

## MEDIATION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF BINARY HIERARCHY IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*

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**Abstract.** *The paper discusses binary opposition, one of the most explored concepts in post-colonial criticism, as used in *The White Tiger* (2008) – Aravind Adiga's debut novel placed, due to its topic as well as the issues it raises, in the tradition of post-colonial literature. Since the binary theory was first used by the movement of structuralism, and later developed by the famous post-structuralist and post-colonial theorist Jacques Derrida, the aim of this paper will be to implement the structuralist concept of binary opposites, as well as Derrida's binary theory, on the novel. The paper explores mediation as the means of overcoming the polarities, indicated by the structuralist theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss, as well as the deconstruction of the hierarchy created by the system of opposites, suggested by Derrida's theory. In addition to analyzing the primary binary concept, it also explores the parallel secondary analogies which serve to reinforce and further contrast the polarities, as well as their role in the novel. The findings will reveal that the exploration of binary oppositions in literature can benefit in deciphering messages which may sometimes appear too abstract to comprehend: since contexts usually generate their own semantic systems, we can benefit tremendously from interpreting the system of oppositions and demystifying their semantic value.*

**Key words:** *Aravind Adiga, binary hierarchy, mediation, deconstruction.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION: POST-COLONIAL THEORY AND BINARY THEORY

Post-colonial theory and criticism are concerned with most diverse topics, including cultural hybridity, identity, authenticity, race and other issues showing the width and the variety of this field. One issue which seems to stand out from the topics of post-colonialism in regard to its importance and influence on literary theory is, certainly, the issue of binary opposites. Binary theory and post-colonial theory have much in common: the politics of domination and subordination are the absolute opposites in post-colonial theory, influencing all other segments and dividing them into easily recognizable binary

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pairs: freedom/servitude, wealth/poverty, education/illiteracy and many others. Therefore it appears logical that the expansions of these two fields are parallel and similar in many ways.

The aim of this paper is to create a synthesis between the binary concept, a subject so frequently exploited in post-colonial theory, and a novel created by an author emerging from the post-colonial tradition: *The White Tiger* (2008) by Indian-born Aravind Adiga. The theoretical and methodological framework chosen for the novel, the structuralist and the post-structuralist binary concepts with their main representatives in this field, will provide us with ample material suitable for the analysis.

Since there has been a wide-spread tradition of binary opposition in the world's history, with post-colonial theory being just one of the numerous fields of cultural and literary studies where the term may be applied, we will start with a brief summary of the term's history, its meanings and theoretical implications, in order to be able to apply it to a greater extent to this form of literary analysis.

### 1.1. Binary concept in structuralism and Lévi-Strauss's theory of mediation

Binary oppositions are usually defined as semantic structures of opposite meanings within which one word of the pair reinforces our conception of the other. This principle of contrast between two mutually exclusive terms is an important concept of the intellectual movement referred to as structuralism, which perceives such disparities as essential to all language and thought.

For structuralists, meaning is created along the continuum between two binary opposites and at the level of accepted ideologies and ideas. These ideas are constructed by reality and learned through a lot of social practices – but they are seen, however, not as cultural constructs, but as logical and indisputable – too obvious to question. According to structuralists, the human mind perceives the world in terms of those ideological and cultural oppositions, readily accepting culture's dominant ideologies and ideas.

Under the influence of the modern theorists of the dialectic, notably Hegel, French structuralist Lévi-Strauss believed that it is binary opposition that produces the meaning and makes it possible. Also, depending on the story, binary opposition changes, and sometimes, according to his theory, a mediation to solve the problem is necessary. In *Structural Anthropology* (1958) he asserted that “mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution” (1967: 224).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since the position of the mediated form is “halfway between two polar terms” it “must retain something of that duality, namely an ambiguous and equivocal character” (1955: 441).

Therefore, the broad textual network is analyzed through the interpretation of binary opposition and the resultant mediation. By employing Lévi-Strauss's mediation theory we will, after identifying binary opposites and the tension they create, suggest a possible mediation as a method of overcoming the dichotomy.

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss analyzed juxtaposed binary oppositions primarily related to myths and mythical thinking, but the analysis analogously applies to other forms of human thought and activities.

## 1.2. Derrida and his post-structural binary theory: deconstruction and hierarchy of values

While accepting the structural analysis of language, post-structuralism reinterprets the semiotic relationships within language, dismissing the notion of any definite or conclusive meaning. Jacques Derrida, one of the leading figures of post-structuralism, created a type of semiotic analysis which he called "deconstruction". Using this critical method, the reader exposes narrative ambiguities, disputing the conventional connections between the text and the "real world".

Derrida argued that texts embody hierarchies "by which an order is imposed on reality and by which a subtle repression is exercised, as these hierarchies exclude, subordinate, and hide the various potential meanings" (Lamont, 1987: 590). In an attempt to explain the functioning of this "hierarchy of value", he noticed:

An opposition of metaphysical concepts (speech/writing, presence/absence, etc.) is never the face-to-face of two terms, but a hierarchy and an order of subordination. Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to neutralisation: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practise an overturning of the classical opposition, and a general displacement of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of intervening in the field of oppositions it criticizes. (1982: 195)

His theory suggests that there is no stable position or definite reading of a text, only elusive multiple meanings which can be explained by a close textual analysis. It deconstructs the plain and comforting division between "black" and "white", usually ranked as inferior versus superior, revealing the hidden "nasty shades of gray" that "swirl around and infiltrate the neatly constructed opposites" (Wroblewski, 1997: 1).

Using Derrida's theory, we will try to uncover the constraints and the unbalanced polarity of values inherent to the story. By searching into the contrasts underlying the hierarchy, we will focus on the opposing binary poles in order to expose the ways in which the social and economic structures of imperialism are splitting off reality, including the entire western tradition which rests on artificial, arbitrary dichotomous categories.

## 2. BINARY CONCEPT IN *THE WHITE TIGER*

Binary semantic structures are found throughout the novel; therefore, the paper will focus only on the most dominant ones. The primary concept is also followed and paralleled by numerous secondary pairs, which will also be included in the analysis. The first binary opposition that needs to be focused on, due to its dominance and its influence on other polarities in the story, is the opposition between Darkness and Light.

### 2.1. Darkness / Light

The narrator, Balram Halwai, initiates his unusual story with an appeal: "I'm (...) praying to the gods to shine light on my dark story" (2008: 6). This Light/Dark opposition, thus introduced in the opening lines, sets the tone for the rest of the story as a predominant binary pair within the complex binary concept of the novel. The narrator

subsequently further elaborates such an introduced opposition: “Like all good Bangalore stories, mine begins far away from Bangalore. You see, I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness. (...) India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness” (2008: 10), implying the stark realities of a highly stratified postcolonial society and the ideological implications underlying the opposition.

Throughout the course of history, the association of darkness with death and light with life has been one of the most basic symbolic interactions of the human mind. In this vein the dichotomy of Darkness versus Light, existent uninterruptedly throughout the story, is, from its very introduction, reinforced with additional analogies of White versus Black and Life versus Death, multiplying the narrative codes and their semantic values in the story.

The predominating concept in the novel concerned with Black is the river Ganga which, as opposed to the ocean which brings light to the country, “brings darkness to India – the black river. (...) Why, I am talking of Mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth. Everywhere this river flows, that area is the Darkness” (2008: 10). And Black is further related to Death: “Which black river am I talking of – which river of Death, whose banks are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it, suffocating and choking and stunting it?” (2008: 10). The river is also his mother’s burial place, a fact that further strengthens the parallelism of Black and Death: “This mud was holding her back: this big, swelling mound of black ooze. She was trying to fight the black mud; (...) Soon she would become part of the black mound and the pale-skinned dog would start licking her” (2008: 11). It almost seems that, in this highly satirical story, Darkness and Death become its true antagonists.

Contrasted to this darkness a bright image of an island ascends in the distance, a patch of white sand glistening in the sunlight, with Balram wondering whether his mother's soul “had flown there, to that shining place in the river” (2008: 11). But then comes the realization that this black mud of the Ganga is the real god into which everything dies, and decomposes, and is reborn from, and dies into again. “The same would happen to me when I died and they brought me here. Nothing would get liberated here” (2008: 11). Black, therefore Darkness and Death is where he is now. White, therefore Light, and possibly Life, is somewhere in the distance, away from the dark place.

Another association with Black arises from this gloomy landscape. The place where Balram was born is characterized by the Black Fort. And he is the White Tiger, getting ready to leap, to whiten his path, his way into the freedom. This, however, leads to another polarity which will be discussed later in the essay.

The journey from the Darkness into the Light is accompanied by the same Black/White opposites juxtaposing and emphasizing each other. This is how the narrator describes the completion of his taxi-driving training (by means of which he is going to “drive” his way into the Light): “Late every evening, I emerged from under a taxi like a hog from sewage, my face black with grease, my hands shiny with engine oil. I dipped into a Ganga of black – and came out a driver” (2008: 31). And his first real contact with the world of Light (where he is led to by his taxi instructor) is so intense that it appears to him as even more brilliant than the Light itself: “We went through dim streets and markets. We walked for half an hour, while everything around us grew dark – and then it was as if we had stepped out into fireworks” (2008: 32).

With the subsequent advance of the story, with Balram and his master's arrival in Delhi, due to the events that will soon follow, the shade of the colour changes again, and Balram warns the readers: "The story gets much darker from here" (2008: 63), playing with their expectations based on the previously established oppositions.

The Dark/Light motif is repeated again in the episode with Balram driving his masters around Delhi, past a large bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi and the people of India following him, being led from darkness to light. Another scene, not far away from the statue and its promising symbolism, reveals a much more true nature of the promised enlightenment: "These poor bastards had come from the darkness to Delhi to find some light – but they were still in the darkness. (...) We were like two separate cities – inside and outside the dark egg" (2008: 75).

The Light and the Darkness, from the opposite ends of the binary continuum, both pour into one point: Delhi. The Delhi where the masters live "is the bright, modern end of the city", while Old Delhi at the other end is "[f]ull of things the modern world forgot all about – rickshaws, old stone buildings, the Muslims" (2008: 75). There comes an inevitable conclusion: light is not always only light, and darkness is not always only dark, which points to the need to reinterpret the semiotic relationships within language. There are dimensions – spatial, or temporal, or even human, spiritual, where they meet, intersect each other, or simply merge and become one, unbalancing the established values and hierarchies.

In another scene, in a tea shop, while sitting with his little nephew and observing the black water used for cleaning the floor, Balram reflects: "As the black water went past, a voice inside me said, 'But your heart has become even blacker than that, Munna'" (2008: 149) – echoing his inner struggle between good and evil and the solutions he has to made.

Mediation, a complete passage from the world of Darkness into the world of Light is achieved, as we will also see with other binary analogies in this novel, by means of murder. After killing his master, Balram affirms: "I am in the Light now" (2008: 10), confirming his own awareness of the achieved binary resolution.

Having afterwards become a successful businessman in Bangalore, spending most of his time alone, working in his office, he confesses his love for chandeliers (and therefore the Light):

I've got no family anymore. All I've got is chandeliers. (...) Sometimes, in my apartment, I turn on both chandeliers, and then I lie down amid all that light, and I just start laughing. A man in hiding, and yet he's surrounded by chandeliers! There – I'm revealing the secret to a successful escape. The police searched for me in darkness: but I hid myself in light. (2008: 176)

He admits, however, that there are still shades of dark: although he has succeeded in the struggle not to rot in the black mud of Ganga, the murder, he confesses, has darkened his soul, and no skin-whitening creams will clean his hands again.

We can see the way these contrasting Dark/Light, Black/White, Death/Life opposites are gradually building the semantic mosaic of the novel, explaining and intensifying each other, generating messages the words themselves cannot tell. Their metaphorical use (light as the symbol of wealth, civilization, prosperity, and dark as the symbol of poverty, ignorance and misery) only deepens the analogies, creating new lexical meanings which assist in portraying the nation's postcolonial struggle to overcome its contradictions and absurdities. But, before we see how the principles of hierarchy and mediation are shared between them, let us first look at the way they correlate with other binary oppositions in the story.

## 2.2. Master / Servant

Another dominant binary opposition is the one between Master and Servant, reinforced by the analogous binary pairs Family loyalty/Independence and Tiger/Lamb.

The narrator introduces this primary opposition by quoting a Muslim poet Iqbal, whom he considers one of the four best poets in the world, and who has written a poem where he says this about slaves: “They remain slaves because they can’t see what is beautiful in this world” (2008: 24). Balram subsequently comments on this quotation by adding: “Even as a boy I could see what was beautiful in the world: I was destined not to stay a slave” (2008: 24), asserting his resistance to conforming to the culturally accepted hierarchies and polarities.

Moreover, according to Balram’s story, servants in India are much more like slaves than free people, massaging their masters’ feet, allowing themselves to be hit by them (under the pretext that servants expect it from their masters and respect them for it), being considered worth less than their masters’ dogs and exposed to any ridiculous whims their masters might have. He explains to the Chinese Prime Minister he is writing to: “I don’t exactly know how you organize your servants in China. But in India – or, at least, in the Darkness – the rich don’t have drivers, cooks, barbers, and tailors. They simply have servants” (2008: 38). At some moments Master and Servant become one, despite all of the differences between their social status, education level, or wealth, reflecting the servant’s willingness to relinquish his inner self and his entire personality. A servant penetrates both his master’s physical and spiritual being: “And so I saw the room with his eyes; smelled it with his nose; poked it with his fingers – I had already begun to digest my master! (...) From the start, sir, there was a way in which I could understand what he wanted to say, the way dogs understand their masters” (2008: 45; 62).

The idea of an unconditional loyalty to the master as opposed to physical and spiritual freedom is linked to an analogous polarity in the story: the opposition between family loyalty and independence, another recurring motif in the novel. Family loyalty equals loyalty to one’s master, and the other way round, loyalty to the master implies not less loyal servitude to one’s family: “Employers are like mother and father. How can one be angry with them?” (2008: 90). Masters approve of their servants’ fidelity to their families, try hard to encourage that, and sometimes do them an ultimate honour by calling them their own family:

I was tired as hell – but on my lips there was the big, contented smile that comes to one who has done his duty by his master even in the most difficult of moments. (...) He [Ashok] sat down on the table, and said, ‘Sit, sit, make yourself comfortable, Balram. You’re part of the family.’ My heart filled up with pride. I crouched on the floor, happy as a dog, and waited for him to say it again. (2008: 92)

When his masters want him to take the blame for his mistress’s killing a boy on the road, Balram is deeply hurt, but he still takes the burden as all loyal servants and family members do. Speaking on behalf of the majority of Indian servants, Balram bewails the fact that they – servants – have left the villages, but the masters still own them, both their body and soul. And if the master or a member of his family kills someone on the road and blames the servant, the servant’s family doesn’t protest. It’s quite the opposite. They will actually “go about bragging” that their boy “has taken the fall”, gone to jail for his employer, “loyal as a dog”, a “perfect servant” (2008: 95).

Trying to break off these shameful chains of servitude also means destroying one's family, which masters are perfectly aware of and which they are counting on when treating their servants worse than their dogs. "The trustworthiness of servants is the basis of the entire Indian economy", Balram reminds the reader. "A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent – as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way – to exist in perpetual servitude, a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse" (2008: 96).

He also wonders why the Rooster Coop (a metaphor for such an efficient servitude system) exists: "How does it trap so many millions of men and women so effectively? (...) [C]an a man break out of the coop? (...) What would his life be like?" (2008: 97), and concludes that the dignity and the greatness of the nation, the mutual love and sacrifice within the Indian family, is the logic behind their insane determination to remain tied to the coop. Moreover, "only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed – hunted, beaten, and burned alive by the masters – can break out of the coop. That would take no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature. It would, in fact, take a White Tiger" (2008: 97).

Balram's subordinate, but still courageous attitude towards his master is such characterized by one of his fellow servants: "That fellow has balls (...) If all of us were like that, we'd rule India, and they would be polishing our boots" (2008: 98). Devoted to the bone. "They don't make servants like you anymore" (2008: 101).

When his master's wife, Pinky Madam, is gone, Balram assumes the duty of being much of a wife to him. He makes sure his master eats and sleeps well, serving him and cleaning up. His dependence is complete and seemingly irreversible: "When the master's life is in chaos, so is the servant's" (2008: 102).

A few open-hearted, simple and tender sentences that follow summarize the master-servant relationship between Balram and Ashok, and prepare the reader to forgive the soon-to-be crime perpetrator entirely, the way he is readily forgiving his master:

He was so powerless, so lost, my heart just had to melt. Whatever anger I had against him for trying to pin Pinky Madam's hit-and-run killing on me passed away that evening. (...) I forgave him entirely. (...) Like Krishna I philosophized – I joked – I even sang a song – all to make Mr. Ashok feel better.

Baby, I thought, rubbing his back as he heaved and threw up one more time, you big, pathetic baby. (2008: 103–104)

However, there are moments which painfully remind him of his inferior, subordinate position and his complete dependence on his master. In the episode where Balram insists on massaging Ashok's feet, despite his master's objections and calling him stupid, Balram later reflects upon his silly behavior, concluding that the reason for his almost instinctive servitude lay in the fact that "the desire to be a servant had been bred into me: hammered into my skull, nail after nail, and poured into my blood, the way sewage and industrial poison are poured into Mother Ganga" (2008: 107), adding to the novel's criticism of India's highly hierarchical caste system.

In relation to the final outcome of the story, underlying the whole concept of the binary pyramid is the opposition between the Tiger and the Lamb, a direct reversal to the primary Master/Servant opposites. The servant, his position suggesting weakness, becomes the White Tiger, a "creature that gets born only once every generation in the

jungle” (2008: 156), symbolizing Balram’s exceptional nature and the uniqueness of his struggle. The master, who is supposed to symbolize strength, becomes the Lamb, just an easy prey, “weak, helpless, absentminded, and completely unprotected by the usual instincts that run in the blood of a landlord” (2008: 77), affirming the novel as an allegory of the ferocious class struggle.

Mediation in this Master/Servant, Family loyalty/Independence, Tiger/Lamb context is achieved again by Balram’s killing of his master, by means of which he becomes independent, ceases to be a servant and becomes a master to his employees. This also means breaking bonds with his family, perhaps even their sacrifice to the revengeful victim’s family. But Balram shows no remorse. On the contrary:

Yet even if all my chandeliers come crashing down to the floor – even if they throw me in jail and have all the other prisoners dip their beaks into me – even if they make me walk the wooden stairs to the hangman’s noose – I’ll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master’s throat.

I’ll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant. (2008: 180)

The narrator’s double guilty conscience is just one manifestation of the splitting off of the entire binary context his story is based on, suggesting that life is much more complicated than mere division into binaries, contradicting culture’s dominant ideas and ideologies.

### **2.3. Big Bellies / Small Bellies**

The final opposition that will be discussed in this essay is the one between the two castes: the “Men with Big Bellies” and the “Men with Small Bellies”, paralleled with the race-based opposites of Creamy-skinned and Dark-skinned men.

The country, when it was at its height, the narrator explains, “was like a zoo. A clean, well kept, orderly zoo” (2008: 35). And then, on the day the British left,

the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies. (...) To sum up – in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies.

And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up. (2008: 36)

The “Men with Small Bellies” caste produces half-baked men, taken out from school by their families to pay back the family’s debts, dying in the black mud. Again, the mediation is achieved through Balram’s killing his master, by means of which he becomes free and rich and grows a big belly at last.

Another issue concerning dominance and subordination is raised here, and it is the issue of races. Having seen some golden-haired foreigners in Bangalore, the protagonist becomes convinced that the white people are leaving the country: “All of them look so emaciated – so puny. You’ll never see one of them with a decent belly” (2008: 171), and he finishes with a prediction:



White men will be finished within my lifetime. There are blacks and reds too, but I have no idea what they're up to – the radio never talks about them. My humble prediction: in twenty years' time, it will be just us yellow men and brown men at the top of the pyramid, and we'll rule the whole world.

And God save everyone else. (2008: 171)

By dissolving binary distinction the text is resisting the dominant reading and creating alternative, resistant meanings which suggest that “reality” is not a definite description of the world, but is constructed by social conventions and social practices, undermining a person's perspective of the class struggle throughout history.

### 3. HIERARCHY AND MEDIATION OF THE BINARY CONCEPT IN THE NOVEL

The hierarchy, suggested by Derrida's binary theory, is obvious within all binary pairs in the novel, with one binary pole more highly valued than the other in today's society: Light/Darkness, Master/Servant, White/Brown race, etc. These pairs, therefore, have unbalanced relationships, and the “privileging” half of each binary pair is, naturally, what the protagonist is aiming at. The idea of rich, “creamy-skinned” society, being historically, and stereotypically, marked as positive – contrary to the idea of poor, dark-skinned society marked as negative – is the source of his entire motivation and all his actions in the novel.

Derrida's deconstruction theory is warning us not to see these labels as real, as they can subsist only as cultural ideas, acting to emphasize judgmental and hierarchical ways of thinking. Through Balram's system of values and ideas, we can see how binary pairs can be remarkably compelling in reinforcing and maintaining the society's models of thinking, as he sees them as entirely natural, with all culturally marked associations that shape and create meaning. He has no doubt in creating the meaning of light versus the meaning of dark, or the implications of being a master versus the implications of being a servant. He is shaping their meaning in contrast to the meaning of the other half of each binary pair.

Lévi-Strauss's binary theory asserts that a binary opposition can be mediated by advancing a solution to the opposition created by the binary. The mediation to the Darkness/Light binary opposition is in the protagonist's replacing his life in the Darkness with a life in Light, no matter how real or true this light may be (the uncertainty suggested by Lévi-Strauss's positing the mediated form “halfway between two polar terms”<sup>2</sup>, as well as by Derrida's theory). In the case of Master/Servant polarity the nature of mediation is quite different; here the binary opposition is mediated by the servant's action and the final mediation is achieved by the main character's killing the master, by means of which he ceases to be a servant and becomes rich. Mediation is changed from the space dimension (mediating between places of darkness and places of light) to the time dimension (mediating between life and death). Still, by the protagonist's own confession, the murder has darkened his soul, proving the mediated form again as retaining “an ambiguous and equivocal character”<sup>3</sup> of the binary duality.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1.1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Let us now go back to Derrida's theory and explore how the mediation chosen for the story affects the overall structure of the oppositions. The surface structure of the story suggests that when the main character, the son of a rickshaw-puller, matures and takes full responsibility for his life, the most he can achieve as a half-baked man in the Indian darkness is to lead an honest life of servitude to his master and a life of slavery to his own matriarchate family. Here the binary oppositions of Darkness versus Light, Master versus Servant and High versus Low castes are posited. The story then "deconstructs" the expectations by placing them within a context. Contrary to the original assumptions produced by the surface layer of the text, the novel finishes with the protagonist's taking just the reverse place to the one he occupied at the beginning of the novel. In addition, the deep structure of the novel suggests that these values might not be that grand: we could hardly see the protagonist's transformation into the new life as ultimately positive, bearing in mind its cost – Balram's sacrificing his family and the solitude he experiences in his new life: "A White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous" (2008: 169). Moreover, Balram Halwai, who emerges into the light from the filthy swamp of crime and corruption, could hardly be considered the "White Tiger" any more: his "whiteness" no longer symbolizes innocence and purity; it remains instead, by the end of the novel, only as an ironic reminder of the absurdities and the contradictions created by any dividing systems and hierarchies.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Correlating the oppositions of Darkness and Light, Master and Servant and those within castes and races, we discover that they are, along with other binary pairs created by them, thematically intertwined and cross-referential. The novel is constructed on the nervous tension induced by such pairs, whose conflicts pervade every segment of the narrative. The two poles within each pair interact with each other, balancing and intensifying the opposed pole, generating a series of analogous oppositions in the text. Each binary pole is indispensable from the other pole, participating in expanding the structure of the novel. Indeed, the overall meaning of the novel is based on the binary oppositions that establish the system, with the Darkness/Light analogy as the focal point of reference.

In addition to the structuralist, rather straightforward, use of binary opposition wherein the meaning is shaped by the existence of the word's binary opposite, and Levi Strauss's theory of mediation which helps to find the solution to the binary tension, Derrida's theory of binary hierarchy asserts that these pairs exist not only as simple opposites, but rather as unbalanced structures whose meanings are culturally constructed within a complex hierarchical system. Finally, Derrida's deconstruction theory exposes these hierarchical pairs of opposites to a deeper analysis, showing the way their meanings change below the surface level depending on the cultural values we assign to them.

With all these binary polarities, mediation solutions and hierarchical layers that underlie the framework of the novel, Adiga builds up a structure of a master binary concept which assists us, through defining the interconnection of these binary terms, to comprehend the novel's overall subject matter. Furthermore, the discovery of how this principle functions certainly attributes significance to this text. In this way, the binary concept in *The White Tiger* helps us to discover the hidden values of the contrasted

oppositions and their deeper meanings, of the darkness indicated by light and the paradox of servitude, the role of a victim, a lamb, of a master position. It cunningly leads us towards the suggested truth of the ruling castes and races whose role appears to be changing.

Through a synthesis of these prominent binary theories and Adiga's novel (which has proved to be such a good subject for such an analysis), this paper hopefully demonstrates that many of our society's most enduring ideas are maintained and reinforced by the fact that their meanings are created by the workings of binary opposition. In literature, as well as in other fields of human activities, the exposure of thematic binary oppositions is one of the fundamental interpretive strategies. They help our understanding of the work of art and the subtle machinations of the world, revealing the profound power of language.

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### **MEDIJACIJA I DEKONSTRUKCIJA BINARNE HIJERARHIJE U BELOM TIGRU ARAVINDA ADIGE**

*Rad se bavi binarnom opozicijom, jednim od najistraživanijih koncepata u postkolonijalnoj kritici, odnosno načinom na koji se ovaj koncept koristi u Belom Tigru (2008) – romanesknom prvencu Aravinda Adige koji se zbog svoje teme i pitanja koja pokreće smešta u tradiciju postkolonijalne književnosti. Pošto se binarnom teorijom prvobitno bavio pokret strukturalizma, a kasnije je razvio čuveni poststrukturalistički i postkolonijalni teoretičar Žak Derida, cilj ovog rada biće da primeni strukturalistički koncept binarnih opozicija, kao i Deridinu binarnu teoriju, na ovaj roman. Istražuje se medijacija kao sredstvo za prevazilaženje polariteta, na koje ukazuje strukturalistički teoretičar Klod Levi-Stros, kao i dekonstrukcija hijerarhije koju stvara sistem opozicija, a koju predlaže Deridina teorija. Pored analiziranja primarnog binarnog koncepta, takođe se istražuju paralelne sekundarne analogije koje služe da naglase i dodatno kontrastiraju polaritete, kao i njihova uloga u romanu. Zaključci će otkriti da istraživanje binarnih opozicija u književnosti može doneti koristi kroz dešifrovanje poruka koje mogu ponekad izgledati previše apstraktne da se razumele: pošto konteksti obično generišu sopstvene semantičke sisteme, možemo imati ogromne koristi od tumačenja sistema opozicija i demistifikovanja njihove semantičke vrednosti.*

Ključne riječi: Aravind Adiga, binarna hijerarhija, medijacija, dekonstrukcija.