

# SENSIBLE POETIC VOICES OF THE FRAGMENTED IN LEWIS EDWARD SCOTT'S A WOMAN CALLED *MAASUMAA*: A DECONSTRUCTIONIST ANATOMY

Abdullah H. Kurraz<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The present paper applies deconstructive analysis on L. E. Scott's *A Woman Called Maasumaa*<sup>2</sup> (1995)\*, mainly exploring both thematic and suggestive binary oppositions and signifiers/signifieds. Deconstruction addresses a text as an independent entity and looks into the suggestive structures that formulate the sensible poetic discourse and signify its thematized meanings and ideas. Obviously, deconstruction considers any literary text as an open-ended structure with no center of finite analytic signification. Deconstruction builds its views on Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of binary oppositions, signs (signifiers/signifieds), and difference. Consequently, a deconstructionist reading of a text approaches its possible explosive meanings. Scott is one of those modern poets who courageously express their own thoughts and ideas with exciting ambivalences, mysteries, and contradictions of human existence. The fragmented self and the cynical voices towards objects and people offer a chance for a deconstructive anatomy of Scott's *Maasumaa*. In this light, the current paper thematically explores the structural means composed of signifiers, signifieds, and binary oppositions that signify the poet's ideas of escapism, fragmentation, solitude, and instability.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Signs, Signifiers, Signifieds, Binary Oppositions, Fragmentation, Poetic Sensibility.

## 1. Introduction

Scott was born in Georgia (USA), cruised the American continent, and settled in New Zealand to escape his past for personal, social, and financial reasons. He is an African American jazz poet and musician who gained a lot of human experiences and knowledge from travels to Africa, Europe, Australia, and the Far East, meeting new people, and reading other cultures. Scott's major human themes include love, gender, death, existence, politics, war, exile, and spirituality; he wrote poems about his own "self-imposed political exile" (Pirie, 2000, p. 9). On his part, John Thomson argued that Scott's exile poetics imply "gentle mediations, almost spiritual ... centered on water, trees, and earth, as well as people ... and balance" (1996, p. 87). Therefore, Scott's poetics are an inspiring source for deconstruction to reveal their deep signs and binary oppositions that bear his human ideas and experiences. Pinpointing the functions of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida stated that it "must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of English, Al-Azhar University – Gaza, Palestine. E-mail: abdhk99@yahoo.com or abdhk99@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth is referred to as *Maasumaa*

commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses” (1978, p. 158). Similarly, J. Hillis Miller described deconstruction as “a mode of interpretation [that] works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth ... [and] is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. (1991, p. 126). Both critics emphasized the significance of deconstruction in interpreting literary works from within in the light of their language, signs, and oppositions. Accordingly, deconstructive readers are interested in tensions, gaps, ironies, aporias, silences, paradoxes, contradictions, conflicts, digressions, ambiguities, puns, multiple meanings, and intertextuality. On her part, Lois Tyson emphasized the significance of deconstruction in literature; she argues that this theory fosters the ability “to think critically and to see more readily the ways in which our experience is determinate by ideologies” of which readers are not aware (2006, p. 241).

## 2. Deconstruction and poetry

Poetic deconstruction has its own aesthetics that are intertwined together restructure unique poetic text that entails the explication of its binary oppositions and competing elements. Inevitably, there is no text without its structural elements and premises with aesthetic essence and thematic suggestiveness. Accordingly, this paper traces these aesthetics and components as both signifieds and signifiers in Scott’s poems of *Maasumaa* for their aesthetical structural paradigms and thematic manifestations. I choose this collection because it presents dynamic poetic expressions, words, and structures, which offer signifiers and signifieds with diverse meanings and interpretations. In this sense, Yoga Permana (2016) stated that the signifieds imply mental concepts that stand for real things and the signifiers suggest “the sound or image” that denotes the material aspect of things that arouse human senses of seeing, smell, taste, hearing, and ouch or feeling. Also, this collection is part of the human poetic experience of the modernist poet Scott. In addition, Scott is the least studied poet for several reasons: first, he comes from “a different literary background,” and his subject matters include the US anxieties and the “political polemic ... charismatic and confrontational manners” (Pirie, 2000, p. 10). Such reasons made him a less-received poet for his poetic career was troubled and unsecured, provoking readers’ interest to investigate his fragmented poetics.

Postmodernist poetics are mostly concerned with deconstructive aesthetics for they would produce an implied poetic and thematic discourse rife with oppositional signifiers. Further, they resolve a lot of ambiguities that the readers may face while reading and appreciating poems. Therefore, deconstruction is an approach to uncover the multiple contradictions or oppositions in a text because thematic meanings or associations are unstable (This is why there cannot be “a complete text”). Moreover,

deconstruction exposes the contradictory oppositions of language in a text, showing the mode this text deconstructs itself from within. Furthermore, “to deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies” (Culler, 1982, p. 86). Therefore, the paper addresses a set of suggestive binary oppositions, signs and signifiers, poetic images, artistic intertextualities, narrative techniques, and contextual and intratextual questions and ambiguities that necessitate deconstruction. To convey its juxtaposed ideas and themes, *Maasumaa* employs a variety of both binary oppositions and signifiers that entail thematically deep and artistic deconstructive explication.

Furthermore, various thematic binary opposites such as birth and death, and love and hatred, winner and loser among others dominate *Maasumaa*. Through its multi-layered semantic binaries, this collection offers a sensible human tone full of pains and passions. In this respect, Peter Mitchell (2006) described Scott’s poetics as “embedded in earth tones and dwell in the tortured spirit of a man looking for meaning in difficult times.” Moreover, Scott’s poetics are lamentative with dark tone of human inevitable absurd mortality. Also, inescapability, vanity, ash, mortality, blood, spiritual and intellectual maturity, and rebirth are recurrent motifs in Scott’s poetics. The dynamic thematic imagist components in Scott’s poetic discourse constitute a structural phenomenon of both signifiers and signifieds that require interpretive deconstruction. They also construct several entries and exits to the semantic and suggestive structure of the poetic space. In addition, Scott’s poetry is “associated with the New Black poetry” of the 1960s with strong authentic voices that make him “part of the rich heritage of African-American writers” contributing much to the American culture and legacy (Pirie, 2000, p. 12). Therefore, such dynamic poetic voices/components establish their own thematic implications full of vitality and performative structure, suggested by the signifying concepts of absence and presence.

### **3. Voicing the poetic thematic binary opposites of the poetic self**

Thematically, binary oppositions constitute a major means to communicate with the other and express the individual thoughts and feelings that are based on the relationships among the components of human existence. Such binary oppositions construct an extended textual drama that feeds the poems with tension, depth, excitement, and dialectique. These oppositional pairs result in thematic and cognitive contradictions and conflicts among the poetic images/signifiers. Defining a binary opposition as a literary critical term, Paul Inns states that a binary opposition implies “[a] relationship of opposition and mutual exclusion between two elements: [...] masculine/feminine, cold/heat, or up/down” (2010, p. 74). Pointing out its structuralist significance, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure indicated that

“[t]he binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not” (1983, p. 115). Such definite binary oppositions ignite diversified tensions and anxieties in both the readers’ and poet’s psyches in any human society. Scott’s aporias/tensions are suggestive and imply his sense of alienation, fragmentation, and repression. Moreover, Scott’s poetics also signify that human life, individually or collectively, is a dramatic conflict between oppositional structures, in which the binary oppositions depict the world as again alienated, subversive, conflicting, grimy, and anarchic. In this respect, Scott’s poetry follows “oral-based style” fused with Black jazz and blues, folk cadences, African chants, gospel rhythms, dramatic forms, and the spiritual teachings of the Black church (Pirie, 2000, p. 12).

From this definition, a binary opposition thematically implies a pair of words that suggest two opposed ideas, and readers can realize the significance of each word by the virtue of its opposition/s. For example, readers can conceive the meaning of words such as tall, absence, white, faith, and man by the means of their opposites, short, presence, black, reason, and woman respectively. In this regard, Jonathan Culler affirmed that “Deconstruction seeks to undo all oppositions that, in the name of unity, purity, order, and hierarchy, try to eliminate difference” (1982, p. 278). In poetry, a binary opposition determines the thematic meaning of a word in the light of its opposites, creating a sort of poetic significant tension that entails deconstruction. Thus, in deconstruction one possibility in analytically reading a poem “rests on a binary opposition in which one member of the pair is privileged over the other” (Tyson, 2006, p. 255). A close exploration of these binary opposites may suggest a split in the poet’s psyche. Thus, *Maasumaa* presents self-deconstructive poems that bring sensibly suggestive common binary oppositions such as good/bad; past/present; absent/present; good/corrupt; love/hate; love/lust; hopefulness/hopelessness among others. Furthermore, Scott presents his own ideology by evoking significant words such as “my life, voices, mouths, sunlight, warmth, shadows, and jailer” as signifiers that evoke their meaningful and suggestive oppositions that bear multiple signifieds (Why am I pointing at Me, p. 12). Such signification mobility creates Scott’s poetic world of confusion, fragmentation, alienation, absurdity, and suppression. Certainly, Scott’s binary opposites signify “real life absurdities - a sort of ironic satire of both language and behavior” (Thomson, 1996, p. 93). In this respect, “Reading... can’t legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it ... or toward a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place, outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, outside of writing in general ... There is nothing outside of the text” (Derrida, 1978, p. 158). In this light, deconstructing a text means exploring its signification system of oppositions and tensions from within, as a text is a unique informative entity.

The dynamicity of the poetic binary oppositions in *Maasumaa* seems a consistent form of the poetic expectational tone. For example, the speaker presents initial poetic structures based on the present and past verbs as opposites,

There is this early morning hurt  
That has nothing to do with the day before  
But it gives birth to the coming one      (Wake-Day by Day, p. 5)

This implied themato-poetic discourse and its acts of speech do not refer to the present content with a specific chronotropic significance. Rather, they signify temporal facets that involve active textual signifying perspectives, manifested in the opposition-bearing metaphorical words of “early morning, hurt, the day before, birth, and the coming one.” Evoking binary oppositions, Scott centers his poetics on themes of “a memoir about family, friends, and love,” among other ideas (Thomson, 1996, p. 88). Also, such oppositional words signify the fragmented psyche of the poet who becomes a representative of modern man who experiences similar pains and passions. Based on the immediate bond between the delayed meanings and the suggestions of diction, Derrida called this delay “différance” to mean that “a word, which is present, signals what is absent” and refers to the bond between binary oppositions as supplementation (1978, p. 49). In this sense, Scott condenses his binary oppositions to reflect daily human life poeticized in *Maasumaa* that bears thematically significant binary oppositions manifested in his signifiers. Moreover, Scott’s poetic binary oppositions make a deep transformation in the structure of his poems that become charged with oppositional dynamicity that suggests the poetic self’s mental and intellectual instability. Positively, Scott makes his poetry speak loud to convey his sense of being and of self-realization and actualization. Therefore, Scott gives his readers deeper insights about their realities and daily life practices, concerns, and dreams. In this concern, Scott, and through his suggestive binary oppositions and signifiers, creates his own “Personal poetic realities [that] are artifices constructed out of pieces of the truth [which] the poetic deconstruction of reality allows us to better see its essences” (Mitchell, 2006). Thus, through his sensible poetic voices, Scott represents modern man who loses faith in reality, truth, self, other, and future.

Moreover, the thematic proliferation of the semantics in Scott’s poetic discourse indicates that there are certain aesthetic pauses of stability resulting from the diachronically poetic moment manifested in “there/this/pain/since morning.” Accordingly, the thematic content of the binary chronotope refers to the suggestive coupling of both time and place in the poem, “present/absent/time/manual” in their oppositional tone. However, these informative tempo-spatial tools exist in the poetic spirit of the perspectival communication influenced by the textual explicit implications. These implications are doomed by the thematic impressions and the

poetic structures in the light of the significant phonic speech in “the day before/ but only/early morning/this pain.” As a result, the dynamicity of the oppositional poetic semantics fuses the diversified flashbacks and the expected relationships of proximity and remoteness to expose the poetic split self and the painful presentism of the text itself. In this light, Permana (2016) argued that any poem is a piece of creative art in verse that expresses profound human emotions, thoughts, and feelings which may include diverse binary contradictory pairs. Then, a poem is a human mental and emotional activity composed of words as signifiers that reflect the way of thinking and the nature of feelings.

Through *Maasumaa*, Scott presents diverse binary oppositions to express his own sensible thoughts and emotions, using words such as “morning, day, night, tomorrow, memories, amnesia.” Such suggestive words highlight the human conflict that manifests the oppositional pattern in rejecting the details of modern age and its contradictions (Memories of You Maasumaa, p. 39). In this poem, Scott cries,

Morning, day, night, kiss each other  
Exchanging memories  
If tomorrow comes with amnesia  
I shall be free of you (Memories of You Maasumaa, p. 39)

These contextual contradictions highlight the concepts of (past/present), which Scott illustrates in two contradictory images. One image, “memories,” revolves around the mode of sarcasm, and the other image, “kiss each other,” revolves around the appraised. Here, the poet presents his good character “I” as an antithesis of the other “you,” a mechanism that dominates *Maasumaa*. Such presentation signifies despair that arises from the intersection between past and present or tomorrow, which apparently collide and mock each other. In this sense, such binary oppositions create a great internal tension that intensifies feelings of sadness and fragmentation. In “Ownership,” Scott mentions, “a taste from yesterday” and “a living grave with flesh” to suggest the antitheses of “grave” as life after death and of “yesterday” as everyday/immortality. Thus, the center of this poem revolves around the binaries of life/death and strength/weakness (Scott, 1995, p. 29). Similarly, in “Picture,” Scott centers his poetics on the binary oppositions of “you were once a dream” and “now you are a shadow” to reveal a binary opposition that creates a tension between virtuous past and wicked present or reality and illusion (Scott, 1995, p. 37).

#### 4. The poetics of signs, signifiers, and signifieds

Modern poetics heavily rely on metaphorical signs and codes in any human language. In this sense, Saussure emphasized that any language consists of a system of signs that “are in first instance arbitrary---after which they have become conventions---and have not taken their specific form because of what they mean, but to be different

from other signs” (1983, p. 49). Meanwhile, Derrida extends this difference to divide the sign within itself between the signifier (sound) and the signified (meaning). Every signified becomes a signifier in an infinite chain of signifiers through the play of *différance*. The sign, which exists for Derrida under “erasure,” derives and confers meanings through its “trace” in relation to other signs and not through its relation to the world itself (1978, p. 154). Apparently, the focal concern of both critics is the suggestive signs of language that have a binary body, consisted of signifiers and signifieds that again refer to sound-images and concepts respectively. Meanwhile, the French literary theorist Ronald Barthes defined the signified as “the mental representation of a thing . . . a concept” that requires deconstruction (1977, p. 42).

Based on this ground, the initial point of delivering such poetic anecdotal components starts through a rhetorical trope of implicit reflections; the poet says,

Every sound has something to do with you  
 Waking  
 Wind shaking the door  
 Window curtains slightly moving  
 Water running somewhere (Sounds, p. 10)

Such reflections result from thematic dynamics of cause-effect signifiers as poetic cognitive suppositions that provide suggestive poetic structures. These poetic constructions yield distinct communicative poetics that are aesthetically appealing, rhetorical, and eloquent. Meantime, Scott condenses his metaphorical signifiers of “water, sound, wind, door, window, moving, and shaking,” signifying the sensible poetic discourse of a fragmented spirit. Significantly, Scott creates his own masculine/gender poetics that drag readers into a mysterious scope between the poetic signifiers and signifieds. For Barthes, poetic texts usually practice “infinite deferral of the signified,” for signifiers should not be viewed as “the first stage of meaning” (1977, p. 158). Such mysterious scope creates a suggestive tension between chaos and stability that juxtapose both night/day and past/present. Thus, Scott fuses feelings of instability and uncertainty produced by his poetic and cognitive sensibility of the multiple suggestions that arise from the binary antipodes of language. In this regard, Tyson argued that for deconstruction, “language is dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable, continually disseminating possible meanings” with competing ideologies that people choose to believe (2006, p. 252). For instance, Scott moves from questioning his objectivity and impersonation to questioning his fixed premises and human beliefs,

With human love  
 Grief and happiness often walk together  
 Unfriendly dream

Wayward thoughts  
 Ugly memories about the future (And the Sun Went down before  
 Night, p. 32)

Based on the dynamicity of binary oppositions (as signifiers and signifieds), Scott objectively juxtaposes human concepts of grief and happiness as two signifiers that reflect the poet's internalized feelings of chaos and fragmentation. Moreover, the poet juxtaposes "ugly memories and future" that represent another binary opposition of the past and present or presence and absence to signify the poet's feelings of loss, uncertainty, and instability.

In fact, reading *Maasumaa* enables the readers to contemplate the bifunctional signifying and suggestive poetic discourse, which would signify the core idea of the text based on the rhythmic spirit of language, discourse, and imagery. The poem is charged with poetical controversial language, antithetical indicative words, temp-spatial relationships, and situational, psychological, and emotional features that constitute the thematic semantic poetic discourse. To exemplify, Scott addresses his other,

There is anger too, in love  
 I try to see your face  
 Turning the lights off  
 Sitting in the darkest corner (Sucking on Your Face in the Dark, p.  
 16)

Accordingly, the poem has its own thematic content and poetic structure that signify the concept of the signifying textual aesthetics. Such aesthetics arise from the poem's conflicting aspects of place, time, metatext, and pragmatic verbs that disclose the centers of the poetic binary oppositions of love/anger, lights/darkest, and I/you." Moreover, the poetic spontaneous flow of signifiers as thematic and aesthetic components is embodied in,

Good news travels slowly  
 And bad news ain't got no family  
 they spoke of me  
 as if it were they I had hurt  
 And not you  
 In between the voices  
 Are reasons why (Voices in the Dark, p. 1)

These lines imply descriptive sensible voice of the poetic self that occupies a virtual space in the binary polarities of the poetic hierarchal and anticipatory pronouns in the poetic signifiers that imply the thematic descriptive performance of objects. For instance, the poetic self refers to integrated spatial character and psychological

qualities within the communicative imagist structures as signifiers. All of these signify the poetic themes such as love, hatred, union, separation, humanization, dehumanization as signifieds. In this sense, Saussure stated that there are referential forces which control the relationship between the signifieds and signifiers (1983, p. 75). In addition, the realistic signifier of “news” constitutes a self-tactical performance towards the oppositional signified of the adjective “good,” a process that results in the displacement of the signified in “travels slowly.” Then, the poem moves to the realistic exploration of the antithesis, “bad news,” and to the inevitable metaphorical signifiers epitomized by the signifier “no family.” This instance substantiates the poetic signification of the signifier in “good news,” which is not but a descriptive image manifested in “no family.”

Furthermore, Scott’s poetics suggest that his loneliness is reinforced by the hollowness of human soul that he cannot communicate with. Such poetics are characterized by “typographical experimentation and free and associative structure ... with black idioms” (Pirie, 2000, p. 12). Structurally, Scott uses binary opposites of good news/bad news as signifiers. The first news travels slowly, while the latter travels quickly; this action creates a deep communicative gap between the self and the other and leaves both in hollowness. In turn, this hollowness creates a heinous image in the poet’s psyche. Obviously, Scott’s poetic mask is absent-minded and alienated; the state of loneliness makes it lost “between the voices” for he, eventually, experiences death in life (Scott, 1995, p. 1). The result of such signification is a communicative implication that signifies phonocentric events that foster the modernist reception process to evoke the common language of inspiration, “and not you ... in between the voices.”

Moreover, the process of the poetic suggestive anticipation is embodied in the spirit of the effective experimental space of the signifier pronoun “I” that signifies the metaphorical and referential plot of the signifier, “the voices.” Yet, despite the multifaceted referentiality of this signifier, the poetic self thematically relies on cause-effect equation, “travels...slowly ... bad news ... got no family ... why.” In this light, the poem offers a set of binary oppositions to suggest the confused and fragmented self of the speaker who consumes the binary pronouns of “I,” as the self, and you, as the other, embodying his poetic experience. Such an experience evokes a variety of dialectical semantics of the signifiers of the poetic plot controlled by the poetic self. Subsequently, Scott – or his poetic persona- presents himself to be the ultimate subject, who knows everything about the self and the other, mainly the female. In other words, the pronoun “you” is supplemented to the pronoun “I.” However, both the “I” and the “you” fuse into one entity “we” or “they” when the speaker invites the addressee to change and re-unite: “I called and thanked them for their concern/showing you that I could change” (Rent on Changing, p. 6). Significantly, both “I”

and “you” unite to be the major subject and the source of change for better.

The suggestive poetics of *Maasumaa* foster its structures that generate unstable meanings of the poetic diction of signs, signifiers/signifieds, and binary oppositions. Such visionary poetics derive from language with its displacements and dynamic verbs seem to be temporal constructors of the poet’s mental absence manifested in the signifying images of prisons, loss, torment, passions, and hallucination. These thematic scenes are narratively suggestive in the light of the speaker’s prestigious and concrete poetic character,

So this face  
mine  
acts like a stranger  
changing  
Without my knowing  
It’s only what I see  
on yours  
What you’ve seen      (See You, See Me, p. 21)

Here, readers may inevitably find fused signs or referents of nominal and object-oriented implications of the sounds of objects, supported by the sounds of the textual dominant emotional metaphors, symbols, and figures. Such signifying components form a variety of paradoxical stances that reflect the sensitivity and sensibility of reading and poetic familiarization. Then, the spirit of the poetic discourse in *Maasumaa* seems predisposed to analytical and fantasmic procedures that most likely signify a thematic play on adjectives –both signifiers and signifieds- that attempt to identify the poetic meanings and significances. These significances and meanings arise with no fixed codified limits and with no immediate actualization of the poetic telepathic speech. For example, in the previous lines, the poet distributes the descriptive structures in the pivotal common relations of objects as signifiers such as “face, mine, yours, stranger, I see, you’ve seen, and my knowing”. These structures are formed in analogous and submissive modes deep in meaning and suggestiveness. Stylistically, Scott’s poems “lack sentence structure and seem, like babies perhaps, to cry for one’s attention” (Thomson, 1996, p. 87). Hence, Scott’s poetic structures certainly reflect the thematic and artistic content of the text, manifested in his poetic fragmented self.

Furthermore, the mechanisms of the poetic disclosure adopt a process of signification to express the speaker’s own thoughts and feelings of resistance of oppression, imprisonment, injustice, and self-realization as signifieds. Such mechanisms work to extend the effectiveness of waiting and patience as another set of signifieds; a probability that signifies the mental influence full of poetic moments of suspense. In this regard, Scott also uses indicative signifiers to reshape his own

experience:

It's almost like you are a dream  
 Yesterday, today, and tomorrow  
 Being made of dreaded voices

...

Being chased by grown-up ghost stories (Circles, p. 27)

Here, the poet evokes certain signifiers that summon their binary oppositions, making his poetics dynamic and energetic. Such words include “you, dream, yesterday, today, tomorrow, dreaded voices, grown-up, ghost” that necessitate the presence of their opposites “I, reality, present, past, delighted voices, suppressed, and being” respectively. These signifying binary oppositions reflect the speaker’s internalized feelings of torture, alienation, fragmentation, and weariness. Therefore, Scott’s significant binary oppositions develop “the suggestive power of poetry, but without being prose poetry, its distinction lies in the way it develops and explores tricks of style proper to prose and its syntax” (Thomson, 1996, p. 93).

In fact, deconstruction looks at texts as crucibles of a word play with signs and signifying words through differences. However, the act of deconstructive reading of the subsequent poems of *Maasumaa* guides readers to the keys of interpretive understanding and thematic semantics. For instance, the speaker says in “We can Get beyond This Other Bedroom”; “so dark, grey/white like ... you didn’t answer/He did” (Scott, 1995, p. 35). Here, the poetic discourse provides its own hypothetical content of thematic signifiers as a result of the sensible poetic voices of the ego that violate the scheme of the poetic privacy characterized by the suggestive referentiality of binary oppositions of colors, “dark” and “white.” The first is a signifier of the signifieds fear, confusion, gothicism, alienation, and loss, the second is a signifier of the signifieds purity, purgation, clarity, perfection, and equality. In Scott’s symbolic significance, the colors grey and black replace the color white in “So dark, Grey/white like/It’s way past the midday sun” (“We can Get beyond This Other Bedroom,” p. 35). To Pirie, this play on colors as signifiers suggests the speaker’s internalized protest against “white America and the American dream;” the color black works against the American dream based on racial conflict and oppression. Likewise, the color red, which is the color of blood, signifies the poet’s rejection of wars and destruction. Meanwhile, the color grey suggests the “seeds of doubt,” manifesting “aspects of creation, birth, life, and its complements” (2000, p. 11).

Similarly, “you didn’t answer/He did” implies striking suggestive binary opposites that signify two dynamic behaviors “did” and “didn’t” which work as signifiers of both obedience and compliance of the first act and indifference and ignorance of the second act. Accordingly, both examples of sensible binary oppositions and voices signify the contradictory entities of presence and absence

and a comprehensive state of loss, confusion, and imperfection. Scott's poetry has a voice that is "harsh, angry, aggressive, and lurid in its depiction of Black life and human behavior" (Pirie, 2000, p. 13). Accordingly, through its signification of the juxtaposed binary oppositions, *Maasumaa* manifests a conflict between the hopeful and hopeless, the good and the bad, the lifeful and the lifeless, the delighted and the fragmented, and the repressed and the repressor.

In their significant structural sense, Scott's signifying poetics try to anticipate the meaning within the limits of the possible semantics and modes of narration, interpretation, phatique (phatic?), impression, focalization, questioning, and referentiality. In this concern, Pirie described Scott as "a man with a distinctive spiritual and political message" through using techniques of "rhythmic voice intonations and ... the voice as a jazz instrument" that call for human independence, freedom, peace of mind and body (2000, p. 13). For instance, in "Changing Crosses," Scott says,

So you left me  
For reasons that had nothing to do  
With the coming of Jesus Christ  
you opened your legs  
Another man touched you

(Changing Crosses, p. 36)

Here, the speaker evokes binary opposites of pronouns such as you/me and of the dynamic verbs such as left/coming, suggesting a state of loss of faith, split, and both mental and physical instability. However, the poem's spoken time and the time of poetic imagery always evoke an implied level of functional binary opposites as signifiers manifested in the speaker's poetic monologue:

The music is missing in my life  
Voices without mouths  
Sunlight without warming and shadows  
Thoughts walking in a circle of one  
Bumping into themselves

(Why Am I Pointing at Me, p. 12)

Here, the speaker evokes dynamic images that offer thematic binary opposites of motion, speaking, light, shadow, and loss. In this regard, Barthes has argued that poetic images are "polysemous;" they have signifiers that allude "a floating chain of signifieds" which may appeal to the public readers for deconstruction (1977, pp. 39-40). By way of illustration, words such as missing, without mouths, and walking signify themes of loss, silencing, suppression, and imprisonment as signifieds that the poetic self suffers and endures.

As a poetic mural of modernist sense, *Maasumaa* has its own poetics of continuous intimate communication of thematic signifiers and signifieds that contain

various indicative binary oppositions of different reflections. Clearly, *Maasumaa* is constructed with many binary oppositions like male/female, I/you, walk/sleep, life/death, peace/turmoil, order/chaos, civilized/uncivilized, and present/absent. It is also clear that the first term of each opposition is the privileged one, presented as the center. Through these signifying oppositions, Scott's poetics suggest human effective functionality in life and simulation of modern reality that is full of confusion, fragmentation, and disappointment. In general, the signifying textual relationships in *Maasumaa* remain a source of the convergence of the poem, the self, the world, and the other, as opposing signifiers of certain realistic signifieds. Accordingly, Scott's thematic selectivity of the stimuli of the text's plausible voices relies heavily on realistic signifying components of time, place, discourse, and the other, all of which is evidence that the poem has imagist abstract acts of semantic cloning between objects as signifiers and the productivity of the semantics of the psychological tension and self-repressiveness as signifieds. For instance, in "wings," Scott uses words such as "love," "grief," and "rage" to describe his own human feelings of repression, disappointment, and fragmentation (Scott, 1995, p. 4). He evokes such words as signifiers to bring to mind a variety of signifieds. These signifieds include deprivation, hatred, alienation, depression, and frustration, to mention a few.

Furthermore, the signifier pronoun "I" is problematic because it is contradictory to the pronoun "you," a thing that creates deep tension between the pronoun "I" and its counterpart "you" by means of authoritative (or gender) power. Scott addresses his woman,

I would like to cleanse your heart  
 To wash this new man  
 Out of your life  
 So you see  
 I'm still at the funeral (Stages: Denial, Grief, p. 20)

Here, there are two suggestive sets of words; the first set manifests Scott's problematic signifier of "you" and "I," which signify the other and the self in a competitive manner. The second set manifests Scott's problematic signifier of gender in "woman" and "man," which signify gender conflict and unstable power relationship. In this sense, the British literary critic Catherine Belsey argued that there are two oppositional poles to the signifier pronoun I: the omniscient and the omnipotent. This "I" is a privileged subject that experiences human life at a loftier level of potency than ordinary characters. It also gets dissolved in selfhood which "the phenomenal world, perceived as external and antithetical, either nourishes or constrains" (1980, p. 68). Thus, this antithetical "I" establishes and immunizes itself against "you." Moreover, such meaningful binaries imply a positive tension in the poetic context that condenses its signifiers and deepen its suggestive signifieds.

For instance, the poet mentions the word denial as a signifier for self-confession of weakness to generate a poetic energy that transcends and creates its aesthetic contextual dynamicity.

## 5. Conclusion

In *Maasumaa*, Scott fuses the ordinary intimate with the humanly bewildering in order to suggest that his poetics deeply and significantly imply that human treasures of happiness, independence, and stability are engulfed in the multi-folded mystic life and history. *Maasumaa* poetically expresses the contemporary human experience, which is imbued with realistic events, artistically charged with irony and irrationality, sarcasm and fantasy, and daily details that represent modernist poetic characteristics. Scott's poems characterize the ordinary modern life, with its contradictions and challenges in a strange and contradictory age filled with the paradoxes described by his agonies, pains, and suggestive accelerated dreams. Such contradictory structures constitute suggestive binary oppositions manifested by good and evil, women and men, white and black, the self and the other, justice and injustice, death and life, center and margin, and love and hatred that haunt modern man.

Scott's pattern of oppositions deepens in the textual space, creating signifiers that structure the binary pairs that intersect, collide, and/or fuse to enrich his poetics with multiple signifiers, reflected in the aesthetics of the binary oppositions. Scott invokes the binary oppositions of presence/absence and distant and proximate to suggest a sort of homogeneity of opposites, which dominate his sensible poetic discourse. Binary oppositions constitute a natural phenomenon in human life; they become a part of human vision towards the self and the other. Scott is one of those poets who evoke such binaries to reflect his own problematic experience expressed in *Maasumaa* that embodies a signifying power on society and culture. In this sense, *Maasumaa* presents the poet's chaotic self based on external conflicts with the surrounding society.

Moreover, Scott's binary oppositions express his own human contradictions which include heaven and earth, night and day, masculinity and femininity, east and west, north and south, and attendance and absence. Such oppositional pairs bear certain suggestions and meanings of human values and virtues. They create cosmic oppositional binaries of the individual self and the other/the collective self which stand in a constant conflict between presence and absence. Binary oppositions, as signifiers, have an indicative effective role in the construction of *Maasumaa*, based on the relationship of the poet's self with the other. Scott's self is a representative of other poetic selves. These selves are defied by unstable anxiety that pushes the poetic individual self to oppose love, freedom, pleasure, and tranquility, which imply, for the poet, expressions of an existential feeling of life and a genuine hatred of its

annoyances. Accordingly, Scott constructs his poetics in the light of oppositional pairs of signifiers and signifieds to expose these multiple unstable themes.

Furthermore, *Maasumaa* is poetically and thematically structured on binary oppositions that express human drama, which arouses readers' desire to read and contemplate it. Such a poetic mechanism creates intersections and overlap between the object and its opposite/s as both signifiers and signifieds. Also, these signifying oppositions are suggestive traces that dominate *Maasumaa* and create thematic indeterminacies and instabilities. Therefore, *Maasumaa* is full of contradictions, paradoxes, questions, and controversies, which create questionable texts. However, *Maasumaa* needs further multiple appreciative readings, for it embodies a very profound poetic imagination, which is creative, cultural, artistic, and impressive. Such qualities entail further creative explorations in the light of other critical theories and assumptions.

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