

contaminates and frightens all the characters. Pozzo:

(suddenly furious). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you. One day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer) they give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, and then it's night once more. (He jerks the rope) On! (103)

This meaninglessness of time is echoed everywhere in the text simply because it expresses the frustration of the characters who represent all of us. Godot's arrival will abort the cycles of time and as Smith contends end the "interminable progression of time" (892) and end the suffering of the tramps. They recognize that all along they have been spending useless time. They question the meaning of time, but come to no answer and perhaps to Vladimir this is where there is the greatest frustration. This sense of emptiness is even expressed at the beginning of the text in the recognition that there is nothing to be done. This recognition dismal as it is a revelation of the void of human forms and actions. Vladimir recognizes this and exposes his helplessness in the fact of his life not having any meaning when he wonders aloud:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of to-day? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (104)

Vladimir's interrogation of the essence of time and the meaning of effort are translated into this clarion call. He wonders at the end of all of this if one can give any meaning to life. Why do we live if it ends up all like this? The realization that waiting for Godot could be a useless effort doesn't in any way deter the protagonist from waiting, wherefore the tragedy that characterizes them. Michael Mundhenk in his "The Dialectics of Hope" contends that to dismiss Beckett as a "pathological "negator of hope" therefore, means to fail to recognize in his works the dialectics of hope and despair" (229). No doubt that there is such dialectic and this paper makes no pretention to refuse that, only which it submits to the fact of the overwhelming aura of hopelessness and mortality. The inability of Vladimir and Estragon to separate from each other and the impossibility of them leaving the position in which they find themselves is a reflection of resigned acceptance. They are the prisoners of time, a burdensome hope and the fear of the unknown. Until they make the choice to liberate themselves with the consequences that can result from the search for freedom, then their lives will be forever tragic. It is important to note that as George Watson argues "Beckett is not interested in man as a social animal, but in man in his essential solitude against the backdrop of the void of which there is no lack" (23). This is fundamental to the argument that the tramps are essentially tragic in their existential outlook.

Conclusion: The discussions above show that Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky are defined by their unavoidable connections to each other,

but this is also the source of their anguish. They reflect the malaise of the century; one characterized by fear, doubts and mutual distrust. Consistently, Beckett attempts to characterize a sense of “nowhereness” and nothingness that has eaten deep in the psyche of the tramps. His sparse characterization in symbolic terms is a reflection of the moribund society void of human forms. The protagonists suffer from broken and degenerated hopes, they are caught in the illusion of waiting but perhaps most tragically in the recognition that it will come to nothing. They are victims of time in all its forms and can make recourse only to their own abilities, but even here they are bereft of the power to decide. Put differently, Beckett presents a world whose *raison d'être* is no longer justified, but especially as there is nothing to be done. Even when traced to the religious traditions of the time, *Godot* Patrick Murray in his “Samuel Beckett and Tradition” asserts is no way closer to Christian optimism. The world is condemned to be the way that Beckett paints it and like Sisyphus, it will continue to be an eternal burden. Normand Berlin rallies to this position when he too stresses on the tragic rather than the comic strain of the text when he writes that:

My own view tilts *Godot* closer to tragedy because I find the play's direction—even with all the comic routines, and despite all the circularities and stalemates and balances—is toward the dark, toward death. The characters are not there yet, but Pozzo and Lucky are moving “on” in that direction, and although Didi and Gogo are frozen they seem very close to the abyss. (427)

Estragon and Vladimir are anguished by their inability to change their social status. They find the world as absurd and we too can think so, but they are gnawed by its resistance to change. They have a meager hope represented in the tree in the second part of the play, but at the end of the play neither the hope has become reality nor has their condition changed. That they fail to separate at the end of the play, and that *Godot* does not really come is an indication that they have failed in their struggle to choose and that they have equally not understood that the fact of waiting is simply a farce, and that they are condemned to continue in this regard as long as they cannot take decisions. Unfortunately, and this is where it is all painful, they cannot even choose and so the condition of their existence remains pathetic and eternally painful. What can be more tragic than this? Berlin concurs that in *Godot*, the condition of man is “waiting”, it is a reflection of a “radical uncertainty” that informs the 20th century which he concludes is “centerless, purposeless, godless” justifying the need for some kind of salvation that will not come (428). The wait is a lie, a mirage, a ghost. Elizabeth Barry equally captures this sense of frustration more succinctly when she contends that “By closing the curtain at the end of his first major play without *Godot* having appeared, Beckett put into striking memorable form the agentless event that he found life to be” (116). All along, I have been trying to argue that contrary to the belief that tragedy must involve an important personality who must have a tragic flaw which will be the result of his undoing, this paper's conclusions rest on another premise. Whether big or small, rich or poor,

educated or illiterate, black or white, Beckett's *Godot* lay bare a world of human beings characterized by a common tragedy. The play is the playwright's gasped effusion of humanity's cry in the desert especially in the tragic understanding that there is nothing to be done, this is simply not ridiculous or absurd; it is downright tragic.

End Notes :

1. The outbreak of the two world Wars and the birth of new philosophies such as existentialism questioned Gods role in human existence.
2. Henceforth *Waiting for Godot* should be read as *Godot*
3. See Hamlets passionate speech "To be or not to be..." about the dilemma of existence

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Justifying Queer in the 21st Century: A Reading of Queer Theory as Based on the Conceptual Core of the Age of Information

- Md. Shahriar Kabir

Abstract: Study of literary periods proves that literary theories come and go rendering the theoretical fossil of the previous era on the pages of books. Such consistent weathering out of zeal and fervour should not be taken lightly. For example, the vibrancy of 1950s Postmodernism ebbed in the course of time. Is “Queer Theory” the next to dominate the study of literature? In parallel, information, the conceptual core of the Age of Information, has been the currency in recent times. Interestingly, information has always been vital to literary works and, until recently, it has acquired undeniable significance due to its overwhelming presence beyond the confinement of covers and blurbs. In this backdrop, critical insights must be there regarding the notional changes resulting from the possession and dissemination of information. Are those changes influencing the readings of literature and literary theories? Is Queer Theory, then, getting coinage because it can be aptly accommodated in the conceptual framework of the notion of information? This article argues in favour of these queries.

Keywords: queer theory, age of information, concept of information.

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”...¹

The potential of humanities in the 21st century is virtually infinite and the oblivion of the infinite is expanding each day. Latest technological advancements are pouring into and paving the way for more. At this backdrop, the discipline of humanities has also taken interesting twists and turns. Theoretical arenas apart, the discipline of English language and literature has entered into the realm of practicality with the applicatory premises like cultural studies, gender studies, media and film studies and so forth. Since the inception, this discipline has been guided and fashioned by numerous theories dating back to Aristotle. The latest of them is Postmodernism that started somewhere near the late fifties of the last century (dates are just numeric underpinnings). The vibe of this theory has ebbed away so far the zeal and fervor is concerned. This fact once again substantiates the anti-stagnant stance of the discipline itself. Then the logical question would be something like “what is next?”. One *logical* proposition is: “Queer theory.” It does not necessarily have to be queer theory to dominate the theoretical and applicatory arena of literary discourse all alone in 21st century. There are other theories that can successfully bear the burden of the humanity. But queer theory is something that cannot be kept aside of the discussion. As a matter of fact, *queer is concerned with practicality as it deals with a very hardcore fact of humanity. It is very much concrete whereas most of the theories are based on*

abstract bases. All these emotional responses (are they? really?) can wait. Prior to those responses, queer theory has to be posited firmly in the mainstream that has airy existence even after twenty years of formal proposition in a conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1990 by Teresa de Lauretis (Giffney, 2009). It has already been mentioned that, English as a discipline has been read, perceived, and guided by a number of theories over the course of time. Theories are recent mood of criticism but the thematic integrity and uniqueness has always been there. After the seventies of the last century, literary theories flourished and inundated whatever barriers were there. The possibilities spilled over the shadow lines and the accommodative nature of the discipline has achieved a unique title 'multidisciplinary'. Reading of English literature now encapsulates arenas that previously existed abreast but were more like watertight compartments. What began centuries ago with loners like "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" has turned out to be an all inclusive hotspot. The labyrinth of layers makes it more interesting and the diversity is alluring at once. As literature mirrors the society at a given time, so the perusal must be conducted with a view to deciphering the societal dimensions. This is where queer befits and this article insightfully provides the rationale of queer theory in the 21st century. Firstly, an outline of the queer theory is drawn. Then this paper conveys the *conceptualization of information*. Based on these two parallel discussions, the recent vibe of queer theory is justified.

"In emulation opposite to Heav'n"...²

If queer needs to be shown and positioned in the mainstream of English literary history, then the legacy must be mentioned. M. H. Abrams (2004) dated the literary eras over the ages and, divisions and subdivisions apart, there is an approximate average of five hundred years in between each literary period and the gap between each literary age narrowed somewhat regularly with the course of time (p. 210). After the First World War, the world of art and literature encountered numerous isms and ologies within a span of hundred years ("Isms: Modern Art Movements," n.d.). The disruption of harmony of collective psyche of humans is very much reflected here. No resorts were comforting enough and therefore even postmodernism that ruled the literary and artistic aesthetics in the fifties and sixties ran out of zeal and fervour by the seventies. In this lineage, queer theory declared its bold presence and has been influential (specifically) since the 1990s. It must not be forgotten that the paradigm of society also shifted towards the age of information in parallel.

Defining queer requires a diachronic reading of the history of the emergence of queer. Most of the books map the history of queer and portray how queer came into being. Interestingly, very few of them define its function and functionality as a theory. Queer is more a social phenomenon than a theory. As a result, theorising queer is certainly demands newer words, fresher lines, and to some extent disturbing propositions. Authors like Michel Foucault, Adrienne Rich, Simon de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick destabilise the bases of male-female dichotomy (Hossain, 2010, p. 69-70). The dichotomy

before them was interpreted as a dichotomy of power relation, a strong binary, and a historical process of constructing one and 'an other'; but the mentioned authors deconstructed the whole subject matter that actually constructed the base of gender studies of today. The performativity of gender actually speaks of the *preferred* way of performing it. Thus Rich's compulsory heterosexuality speaks loudly of the silencing of homosexuality and other numerous sexual acts interpellated as perversion. It is not a mere argument of right or wrong in the name of society, religion, and other Althusserian ISAs. It is about embanking and channeling human diversity into one single unified channel that may fruit nothing but profit in the surname of norm/al. If heterosexuality is normal, then homosexuality is abnormal. Unfortunately, discourse travels in a more twisted manner and thus homosexuality has been associated with the notion of sick or evil (Tyson, 1999, p. 322). This *systematic* exclusion from the mainstream is the main concern of the critics mentioned earlier. In this case, if the exclusion is to be perceived, the history/herstory of the emergence of queer has to be considered and read.

Queer, as a term, is not a very recent phenomenon. The world, as Foucault sees it, is acquainted with concept of queer. He documents a history of "frankness" regarding sexual activities in the "seventeenth century" England (Foucault, 1991, p. 292). There are numerous other references from which it can be inferred that sexuality as a notion was pretty much a subject to be *performed* in a very frank manner until the appearance of the "Victorian bourgeoisie" who "carefully confined" sexuality, maintains Foucault (1991, p. 292). On the contrary, the construction of homosexuality is a very meticulously knitted discourse. Ruth Hubbard states, "There is no "natural" human sexuality. This is not to say that our sexual feelings are "unnatural" but whatever feelings and activities our society interprets as sexual are channeled from birth into socially acceptable forms of expression" (1998, p. 52). Evidently a great deal of silencing the history is the key to comprehend queer theory. In addition, Jonathan Ned Katz documented the gradual growth of the concept of heterosexuality over the years and claimed heterosexuality to be "old as procreation, ancient as the lust of Eve and Adam" and he adds that "[W]e suppose that heterosexuality is unchanging, universal, essential: ahistorical" (1998, p. 55). Right after informing this, Katz puts forward that "the idea of heterosexuality is a modern invention, during to the late nineteenth century" (1998, p. 55). The rest of the essay is a documentation of the history if the discursive regime of heterosexuality with specific reference to the United States. The essay reads well, speaks more meticulously of the hegemonic attempt of fixing human identity in terms of sexual binary. The essayist makes an outline of the discursive inclusion of heterosexuality as a norm and its reception as natural or normal in the society through the "distribution of "heterosexual" as universal sanctifier" (1998, p. 64).

Despite the hegemonic presence of heterosexuality, the homosexual tendency did not remain suppressed. The late 1960s of the previous century experienced "anti-establishment countercultures, fledgling feminists, and homosexual-rights activists" (Katz, 1998, p. 63). The

Stonewall riot in 1969 resurrected the “stigmatized *other*” (Hossain, 2010, p. 58). Moreover, issues related to AIDS and discriminations related to it have “become a part of gay sensibility in the late 1980s and 1990s” (Tyosn, 1999, p. 333). Shortly after the surge caused by AIDS and related activisms, queer theory was coined formally by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990 (Giffney, 2009). When it was voiced, it began with a concern for identity and the theory points out the compulsory heterosexuality and the discursive silencing of homosexuality since its inception. With such an active subverting force inside, queer theory has travelled a long way and has sustained by having a very forceful impact in today's literary premises. Characteristically, queer is a complex and accommodative matrix of identity. It questions and subverts the formation of individual identity on the basis of sexual preference. It is unimaginably diverse and interesting in its own complexity of dimensions. Queer theorists deconstruct the “key binary oppositions of Western culture” (Abrams, 2004, p. 255) and those were determined by strongly imbedded stereotypical features (i.e. for stereotypes debasing gay people, see Mohr, 1998, 458 – 464). Instead of falling in either of the polar region of binary, queer theory emerged as an all-inclusive force posing questions towards the discursive practices regarding the fixation of gender and identity based on sexuality. It proposes a brand new dimension of identity and normativity in the conceptual arena, and it functions as a discourse and shows relationality in the practical premises. Queer has the ability to disturb as it is more a slang than a violent conjunction with the concept of 'theory'. Queer embraces anything in its way as it has the postmodern all-inclusive nature unlike a term with attributive specificity. Queer is political when its 'rebellious' background is concerned. Queer is ambivalent as it travels fluidly in the system of binary of any sort. It must not be forgotten that queer is more a resistance against heterosexual normativity than a defense of homosexuality. In a nutshell, queer functions as a sign in the world of sexuality but has the attributes of postmodern slipperiness (sounds like Lacanian “Real stage”³) as it “resists symbolization absolutely” (Homer, 2007, p. 83). Queer, therefore, has the potential to open up endless possibilities for attaining a newer and fresher dimension both socially and culturally.

“Let us go then, you and I” ...⁴

The modern world is changing and the trend can be seen with a perceivable clarity. Information has been the currency and it continues to firm its grip. A very common phrase to define contemporary era is *The Age of Information*. In a literal sense, it means that this age is based on the notion of information. Unfortunately this lexical item 'information' is the most widely used which is not understood (and misunderstood too) in a massive scale. People often use this word but they seem to be unaware of its significance as well as its pivotal role. Although the concept of information is functional in the collective unconscious of the people, mass perception of this age is very limited and 'primitive'. Internet seems to have opened all the possible entrances and therefore carelessness due to availability can be seen. If one requires to know something, s/he just googles it at once that is the shortest possible way. If one wants to share

something, one just updates one's status on facebook, twitter, and other social-networking sites. Not to tell of the short message service (SMS) that disseminates messages faster than is imagined. If Google does not help adequately, one just types youtube on the address bar. All these facilities can be availed if one possesses a computer/laptop and an active internet connection. Even in the third world countries internet is turning out to be a part and parcel of our daily life if not wi-fi and the like. It is no more a fancy thing to have in possession rather it has been more than necessity. The above mentioned facilities are not exclusive to desktops or laptops anymore. If someone has even a mediocre smart-phone, s/he can avail all the facilities in a standard sized gadget which is at once unimaginably compressed and (metaphorically) expandable to an infinite extent. The virtual hyperspace is allowing individuals to have vast room to dive in deep. In this backdrop, mass unawareness regarding the true essence of the Age of Information is alarming. People okay the blessings and close their eyes and thus facilitating a backwashing effect. The truth is we are in the thin layer of ice and we do not bother to see beneath it. *Interestingly, information is not the ultimate core of the Age of Information rather the raw material from which information is processed is the cardinal concept.* To preface the basic theorization of the very notion of information demands the answer of the question: "What is information?". Other disciplines have given their versions but the sector of arts and humanities is still less vocal in this regard. In a broader sense information is nothing but abstract a term and this very concept is seen to be in use in maximum cases. Therefore, it is compulsory to secure the definitive premise of the concept of information. Unfortunately, vitalities are dumped into the shell of information making it an umbrella term since its inception as a lexical item.

Prominent user of the term information is the computer science discipline. *Information is processed data processed by the logic of binary.* Computer laureates tend to define information in term of its accuracy, simplicity, timeliness, relevancy, completeness, conciseness, consistency, and security (Rahman, 2010, pp. 12-13). The Republic of India defines the term "information" in "The Information Technology Act, 2000" as such: "*Information*" includes date, text, images, sound, voice, codes, computer programmes, software and data bases or micro film or computer generated micro fiche" (Dasgupta, 2009, p. 360). In addition, the same act defines data likewise:

Data means a representation of information, knowledge, facts, concepts or instructions which are being prepared or have been prepared in a formalised manner, and is intended to be processed, is being processed or has been processed in a computer system or computer network, and may be in any form (including computer printouts magnetic or optical storage media, punched cards, punched tapes) or stored internally in the memory of the computer (Dasgupta, 2009, p. 358).

From the sets of definitions above, it can now be clarified that the age of information is solely dependent upon its raw material and it is unprocessed data. Data is something upon which one can attribute