Investigating Literary Representation in EFL Reading Texts:

An analysis of English literature and its usage in EFL.

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Abstract *This paper examines the methods and approaches employed in the teaching of English literature in EFL reading classes. The study finds that although many EFL literary texts are suffused with Western cultural norms and values, which create student comprehension problems, the teaching of cultural background in literature is glossed over in favor of an approach which places more importance upon information retrieval for specific purposes. However, the reading of a selection of key Western literary texts reveals that English literature has historically served an important function in producing a specific way of thinking about non western cultures. Furthermore, it is found that some anxiety is held by teaching professionals in relation to the possible affect of these literary representations upon EFL reading students. In light of these findings, the paper advocates the avoidance of a purely Western culture-specific literature syllabus in EFL reading classes, and instead recommends the adoption of a multicultural and critically comparative approach. Finally, the paper outlines a future research project, involving Japanese English reading students based at a private university, which would aim to discover whether the employment of such an approach improves EFL students' cultural and linguistic perception of English texts.*

1. Teaching Literature in EFL

The reading component of an EFL course may pursue a set of learning goals which includes the ability to read a wide range of literary texts in English (Hedge, 2003). These literary texts can be introduced to students for a variety of reasons. Carter and Long (1991) argue that introducing literature into an EFL syllabus is beneficial for linguistic, cultural and personal growth reasons. Moreover, literature is a rich source of authentic material which pre-

sents students with the opportunity to understand how the English language is used in a variety of specific environments. Cruz notes that "what authors like Irving Welsh, Joseph Conrad or Mark Twain have in common is that their literary works reconstruct the way language is spoken in certain geopolitical contexts" (Cruz, 2010: 3). Such literature can also afford students the chance to understand culture at a deeper, more satisfyingly complex level. Brumfit (2001: 91) argues that this is because great literature presents a "refusal to oversimplify, in a belief in the complexity, subtlety, richness—and indeed uniqueness—of each human experience, expressed through metaphor and the working of the human imagination." Furthermore, Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000) list a series of reasons why literature should be taught in the EFL classroom, including:

Figure 1.

1. Cultural enrichment. *Reading literature promotes cultural understanding and awareness.*
2. Linguistic model. *Literature provides examples of "good" writing, linguistic diversity, expressive ranges and so on.*
3. Mental training. *Better than any other discipline, literature trains the mind and sensibility.*
4. Extension of linguistic competence. *Literature stretches the competences of learners who have mastered the linguistic rudiments.*
5. Authenticity. *Literature is genuine linguistic material, not a linguistically contrived textbook.*
(Parkinson and Reid Thomas, 2000: 9-11).

In order to improve literary reading targets, many teachers seek to develop students' abilities holistically through the pursuit of both intensive and extensive readings, with the latter often taking place outside the EFL/ESL classroom in the form of graded readers. Furr observes that extensive reading programs are generally predicated "at or just below a student's actual reading level." (Furr, 2004: 2) However, in studying English literary texts, many learners of English as a foreign language face difficulties in moving from basic decoding into fluency stage (Alyousef, 2005: 150). Gabb, cited in Alyousef, identifies a number of obstacles to this, of which two of the most prominent are limited vocabulary and lack of textual background knowledge (2005: 150). However, whilst many EFL students may lack the necessary information to understand literary texts, many universities around the globe still employ the same traditional methods of teaching literature, such as an emphasis on language, theme, characterization, plot and motifs (Abraham, 2010: 1). Literature is also employed in some Asian countries,

such as Japan, in order to build up intensive reading skills, improve reading speeds, and for translation purposes. Nevertheless, whilst many Japanese universities include works by writers such as Twain, Dickens, Austen and Burnett in their graded readers selection, the teaching of literature in the classroom often focuses on information retrieval. Furr notes that in Japan "reading and literature instruction, particularly at the University level, has historically revolved around a "grammar translation" approach" (Furr, 2004: 2).

However, Culler (1975: 6) criticises the practise of employing literary texts in order to improve translation and information retrieval skills, arguing that "a true literature syllabus will not be simply the use of literary texts for advanced language purposes, but it must also attempt to develop and extend literary competence". It is argued that a literary competence approach would aid reading competence, as this approach involves equipping students with a variety of skill components, such as an awareness of literary language, structure and conventions, and knowledge of the values of the culture it embodies and represents. (Culler, 1975: 114) A literary competence approach would enable students unacquainted with foreign cultures to process the culture-specific schematic knowledge of English literature more smoothly. Widdowson notes that students process cultural information according to "the schematic knowledge associated with their mother tongue" (Widdowson, 1990: 110). Therefore, in order to avoid problems in student comprehension, an approach to teaching literature in reading classes should look to bridge top down processing, or schematic knowledge, defined by Fowler as "perceptions and interpretations" (Fowler, 1991: 60) with systemic knowledge, defined by Alyousef as "bottom up processing" (Alyousef, 2005: 144).

Conversely, a purely Western centered, top down processing approach ensures that reading students are often taught literary texts in an uncritical fashion. This in turn runs the risk that they will be alienated, confused or misled by the cultural content of the literature due to it not being in congruence with their own socially acculturated schematic knowledge. This type of reading approach, which neglects aesthetic characteristics and critical knowledge of textual background, and which focuses on the message and the content of the text, is known as an efferent reading. Rosenblatt, cited in Cruz, defines an efferent reading as "reading for the purpose of getting information" (Cruz, 2010: 4). Cruz argues that "in an efferent reading the text is regarded as a closed and finished object that a student can only contemplate passively from the perspective established by the teacher". (2010:

4) Despite the disadvantages of this reading method, and the contrasting benefits which a cultural competence approach affords learners, Howatt & Widdowson observe that English teaching is likely to "exclude the cultural values and identities, or expressive and aesthetic characteristics....quite simply because these are now seen as surplus to practical requirement" (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 357).

2. Literature in EFL Textbooks

The teaching of cultural skills in EFL is often sacrificed to meet immediate utilitarian needs. This ensures that the teaching of cultural background in literature is often glossed over in favor of an approach which places more importance upon information retrieval for specific purposes. However, despite this avoidance of cultural education, many EFL literary texts are suffused with Western cultural norms and values, which create student comprehension problems. Moreover, the cultural content found in textbooks often conforms to an elitist, circumscribed standard. F.R Leavis claimed in 1948, in 'The Great Tradition', that "The great English novelists are Jane Austin, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad—to stop for a moment at that comparatively safe point in history" (Leavis, 1950: 1). However, whilst Leavis' elitist definition of literature and culture has been criticized by Williams (1971) amongst others, past literary figures of the great tradition still pervade the content of recent EFL textbooks. For example, 'Headway' devotes pages to Western cultural figures such as Dickens and Austin (Soars, 2005: 29), whilst 'English File' focuses on Shakespeare (Oxenden, 2001: 112). Hedge highlights the role of EFL textbook writers who, "like everyone else, think and compose chiefly through culture-specific schemas" (Hedge et al, 1997: 56). However, these top down administered, culturally-specific schemas can occlude students from accessing and critically processing the cultural data in textbooks. Hedge maintains that a learner of English who is unfamiliar with the cultural context of EFL materials will "most likely experience problems in processing English systemic data" (Hedge, 1997: 53). Whilst Western culture permeates EFL textbook design and classroom practice, this culture-specific emphasis can be problematic for those students without literary or cultural competence skills.

Many EFL reading textbooks focus heavily on Western literary figures and culture-specific schemas. For example, the literary textbook 'Discovering Fiction' contains works by a selection of American authors, whilst stating that "Any study of a language should also include an exploration of its culture....Through these stories you will develop some additional insights into

American culture" (Kay & Gelshenen, 2001: 26). However, as Crystal observes, English is a global language, ensuring that "nobody owns it any more" (2004: 2). Therefore, a rigorous exploration of culture in relation to English should provide a much wider selection of literature to reflect its global status. Nevertheless, the textbook foreword maintains that its literary selection will broaden the horizons of reading students, stating that "Many students have read Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, but few have been exposed to Langston Hughes, Ray Bradbury, or Shirley Jackson" (Kay, 2001: 23). However, whilst less well known American authors are included in the textbook, the choice is nevertheless exclusively weighted in favor of American writers. Whilst Hughes and Jackson are included, there is no place for international writers such as Marquez, Mahfouz, Algria or Lao She. This mono-cultural approach to the teaching of literature in EFL is echoed in the observations of Said, who argued that, in their English class, "Young Arabs dutifully read Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Austen, and Dickens as they might have studied Sanskrit or medieval heraldry" (Said, 1993: 368). This example is perhaps symptomatic of the general lack of focus on global literature in many EFL textbooks. Said observes that, in specific relation to the Middle East, American attention to the Orient is striking in "its singular avoidance of literature." (Said, 1979: 291)

3. Ideology and the Western Literary Canon

Eagleton, cited in Brumfit, argues that the Western literary canon "has to be recognized as a construct, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time" (Brumfit, 2001: 87). This literary field can be defined as doxa, which is clarified as representing a stable, tradition-bound social order in which power is fully naturalized and unquestionable (Eagleton, 1991: 157). A growing recognition of this ideological process has ensured that the English literary canon has begun to suffer attacks on its credibility. Brumfit notes that these attacks focus on the canon's "dogmatism in advancing values based on taste or on moral commitment." (2001: 87) Furthermore, others argue that the values of English and its literary canon are the values of cultural colonialism, advanced by colonialist scholars and employed as the cultural arm of Empire. Said claims that in the West "there developed a fairly large body of Oriental-style European literature... Flaubert comes to mind immediately" (Said, 1979: 157). He continues by observing that writers "like Melville were interested in it; cynics like Mark Twain visited and wrote about it" (1979: 290). However, whilst Said argues that an investigation into a study of power should focus on the effects of cultural ideology in Western literature and scholarship, Irwin argues that it

is a great waste of time attacking writers and scholars of Arab and Islamic culture, instead maintaining that "the academic dog fight is a fantastic diversion from the real horrors of what is happening" (McLemee, 2006). Therefore, Irwin attacks academic emphasis on ideology, and instead advocates pursuing a more pragmatic, political analysis of power, arguing that "the Orientalism debate is an intellectual substitute for engaging with real, non-academic issues." (2006) Conversely, Eagleton, cited in Kamiya, derides Irwin's inability to comprehend the complex role of cultural ideology in a study of power, noting that "He gives the impression that he could recognize an ideological formation about as readily as he could identify Green Day's greatest hits" (Kamiya, 2006). Furthermore, Said's argument is supported by Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1998), who maintain that English culture and language is employed as a force of hegemony due to the ideology of colonialism that underpins it. Pennycook argues that "colonialism produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part of Western cultures" (Pennycook, 1998: 19). In addition, it is argued that much of English literature is also a product of colonialism. Said accuses the "European tradition of Oriental scholarship" (Said, 1979: 295) as serving an important cultural function in producing highly pervasive and implicit representations of non western countries and societies. This literary tradition of cultural representation produces and enforces the effect of natural legitimacy whilst being based on ideological characteristics which are highly unnatural. This naturalization of the ideological, or arbitrary imposition, is argued by Bourdieu to legitimize itself through "collective misrecognition, which is the basis of belief in the value of an ideological discourse." (1991: 153) However, this collective misrecognition of ideological representation has even been accepted in countries that are represented, or misrepresented by this process. Said notes, in specific relation to the Middle East, that because of this legitimization "The modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalising" (Said, 1979: 325).

This possible textual representation of cultures, and its subsequent misrecognition by readers, is especially concerning in an EFL context, as Asian and Middle Eastern English students are often required to read Western literary texts that may represent their cultures tendentiously. However, as previously observed, this problem is compounded in many cases by a classroom reading approach which excludes the teaching of cultural skills, and instead focuses on efferent readings. Sahin notes that "without being aware of the literary tradition where that work is created, we cannot fully analyze and understand it" (Sahin, 2002: 299). These concerns have led to some EFL professionals being afflicted by feelings of guilt, and, moreover, it is felt by

some teachers of literature that by introducing Shakespeare, Dickens or Hughes into a reading class they are in some manner contributing to linguistic and cultural imperialism (Sell, 2005: 86). Therefore, to critically investigate the extent to which colonialist ideology permeates the kinds of literature found in typical EFL reading programs, and to further aid a discussion regarding the suitability of English literature in the reading classroom, this paper wishes to pursue an examination of literary representation, based on a selected reading of key western literary texts.

4. English Literature and Colonialism

To critically evaluate the colonial ideology embedded in English literature, it is first necessary to proceed with an investigation into the historical origins of these underlying ideological discourses and literary representations. English literature is linked to the dominance of global English, and can be traced back to its historical enforcement by British military might, which, by the Treaty of Paris, in 1763, supported the greatest empire seen since the Romans (Bowle, 1977: 170). Bowle notes that one specific consequence of the British empire's rise to global dominance was that the English "language and culture have had an even wider influence on peoples far stranger to the British than the barbarians of North and Central Europe....had been to Rome" (Bowle, 1977: 14). Conversely, the previous Spanish empire in the Americas was based more on a policy of coercion and force than that of cultural influence. In his journal, Colombus described the native peoples he found as "peaceable, gentle" (Zinn, 1997: 480), remarking, however, that "with fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do what we want" (1997: 480). Las Calas, a Dominican priest, describes the subsequent process of subjugation as "killing and destroying", whilst the Spaniards are described as "ravening beasts" whose ultimate aim is "to acquire gold" (1997: 481). However, whilst the Spanish dominated the continent, and made attempts to convert the natives to Catholicism, the idea to actively export Western culture and values to the Americas was instead developed by the British poet, historian, and explorer Sir Walter Raleigh.

Raleigh saw the Spanish empire in the Americas as something to be replaced by an English empire (Hill, 1972: 157). Graham describes the ambitious Raleigh as "empire intoxicated" (Graham, 1971: 19). However, whilst Raleigh viewed the natives he found in similar terms to Columbus, describing them to be a "harmless people" (Hill, 1972: 156) his good treatment of them was in contrast to that of the Spaniards. More significantly, his imperial policy envisaged "the export of English arts" (1972: 156). Therefore,

whilst Raleigh's colony in Virginia failed to survive, Hill argues that Raleigh's imperial ideas, outlined in his literary text 'The Discovery of Guiana' denote him as an "important figure in the history of English culture" (1972: 219). In particular, this text set in motion a colonial mode of thought based on civilizing through culture, which was in turn enforced by a military presence. Raleigh's friend and fellow poet George Chapman heralded the coming of an English "golden world in this our iron age...a world of savages fall tame before them" (1972: 158). Similarly, this notion of colonialism and empire as an enlightening force is to be found in the literary texts of the first settlers in North America. For example, John Winthrop maintained that the New England colonists "must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill". (Winthrop, 1980: 13) This quotation, which emphasized the enlightening properties of Christendom, is taken from Matthew 5.14-15, which describes a Christian city set upon a hill as "the light of the world" (1980: 13).

Whilst Winthrop envisaged his Christian 'city' as a force for enlightenment, the subsequent scientific Enlightenment gave the British Empire increased reasons for self vindication, as it further distinguished its 'golden world' from 'the world of savages'. Russell notes that due to the triumphs of science and conquest Western Europeans "felt themselves to be fine fellows" (1947: 560). However, the enlightenment process created in Western eyes an ideological demarcation between opposites, bestowing superiority on the West, and defining other parts of the world as decadent, weak, and feminine (Pennycook, 1998: 50). Many western literary texts emphasized this perception of non-Western peoples as exemplifying these decadent, weak or feminine qualities. For example, in 'Moby Dick', Melville describes the Polynesian Queequeg as possessing "an innate sense of delicacy....(being) essentially polite" (Melville, 1992: 30). Similarly, in London's 'The Sea Wolf', the Polynesian Kanaka is described as "breathing as placidly as a woman" (2000: 104) and being "almost feminine..there was a softness and dreaminess" (2000: 108). Moreover, Voltaire, in his 'Essay on The Manners and Spirits of Nations' describes the Indians and Chinese as meek, observing that "this very virtue, or meekness of theirs has been their ruin; for they have all been enslaved" (1977: 553). Those territories and peoples that were held to be unenlightened were therefore judged by the West to be in need of logical and enlightened guidance. Smith argues that the European powers held a deep rooted belief that "as the West had an Enlightenment, so must...the rest of humanity" (Smith, 1998: 4).

Much English Literature of the 18th and 19th century reflects this belief in the

necessity of civilizing the savage. Blake, in 'The Little Black Boy', wrote of the eponymous subject of his poem that "I am black, as if bereaved of light" (Blake, 1996: 56: l.23), whilst offering the possibility of salvation as his unenlightened child stated "but oh my soul is white (1994: 56: ll.22). Whitman questioned the disposition of uncivilized, primitive men, asking "The friendly and flowing savage, who is he? Is he waiting for civilization" (Whitman, 1980: 753: ls.978-9), whilst Dickens answered this question by insisting that "I call a savage something highly desirable to be civilized off the face of the earth" (Dickens, 1853: 1). Furedi argues that Western culture represented "Imperialism and the global expansion of the Western powers.....in unambiguously positive terms as a major contributor to human civilisation" (Pilger, 1999: 38). This western civilised culture was unambiguously associated with a white man's presence. (Said: 1993: 374) Hume, cited in Kbiri, argued that "There never was any civilized nation of any other complexion than white" (2008: 7). However, this sense of superiority was, and still is, also countered in Western culture and literature. Zarnet argues that it was, and is, opposed by "powerful intellectual cross-currents that made self criticism a frequent and potent force" (Zarnett, 2007: 54). This self criticism, which included "the intellectual tradition of guilt" (2007: 54) is examined by Warraq, who highlights the significance of Voltaire's contrasting opinions regarding Muhammed. Whilst Voltaire had attacked Muhammed in his play 'Mahomet', he later retracted his views and confessed that he had made the prophet out to be "more evil than he was" (Warraq, 2007: 36). Moreover, Voltaire notes, in 'The Manner and Spirits of Nations' that "The Turks are more civilized" (Voltaire, 1977: 552) whilst also observing that the Indians and Chinese are "much better members of society than ourselves" (1977: 553).

5. Literary Representations of 'The Orient'

Western literature has served an important function in reacting to and producing many positive and negative ways of thinking about and representing the Orient. However, due to the West's extensive production of cultural and literary representations of the East, this relationship between West and East has been an unequal one. Said, argues that a "powerful difference posited by the Orientalist as against the oriental is that the former writes about, whereas the latter is written about" (Said, 1979: 308). One of the most significant literary texts in this tradition was Marco Polo's account of the court of Kublai Khan. Graham notes that "this volume of travel, describing golden cities and strange customs, possibly had more influence on world history than any other book except for the bible." (1971: 11) The

translation of the Arabian Nights into English in 1811 would further stimulate a fascination with the exotic lands of the Orient, and seize Western popular imagination. (Kidwal, 2006: 1) However, Kidwal notes that the text version of the original Arabic Alf Layla wa Layla enjoys the distinction of enjoying more popularity in Europe than at home, being thought of as possessing vulgar and depraved sensuality by Middle Eastern scholars (Kidwal, 2006: 1). Nevertheless, in Western literature, the text proved to be immensely influential in terms of reinforcing stereotypes about the Middle East. Dickens illustrates its influence in a scene from 'A Christmas Carol' where Scrooge is shown images from his childhood by the Ghost of Christmas Past, and exclaims "Why its Ali Baba...Its dear old honest Ali Baba" (Dickens, 1988: 31). In 'Innocents Abroad', Twain, cited in Kbiri, describes a trip to the bazaar as that which "casts you back again at once to your forgotten boyhood, and again you dream the wonders of the Arabian Nights" (Kbiri, 2008: 11). More specifically, in relation to romantic literature and painting, popular depictions of the mysterious, exotic and inscrutable wonders of the Orient attained a vogue of considerable intensity. (Said, 1979: 118) In Wordsworth's 'The Prelude', the poetic dreamer finds himself in an "Arabian waste" (Wordsworth, 1996: 337: ll.71) where he meets "an Arab of the Bedouin tribes" (337: ll.78) who bears books of wisdom "to lead him through the desert" (338: ll.83). In Coleridge's 'Xanadu' the poet mystically imagines the "pleasure dome" (Wu, 1996: 514: ll.2) of Kubla Khan, and its "caverns measureless to man" (514: ll.4), set in "a savage place" (514: ll.14), and finally dreams of "an Abyssinian maid" (515: ll.38) who "on her dulcimer she played" (515: ll.39). Russell notes that "Coleridge's Kubla Khan is hardly the historical monarch of Marco Polo", and observes that "the geography of the romantics is interesting......the places in which it is interested are remote, Asiatic" (1947: 704). Romantic poetry celebrated the decayed debris of the East as mystical and gothic. Shelley's 'Ozymandias' was devoted to the shattered, ruined statue of Ramesses the Great, set in the ruins of "an antique land" (Wu, 1996: 860: ll.1), whilst "the decay of that colossal wreck" (860: lls.12-13) was used as a metaphor for human decadence set against the impersonal, destructive powers of nature and history. However, other European writers saw this decay as an example of indolent barbarism. Voltaire criticized the Turks for allowing "the most noble and beautiful monuments of antiquity to fall to decay, and reign only over a pile of ruins" (Voltaire, 1977: 52).

Whilst the East was both celebrated and criticized in Western literature for its perceived decadence, the scientific advances made during the enlightenment gave the West "reasons for self satisfaction" (Russell, 1947: 560).

Clarke defined civilisation as "perfection—reason, justice, physical beauty, all of them in equilibrium" and argued that "Western Europe inherited such an ideal." (Clarke, 1969: 3) However, Eastern culture was represented in Western literature as displaying exotic, but irrational, savage qualities, which were deemed irreconcilable with the enlightened, scientific values of the West. Western literary figures represented this in their prose. Voltaire asserted that the West and the Orient "differ in every respect, in religion, policy, government, manners, food, clothing, and even in our manner of writing, expressing and thinking." (Voltaire, 1977: 553) De Quincy remarked that "a more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face...contrasted with... the ferocious-looking Malay" (De Quincy, 1996: 677). The East was therefore depicted in mystical and inscrutable terms, and Smith argues that this depiction emphasizes qualities such as "exotic rather than ordinary, inscrutable, rather than comprehensible" (Smith, 1998: 3). In 'Burmese Days', Orwell described 'Orientals' and their quarrels as "impervious to the European mind" (Orwell, 1967: 44), whilst Camus, in 'The Outsider' describes a group of Arabs as "looking at us in silence, but in their own special way" (1982: 50). However, Gide celebrated what he perceived to be the mystical, exotic nature of Tunisian Arabs, maintaining that "the Arabs...live their art, sing it, dissipate it from day to day; it is not fixed, not embalmed in any work." (1960: 148) Gide maintained that what he perceived as Arab fluidity of expression was due to the absence of structure and order, and argued that this was "the cause and effect of the absence of great artists." (1960: 148) Therefore, whilst it was represented as mysterious and exotic, the East was also depicted as lacking in logic, order and structure. Orwell remarked of the Burmese that "you could forgive the Europeans......Living and working amongst the Orientals would try the temper of a saint". (Orwell, 1967: 33) Furthermore, De Quincy wrote of Asians that:

> *I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego and live in China and among Chinese manner and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. The causes of my horror lie deep, and some of them must be common to others. Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful images and associations* (De Quincy, 1996: 680).

Similarly, Hearn interpreted Japan as exhibiting "underlying strangeness.....psychological strangeness". (Smith, 1997: 1) However, this interpretation of Japan was critically dissected by Oscar Wilde, who noted that "In fact the whole of Japan is a pure invention...There is no such country, there are no such people" (Smith, 1998: 3). In 1869, when Japan opened its doors

to international trade, its culture became 'en vogue' across Europe, leading to the fashion of 'Japonisme'. However, whilst luminaries such as Degas, Manet, Whistler and Pissaro were in thrall to Japanese imagery, Wilde instead made the important distinction between the "extremely common-place" (1998: 3) Japan and its exotic and mysterious representation in Western culture and literature.

6. Literary Representations of the 'Civilised' and the 'Unknown World'

Western literary representation also extended towards those parts of the world deemed dangerous, savage and uncivilised by the West. These ideas had their modern genesis in the period ranging from 1422 to 1522, regarded in European history as the great age of discovery. During this period of exploration, Portuguese sailors such as Henry the Navigator looked on the unknown Atlantic Ocean as 'the sea of darkness' (Castlereagh, 1971: 43). The 'dark' interior of Africa was perceived by the later 19th century Europeans in much the same way (Pakenham, 1991: 23). However, this per-ception regarding unmapped parts of the world as dark, mysterious and incomprehensible has lingered in the Western imagination through its liter-ature. Indeed, many Western literary texts, ranging from prose to poetry, have helped reinforce this colonist notion. Kipling in the 'Ballad of East and West' saw East and West as irreconcilable, writing "never the twain shall meet" (Partington, 1998: 3), whilst Hardy, in 'The Convergence of the Twain' employed oppositional metaphors, such as "stature" and "shadowy silent" (Hardy, 1994: 288/9) to contrast the known and unknown worlds. Furthermore, the imperial undertones of Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (1995) resemble the colonialist attitudes of the first European explorers, as the interior of the African continent is designated as a centre of darkness and savagery. Said argues that "when Marlowe acknowledges that he always felt a passion to fill in the great blank spaces on the map" (Said, 1993: 201) this constitutes "the overwhelming reality; a constitutive reality in the culture of imperialism" (201). Therefore, Marlowe's narration pre-supposes that there is an unknown savage territory waiting to be mapped out and discovered. However, Eagleton argues that Conrad's text is ambivalent, rather than imperialist, noting that in the novel "Westerners are just as much savage brutes as the Africans". (Eagelton, 2005: 262) Furthermore, Eagleton notes a similar ambiguity in Forster's 'A Passage to India', which describes India as an impossible sprawling chaos whilst satirizing the West's petty-minded schemes for subduing it as ridiculous (2005: 262). This ambiguity leads him to question "is this pro-or anti imperialist?" (262) Therefore, whilst many Western literary texts have represented unfamiliar

parts of the world as dark, savage, and chaotic, some have also self effacing-ly satirized the West's attempts at colonialism.

Recent scholars are therefore skeptical regarding the influence that these texts have had on the West's attitudes towards other parts of the world, whilst some contend that Western Imperialists were not influenced by oriental scholars or colonialist literature. Irwin instead claims that "they read rattling good yarns about soldiers of fortune, tiger hunting, pig-sticking or polo playing—unless they were seriously cultured" (McLemee, 2006). However, those parts of the world unknown to the West have also been depicted in the literature of 'rattling good yarns' as a playground in which Western 'soldiers of fortune' and explorers could experience adventures and excitement. Webb affirms, in 'The Great Frontier', that it was the aim of the adventurous metropolitan in "getting to some distant place...so that he could come back to the metropolis to tell his tale and reap the acclaim" (Webb, 1951: 359). Western literary figures reflected this sense of the writer as explorer in their texts. Twain, cited in Kbiri, describes the Middle East in exotic terms, writing that "To see a camel train laden with the spices of Arabia and the rare fabrics of Persia come marching through the narrow alleys of the bazaar...is a genuine revelation of the Orient. The picture lacks nothing." (Kbiri, 2008: 11) Kerouac, in 'Desolation Angels', documents his arrival by ship at the port of Tangiers by fantasizing about the mysterious East, and imagining himself as an adventurer. He writes of Tangiers that:

> *Here where the patch-eyed international gem smugglers sneaked up with blue .45's to steal the Tangier harem...the city turns on magical little lights, the hill of Casbah hums, I wanta be out there in those narrow Medina alleys* (Kerouac, 1995: 344).

Similarly, recent travel guides have emphasized the exotic and mysterious nature of the colonial 'other'. For example, Footprint Guides describes Morocco in similar terms to Kerouac, describing how its "arid wastes and kasbahs star in films, its cities can be secretive, seething, contrasted: austere Fes and Rick's Casablanca, maverick Tanger and Goytisolo's Marrakech". (Footprint Guides, 2011) Moreover, the online guide describes Morocco as "the land where Delacroix and Matisse discovered colour" (2011), denoting it as a stage, or blank canvas, on which Westerners discovered, created and civilized. Recent popular literature, such as Alex Garland's 'The Beach' (Garland, 1998), conveys the promise of adventure that draws backpackers and travelers to the poorer parts of the word on 'gap' year travels. The book has itself been cited on travel websites, such as travelersdigest.com, as

a form of advertisement, where readers are invited to "explore the inner reaches of this stunning marine destination" that "inspired Alex Garland to pen his famous book, 'The Beach'"(travelersdigest.com: 2011). Furthermore, this genre of travel literature has influenced cinematic depictions of different parts of the world. Croteau and Hoynes observe the Hollywood tradition of establishing rigid lines between 'us' and 'them'. They maintain that in Western movies "civilized people triumph over the primitive, (Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom)...One version of this genre places the hero in faraway, exotic lands" (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003: 174). However, a critical approach of Western culture which seeks to holistically examine multiple ideological configurations, has, in turn, been attacked for being too simplistic. Zarnett argues that this ideological framework gives equal weight to "the writings of ignorant travelers, amateur journalists and learned scholars. It advances the view that Western attitudes...form a unified discourse with immutable values" (Zarnett, 2007: 50).

7. Literary Representations of EFL Learners

Whilst some critics argue that English literary texts and culture are complex and ambivalent in their depictions of other cultures, a reading of English literature finds learners of English as a foreign language being represented in less ambiguous terms. Coleridge noted the hegemonic quality of language and culture, which "at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests" (Said, 1979: 136) and Orwell related this hegemonic quality specifically to English when he argued that "In this war we have one weapon which our enemies cannot use against us, and that is the English language" (Orwell 1970: 250). English was championed as a lingua franca by Orwell because of its perceived grammatical and logical simplicity, whereas other languages were seen as opaque and complex. For example, he maintained that "a completely illiterate Indian will pick up English far faster than a British soldier will pick up Hindustani" (Orwell, 1948: 33). He observed that there are many Indians who "speak English as nearly as possible perfectly; yet the number of Englishmen speaking any Indian language perfectly would not amount to a few scores" (1948: 33). However, the reasons for the supremacy of English in India were more likely militaristic than linguistic, and Weinreich, cited in Swann observed that "Language is a dialect which has an army and a navy." (Swann, 2005: 63) Therefore, due to the high status enjoyed by English, which was underwritten by the military power of the British Empire (Boyle, 1977), there was a more pressing economic need for 'illiterate Indians' to learn English than there was for British soldiers to learn Hindustani.

Nevertheless, this ethnocentric conception of English is discovered in a number of English literary texts. In Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe', the scenes where Crusoe teaches Friday English display a Western superior attitude towards English (Defoe, 2007: 269-74). Crusoe does not consider learning Friday's language, because he considerers English to represent a superior discourse. Therefore, Crusoe quickly sets about the process of civilizing Friday by teaching him English. Moreover, Friday's progression in the language largely serves as a barometer for Crusoe's judgments of his capabilities. Pennycook claims that Friday is subordinated whilst his identity is constructed, arguing "Not only does Friday not get to speak in his own language, but he has been given very particular, colonizing English words to express his cultural background" (Pennycook, 1998: 15). Furthermore, in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness', Marlowe judges the Congo natives by the standards of his own language, and deems them to be subordinate because they do not use English. As the natives cannot speak his tongue, Marlow refers to their chanting as an "immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense" (Conrad, 1995: 80). Conversely, Conrad's narrator describes "the inestimable privilege of listening to the gifted Kurtz" (80), which was possible because "he could speak English to me" (82). Because Marlowe cannot understand the language of the Congo natives he refuses to acknowledge it as the equal of his own. Therefore, he doesn't afford it the status of a proper language, claiming that he holds "a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend" (63). Conversely, this superior literary attitude towards non native speakers of English was satirized by Dickens in 'Little Dorritt'. When the characters in Bleeding Hart Yard begin teaching Mr. Baptist English they teach him "such as were addressed by the savages to Captain Cook, or by Friday to Robinson Crusoe" (Dickens, 1998: 297). Dickens shows how the sensitive and intelligent Baptist is patronized due to his lack of English, whilst the rather middling denizens of the Yard begin "treating him like a baby and laughing immoderately at his lively gestures and his childish English" (297). Moreover, other critics, such as Pennycook (1992) and Phillipson (1998), have criticized this Western practice of judging other cultures by the polarized linguistic standards of their own. Phillipson argues that "There is a sense in which we are inescapably committed to the ethnocentricity of our own worldview" (Phillipson, 1992: 47).

However, contemporaneously, this ethnocentric representation of speakers of English as a foreign language can now be located in modern Western cin-

ema culture. For example, the recent movies 'The Pink Panther' (2006), and 'Borat' (2006) have mocked the accent and grammar of non native speaker's English. The 'Borat' film 'Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan' (2006) deliberately employs grammatically incorrect English in its title for comic effect (The New York Times, 2005). Moreover, the English actor Sacha Baron Cohen gives his Kazakhstani character a poor command of spoken English, which imbues him with an awkward, clownish persona. More significantly, the film's protagonist is delineated by Western culture as coming from "a loutish... coarse" state (2005). Ashikbayev, the Kazakhstan Foreign Ministry spokesman, explained that his concern with the film related to the fact that many of Cohen's viewers are children, arguing that "Cohen comes up with these ridiculous jokes that some people may take for truth." (2005) Literary and cultural representations of self and other, now twinned with the economic power of Hollywood, have tremendous reach and influence. In the modern era, the mass media is central in this ideological struggle to legitimize western culture and parody the culture and language of non-western countries. Hall claims that this is because the media does not merely reflect the world, but instead 're-presents' it. He argues that "representation is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping....making things mean" (Hall, 1982: 64). Therefore, instead of reproducing the 'reality' of the world, Western culture instead attempts to define its notion of reality. Whilst the Kazakhstani nation is globally represented (or misrepresented) by the Borat movie, it has less global reach and economic scope to represent itself back. However, this modern representation of other countries is linked to the powerful tradition of scholarly and literary representation of the East (Said, 1979). Said contests that due to this process of literary representation "a wide variety of hybrid representations now roam the culture. Japan, Indochina, China, India, Pakistan: their representations have had, and continue to have, wide repercussions." (1979: 285)

8. The Effects of Literary Representation

A reading of various examples from English and Western literary prose and poetry has revealed, as Said maintains, 'a wide variety of hybrid representations', but, moreover, representations with varying degrees of complexity and ambiguity. Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge that Western representation is not a completely arbitrary construct, but can also present and acknowledge the obvious in foreign cultures. Irwin, cited in Kamiya argues that "different regions of the world do share certain cultural

traits...this is not to 'essentialize' those societies or reduce them to religious caricatures". (Kamiya, 2006) However, whilst there may be some underlying cultural truths inherent within Western representations of other cultures, an important fact remains that Western culture has more scope and power to represent other societies than other societies have to represent it. This depiction, or representation, of other societies in Western culture and literature arguably creates a stereotypical self-image in the minds of those represented. Said refers to "the paradox of an Arab regarding himself as an 'Arab' of the sort put out by Hollywood" (1979: 325). This is despite Western culture often depicting the East in pejorative or insulting terms. Fowler notes a specific example in which a leading U.K newspaper described Libyan figures in bestial terms, such as "mad dog", "rat", and "Arab rat" (Fowler, 1991: 117/8). Fowler argues that "this makes it quite clear the perception of Arabs as non-human, bestial" (1991: 117/8). However, despite this negative representation of Arab people, Western culture remains extremely popular in non-Western countries, and even in Arab countries that oppose the West politically. Whilst Pilger notes that Arnold Schwarzenegger, in the movie 'True Lies', kills over eighty Arab terrorists (Pilger, 1999: 35) many Muslims are allegedly fans of these kinds of American movies and TV shows. The Mail Newspaper claims that Osama bin Laden's "favorite television shows were the Wonder Years, Miami Vice and MacGuyver" (Daily Mail, 2006: 1). Said notes that "there is a vast standardization of taste in the region", observing that this is "symbolized not only by transistors blue jeans and Coca-Cola but also by the cultural images of the Orient" (Said, 1979: 25). Western cultural production has therefore proved to be immensely popular across the globe, especially with the young, who often equate these images and values with freedom and excitement. Furthermore, Mander notes how many young Indians in Yellowknife, Canada, now worship and ape Western icons and cultural totems whilst discontinuing with their own traditions and culture. He cites the observations of an Indian elder that the youth "don't want to be Indians now. They hate being Indians" (Mander, 2001: 51).

In relation to the English classroom, there is a growing concern that cultural colonialism permeates the EFL industry, and, moreover, that it saturates classroom literature. Phillipson argues that around the world, "students are daily being confronted with the European reflection of itself....children are made to...analyse and evaluate the world as made and seen by Europeans" (Phillipson, 1992: 241). However, others maintain that learners, students and consumers appropriate and convert Western culture for their own ends within their own localised domains. Canagarajah, cited in Gray, suggests

that students do on occasion recognise the ideological nature of certain content, and seek to challenge it (Gray, 2010: 730). Varisco, cited in Zarnett, argues that indigenous Arab, Persian, and Turkish newspapers and journals have written back against cultural imperialism (Zarnett, 2007: 58), whilst Zarnett cites the evidence of "Muslim intellectuals who learned from Western education yet saw through to the core of the prejudice" (2007: 58). Furthermore, Liechty, cited in Osgerby, notes that cultural hegemony is too simplistic a model, and that instead diaspora occurs, as local communities actively engage with cultural commodities such as music, movies, language and literature, and creatively re-embed them within local cultures and contexts (Osgerby, 2004: 172). Gray observes that "clearly there is a need for more detailed research into how such content is perceived" (2010: 730).

The role of culture and literature in the EFL classroom is therefore at the centre of an ongoing pedagogic debate amongst theorists and practitioners. Torikai (2011: 1) maintains that culture should be avoided completely, due to its hegemonic properties. However, Kramsch (1993: 1) argues that rather than engaging with culture less, students instead need more cultural competence to achieve fluency, and that this necessitates engaging with culture more rigorously and critically. Moreover, literature can also be employed as a valuable proselytizing force, possessing the valuable potential to transmit the texts of many cultures into English. In the 11th century, at the school of translators at Toledo, it was through the dominance of Arabic that scribes were able to translate the classics of Greece, such as the plays of Sophocles and Euripedes, and the scientific writings of Archimedes, Hippocrates, Galen, and Euclid. (Bronowski, 1973: 179) The work of the Arab mathematician Alhazen was also translated from Arabic; his ideas on the movement of light and perspective passing into art, and influencing the early painters and thinkers of the Renaissance. (179) Contemporaneously, English, due to its status as a global language, enjoys the broad potential to connect many diverse strands of literary and cultural knowledge together.

9. Teaching Literature Critically to EFL Reading Students

Whilst it would appear that literature possesses both educational and hegemonic potential, the central problem for EFL practitioners is in assessing what the intended culture of a text should be, and how they should attempt to teach it. Brumfit writes "How it is best done, what the relationship between reading and literature needs to be.......exactly what books are most appropriate at what levels—these are questions for teachers to address" (2001: 92). However, with economic power perhaps switching from West to

East, Sell observes that "the culture learners are invited to try out (Multicultural British, Commonwealth) will not perhaps be of much use in the immanent future" (Sell, 2005: 90). Instead, Sell states that Chinese, Indian or Islamic culture will be useful, and that it would be "productive to introduce learners to other cultures through English." (Sell, 2005: 91) Instead of being culturally represented in Western literature, the literature from many diverse parts of the globe, such as Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, should represent itself, and be read and studied in English. For example, Keene, in specific relation to Japanese literature published in English, writes that it is to be hoped that the reader will be able to obtain "an understanding of the Japanese people as their lives and aspirations have been reflected in their writings" (Keene, 2002: 30). Through the reading of multicultural literature in English, students are afforded the chance to enjoy a broader, deeper, more profound vision of the world. Brumfit maintains that "The teaching of literature can thus be seen as a means of introducing learners to such a serious view of our world". (Brumfit, 2001: 92) An approach to teaching literature in English should thus attempt to avoid cultural bias and, whilst including British and American texts, should also expand to represent many varied parts of the globe. Some EFL reading textbooks, such as 'Literary Odysseys', and 'Explorations in World Literature' have previously attempted to present authentic multicultural selections of literature. While the former is unfortunately out of print at the time of writing, the latter offers selections from "diverse cultures and periods of history and provides a balanced racial, ethnic, and gender perspective." (Shaffer-Koros, 1998: 5) The book is informed by several teaching approaches, including:

Figure 2.

> **(1) reader-response theory**, *which encourages the student to be an active reader and helps him/her to recognize the ambiguity of literary texts, and*
> **(2) content based language instruction**, *which teaches language through academic subject matter. Thus, students using the book improve their English language skills through the study of world literature.*
> (Shaffer-Koros, C, M, Reppy, J, M, 2001, V)

However, many recent textbooks are constructed with economic or utilitarian goals in mind, and are published in conjunction with big business or international sponsors. For example, Flavell (1994: 48) cites the dominance of the British Council and Norwegian interests in the Sri Lankan textbook market, leaving no room for alternative English texts. Moreover, Flavell notes that "many ordinary English teachers throughout the world have no

choice at all in the textbook they may use" (Flavell, 1994: 48). Faced with a restricted, culture-specific choice of textbooks and materials, teachers may need to accept more personal responsibility in terms of leading students to diverse literature, and this will in turn necessitate instructors possessing critical expertise of literary texts. Nafisah argues that "teachers who are avid readers stand a good chance to develop a more literary classroom" (Nafisah, 2011: 4), whilst Cruz notes that the teacher also needs to guide the students through the cultural knowledge being taught so that they can "construct their own interpretation and reflections according to their own experience, by first thinking critically and then comparing and contrasting the two different cultures" (Cruz, 2010: 6).

Furthermore, in addressing learner problems with diverse cultural content, the reading goals of any EFL course should seek to take a critical stance to the context of multicultural texts (Hedge, 2003). A critical approach should stress to students that literary texts can be connotative and opaque, (Parkinson, Reid Thomas, 2000: 9-11) and that this necessitates perceiving texts from different angles. Indeed, holding a perception of the text as open to interpretation will aid learners in developing their critical thinking skills further, because it will necessitate the development of text based argument to support opinions. Moreover, the teacher should ensure that students are able to contextualise the ideas within the texts through both efferent and aesthetic readings. Cruz holds that efferent readings must be supported by aesthetic readings, in which students are encouraged to discuss how the message of the text is delivered and to critically engage with the work and its implications by critical comparison with their own culture and identities (Cruz, 2010: 4-5).

Therefore, a critical and culturally comparative study of texts in an English reading class would attempt to improve learners' literary competence, which students could combine with acquiring and improving reading skills. However, Nordin & Ahmad, et al note that because of the archaic language employed in English literature, students often face great difficulties in grasping the meaning of literary texts (Nordin, Ahmad, et al, 2010: 239). To best combat this they advocate the use of a 'see' 'hear' approach, which incorporates the use of multimedia in the classroom, such as "computer graphics, images, audio, integration of texts, video and digital environment" (2010: 239). In addition, student problems with language can also be tackled by the distribution in class of pre-reading vocabulary sheets, which would help crystallize key cultural and critical concepts. Byram et al note that vocabulary should be used that enables students to discuss topics related to

cultural diversity, such as "human rights; equality; dignity; gender; bias; prejudice; stereotype; racism; ethnic minority; and the names of ethnic groups, including white groups." (Byram, et al, 2002: 16) Moreover, activities like predicting, gap filling, creative writing, role playing, and the integration of spelling with vocabulary can establish the necessary connection between language and literature which eventually make the teaching and learning of literature a very productive and enjoyable enterprise. Language and cultural skills should not be taught in isolation but in an integrated way, incorporating a set of text based, student centered activities which add fresh momentum into the teaching of literature (Abraham, 2010: 2). This study therefore acknowledges that literary texts are culturally charged, and advocates a multicultural literary approach. It is hoped that such an approach, taught in congruence with vocabulary handouts, scaffolding materials, and the exploratory use of visual and audio media, would encourage EFL reading students to approach texts critically and comparatively, in order that they may improve their cultural and linguistic competence holistically.

10. Possibilities for Future Research.

In light of this study, a future research project, involving Japanese English reading students based at a private university, would aim to discover, through the study and assessment of student response data whether the employment of a critical and culturally comparative approach improves EFL students' cultural and linguistic perception of English literary texts. Moreover, this research project would also aim to ascertain to what extent understanding of English literary texts enables students to fully comprehend and critically engage with the types of cultural items found in EFL texts and materials. If the results of this study are positive, then it could have contextual pedagogic implications, both within the localized parameters of the Japanese English teaching system, and more broadly, regarding the teaching of literature and culture to students of English as a foreign language.

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