tan's depiction of Philip and Endo-san's cyclical relationship across previous lives as inescapable karmic repetition recalls the beliefs of the Chinese philosopher Zhang Taiyan (1869-1936), who was also influenced by his visits to Japan and who drew on Buddhist and Daoist teachings to propose a fatalistic karmic repetition in history.

In line with Bhabha's assertions, and with direct reference to Malaysian society and Tan's work, Leon and Koh (2014) have observed that "the process of healing... can only begin with the recuperation of lost histories" (111) and Tan's trauma narratives of the Japanese Occupation and beyond, while partially addressed by earlier writers, as Lim (2011) has noted, clearly offer new opportunities for acknowledgement, reclamation, and healing. Healing and acceptance of self-appear to be achieved in *The Gift of Rain* through "the intersection of the personal narrative of experience and the public narrative of place" (Leon and Koh, 2014, P. 120). Still, it is also clear that this "healing" is problematic, rooted as it is in Endo-san's deception, Philip's untrustworthy interpretation of his relationship with his teacher and with his colonial Japanese masters, and his acceptance of karmic

repetition as a root cause. The notion of self-determination as a change agent is repeatedly avoided and denied. Philip's use of Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" to argue for the necessity of free will (a position that highlights Philip's naivety given that the poem can just as legitimately be interpreted in terms of the deception of arbitrary choice and, indeed, as representative of Phillip's tendencies toward self-delusion) is immediately countered by Michiko's response, "Who created the two roads in the first place?" (401). Though he hesitantly investigates human responsibility ("we all have the power to choose" (425), this is contrasted in the book by references to Western religious thought in the form of Isaiah, Chapter 46, Verse 10. Finally, Philip concludes:

While I now accept that the course of our lives has been set down long before our births, the inscriptions that dictate the directions of our lives merely write out what is already in our hearts; they can do nothing more. (431- 32)

While Philip eventually posits the heart as the pre-determiner of karma, thereby confusingly prioritising emotional connection while inherently negating freedom of choice and self-determinism, I would argue that this is a profoundly troubling response to individual and social obligations in national and ethnic conflicts and national narratives. As Lim points out, the poem comes to an unsettling conclusion because of the position of the emotional centre of agency:

Philip's privileging of the heart silently produces a loophole that allows him to accept responsibility for his actions and decisions during the Occupation and simultaneously disavows it by displacing the cause of his actions and decisions to a source outside his power, namely his autonomous heart. (Lim, "Agency and the Pedagogy" 237)

If, in Bhabha's words, relocating and reimagining key historical narratives allows us to unpack and reinscribe the past to move beyond "the determinism of historical inevitability repetition" (Bhabha, "Culture's InBetween" 59), *The Gift of Rain* by promoting karmic determinism as the ratification of inevitability over agency and choice, and the heart over the mind, marks the lives of the principal protagonists in such a way as to abrogate this responsibility (Wilson, 2018).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Multiculturalism has been seen widely in different contexts and has several impacts on individuals' outcomes. The current study investigates the effects of the multiculturalism theme and its impact on the sense of distorted identity and belonging in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*. This study offers a review of the main study concepts such as multiculturalism, identity and sense of belonging, additionally for deep investigation of the multiculturalism theme and its impact on the sense of distorted identity and belonging in Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain*. The results showed that identity creation is defined as sharing experience and having historical experience through interacting and negotiating with others, while the sense of belonging is to feel connected and related to a group of individuals. Results also clarified that multiculturalism negatively affected Philip's identity and sense of belonging, as he lost his Chinese roots and, later on, British identity when

accumulating the Japanese culture. In summary, society's multicultural features could negatively affect individual cultures and cause distorted identity appearance and loss of the sense of belonging. A contradictory result in other texts showed that Philip does not lose his original identities and traditional cultures when acquiring and integrating a new culture with a foreign culture.

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