



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***TRANSCULTURATION IN  
THE GIFT OF RAIN AND THE CALLIGRAPHER'S DAUGHTER***

***NG WEN LEE***

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**TRANSCULTURATION IN  
*THE GIFT OF RAIN AND THE CALLIGRAPHER'S DAUGHTER***

By

**NG WEN LEE**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

**December 2015**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

**TRANSCULTURATION IN  
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By

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**December 2015**

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This study undertakes the reading of complex interactions between various cultures portrayed in two novels, Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain* (2009) and Eugenia Kim's *The Calligrapher's Daughter* (2010). While the growing body of research on *The Gift of Rain* focuses on the protagonist, Philip Hutton's traumatic condition, his Chinese identity, and his ambiguous identity, this study devotes particular attention to the complexity of interactions between various cultures practised by Philip. On the other hand, although reviews on *The Calligrapher's Daughter* have highlighted the protagonist, Han Najin's namelessness state, collision of cultures between tradition and modernity, and her conflicting emotions towards Christianity, the complex interactions between various cultures practised by Najin appear to have been neglected. This study then aims to address these gaps by applying the concept of transculturalism to analyse the processes of acquiring foreign cultures and incorporating the foreign cultures into traditional cultures experienced by Philip and Najin. In other words, this study employs the concept of transculturalism, which stresses the transitional process from one culture to another, to examine multicultural depictions in the selected novels. Scholars, such as Khan, Tiwari, Sheoran and C. S. Tan who have examined multicultural depictions in various literary texts, have found that migration or colonisation leads to multicultural circumstances, which in turn cause certain ethnic groups to lose their cultures and identities; in other words, experience identity crisis or search for self-identity. Hence, the multicultural circumstances depicted are perceived as negative phenomena. However, this study has found that by examining the interactions between various cultures, rather than focusing on the end products such as portrayals of hybridity, the positive sides of multicultural depictions could be revealed. In the first stage of transculturation process, the acculturation stage, both protagonists, Philip and Najin, acquire foreign cultures due to cultural marginalisation. In the second stage, the deculturation stage, Philip and Najin lose as well as rediscover their traditional cultures. Then in the final stage, the neoculturation stage, they struggle to incorporate the foreign cultures they have acquired into their traditional cultures in order to form new cultural practices. These three stages in the transculturation process experienced by Philip and Najin show that the new cultural practices they have created are made up

of both their traditional cultures and the foreign cultures they have acquired. This means that Philip and Najin do not totally lose their traditional cultures and identities. Therefore, this study concludes that multicultural depictions in the two selected novels could be read positively, provided that the interactions between various cultures, which resulted in the incorporation of foreign cultures into traditional cultures, are examined.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**TRANSKULTURASI DALAM NOVEL  
*THE GIFT OF RAIN* DAN *THE CALLIGRAPHER'S DAUGHTER***

Oleh

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Kajian ini menggarap pembacaan mengenai interaksi kompleks antara pelbagai budaya yang digambarkan dalam dua novel, iaitu, *The Gift of Rain* (2009) oleh Tan Twan Eng dan *The Calligrapher's Daughter* (2010) oleh Eugenia Kim. Walaupun kebanyakan penyelidikan yang telah dijalankan ke atas novel *The Gift of Rain* telah ditumpukan kepada watak protagonis, iaitu keadaan trauma Philip Hutton, identiti Cinanya, dan identiti ambiguinya, kajian ini memberi perhatian yang khusus kepada kompleksiti interaksi antara pelbagai budaya yang diamalkan oleh Philip. Sebaliknya, walaupun ulasan tentang *The Calligrapher's Daughter* telah menonjolkan watak Han Najin yang ketanpaan nama, pertembungan budaya antara tradisi dan moden, dan emosi Najin yang bercanggah terhadap agama Kristian, interaksi kompleks antara pelbagai budaya yang diamalkan oleh Najin telah diabaikan. Oleh sebab itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani jurang ini dengan mengaplikasikan konsep transkulturalisme untuk menganalisis proses bagi memperoleh budaya asing dan menyerapkan budaya asing tersebut ke dalam budaya tradisional yang dialami oleh Philip dan Najin. Dengan kata lain, kajian ini menggunakan konsep transkulturalisme yang menekankan proses peralihan dari satu budaya ke budaya yang lain untuk mengkaji gambaran pelbagai budaya dalam novel yang dipilih. Cendekiawan, seperti Khan, Tiwari, Sheoran dan C. S. Tan yang telah mengkaji gambaran pelbagai budaya dalam pelbagai teks sastera mendapati bahawa penghijrahan atau penjajahan membawa kepada keadaan pelbagai budaya yang seterusnya menyebabkan kumpulan etnik tertentu kehilangan budaya dan identiti mereka; dengan kata lain, mengalami krisis identiti atau pencarian identiti diri. Oleh yang demikian, keadaan pelbagai budaya yang digambarkan dianggap sebagai fenomena negatif. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini mendapati bahawa dengan mengkaji interaksi antara pelbagai budaya daripada memfokuskan pada produk akhir, seperti gambaran unsur hibrid, sifat positif mengenai gambaran pelbagai budaya boleh didedahkan. Pada peringkat pertama proses transkulturasi, peringkat akulturasi, kedua-dua protagonis, Philip dan Najin, memperoleh budaya asing disebabkan peminggiran budaya. Pada peringkat kedua, peringkat penyahkulturasi, Philip dan Najin kehilangan serta mencari semula budaya tradisional mereka. Kemudian, dalam peringkat akhir, peringkat neokulturasi, mereka berusaha untuk menyerapkan budaya asing ke dalam

budaya tradisional mereka untuk membentuk amalan budaya baru. Ketiga-tiga peringkat proses transkulturasi yang dialami oleh Philip dan Najin menunjukkan bahawa amalan budaya baru yang dibentuk oleh mereka terdiri daripada kedua-dua unsur, iaitu, budaya tradisional dan budaya asing. Hal ini bermakna Philip dan Najin tidak kehilangan sepenuhnya budaya tradisional dan identiti mereka. Oleh sebab itu, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa gambaran pelbagai budaya dalam kedua-dua novel terpilih boleh dibaca secara positif, melainkan, sekiranya interaksi antara pelbagai budaya yang mengakibatkan penyerapan budaya asing ke dalam budaya tradisional dikaji.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 15th December 2015 to conduct the final examination of Ng Wen Lee on her thesis entitled “Transculturation in *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher’s Daughter*” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter establishes the outline of the whole thesis. The background of the study is provided to introduce this study before foregrounding the gaps the study aims to address in the problem statement. This is followed by the specifications of the three objectives of the study. Then, the conceptual framework which is used to analyse the two selected novels is discussed. After that, the significance as well as the scope and limitations of this study are presented. Lastly, this chapter closes with the definitions of the key terms used in this study.

#### 1.2 Background of the Study

In his book, *The Long Revolution*, Williams asserts that, from a social perspective, culture is “a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” (57). He further explains that a culture is made up of two aspects (Williams, “Culture is Ordinary” 93). The first aspect is the known directions and meanings, which its members are trained to, while the second aspect is the new meanings and observations, which are offered to and tested on its members. These two ordinary processes of the human minds and human societies cause the nature of culture to always be both “traditional and creative” (Williams, “Culture Is Ordinary” 93). This is evident as one meets foreigners, migrates to a new country, encounters a new idea or belief, or experiences colonisation.

The culture of the Chinese, who have migrated to Malaya and experienced the British and Japanese occupations, is a good example that exhibits the two aspects of culture: traditional and creative. Trocki points out that the Chinese, who have migrated to Penang and Malacca before the British arrived, have worked with Portuguese traders, Dutch burgers, and Malay chiefs (9). B. K. Cheah notes that, after centuries, these Straits Chinese assimilate a certain amount of Malay culture and language into their traditional Chinese dress and their language (13). Hence, as the British occupies Malaya, it is natural that these Straits Chinese also adopt the British culture. This is apparent, as noted by Wu (qtd. in Trocki 9-10), in that the Straits Chinese are able to speak English. Furthermore, the Straits Chinese also become the main allies of the British. They help in managing and governing the Chinese who have migrated to Malaya during the British occupation. Later, the Japanese rule in Malaya also creates a generation influenced by the Japanese cultural values (B. K. Cheah 39). Thus, it is clear that these Straits Chinese’s traditional Chinese culture interacts with the foreign cultures they come across. This causes them to incorporate foreign cultures into their traditional Chinese culture to create new cultural practices. These new cultural

practices show that the traditional aspect of these Straits Chinese culture is their own Chinese tradition while the creative aspect of their culture is the foreign cultures that they have encountered through migration and colonisation.

In addition, the culture of the Koreans who have converted to Christianity as well as experienced the Japanese occupation also shows the traditional and creative aspects of culture. C. Kim writes that Koreans convert to Catholic Christianity after Korean scholars in China, who are exposed to Jesuits' religious texts, bring these texts back to Korea (269). However, this religion is suppressed until the reformation is launched. Beasley delineates that, after Japan successfully forces Korea to open three ports for trade, Japanese influence begins to become established in Korea (44). This leads King Gojong to promote reformation, as indicated by Ebrey and Walthall (373). As a result, missionaries gain entry into Korea and bring in Western institutions. This enables the missionaries to spread Christianity and convert Koreans. More importantly, modern schools formed by missionaries enable Korean women to be educated and promoted with a certain degree of gender equality (Ebrey and Walthall 310). Later, during the Japanese occupation of Korea, Japanese culture is also promoted. In *The Making of Modern Korea*, Buzo states that Japan emphasises cultural assimilation through numerous methods (35). Hence, it is apparent that these Korean Christians' traditional Korean culture interacts with the foreign cultures they come in contact with. This leads them to incorporate foreign cultures into their traditional Korean culture to form new cultural practices. This, in turn, shows that the traditional aspect of these Korean Christians' culture is their own Korean tradition while the creative aspect of their culture is the foreign cultures they have encountered through religion and colonisation.

By looking at the two cultures above, it is evident that languages, customs, norms and standards of different cultures intertwine and form harmonious new cultural practices. The newly established cultural practices contain not only the original culture of the people but also the culture of the new country they settle in, a culture advocates by a new religion as well as the culture introduced by colonisers. Hence, people who have migrated, converted into another religion, and experienced colonisation have highly diversified cultural practices. Their cultural practices are not only different from their own past but also vary from the original inhabitants of the country they have settled in and those who continue to practice traditional religions as well as those of the colonisers. Thus, the interactions between one's traditional culture and the foreign cultures one encounters, which are illustrated in the process of acquiring foreign culture and incorporating the foreign culture into one's traditional culture to create new cultural practices, are unique and worth investigating. Therefore, the present study aims to address this topic.

More specifically, the present study investigates the interactions between various cultures portrayed in the two novels - *The Gift of Rain* (2009) by Tan Twan Eng and *The Calligrapher's Daughter* (2010) by Eugenia Kim - by using the concept of transculturalism. This concept is chosen because it stresses the process of transition from one culture to another (Ortiz 102). The concept of transculturalism divides the transitional process of cultures into three stages: acculturation, deculturation and

neoculturation. Since the concept of transculturalism is compatible with the aims of this study, the conceptual framework of this study is derived from it.

Furthermore, the two novels, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, are selected for this study for two main reasons. First of all, both novels are set in the Japanese occupation period. *The Gift of Rain* is set from shortly before the Japanese occupation of Malaya begins (1939) until fifty years after the Japanese occupation ends (1995), while *The Calligrapher's Daughter* is set from the beginning of the Japanese occupation of Korea (1915) until the Japanese surrender (1945). Another reason is that both novels vividly depict cultural conflicts, which resulted in amalgamation of traditional and foreign cultures. The author of the novel *The Gift of Rain*, Tan Twan Eng, is a Straits Chinese born in Penang, Malaysia. However, as McEwen reports, he can only speak and understand limited Mandarin. He is, however, very comfortable with English and can speak the Hokkien dialect of Chinese. These may be the reasons he creates a half-Chinese, half-English protagonist named Philip Hutton. In a book review, Willse comments that Philip is uncertain of his position in his English family and with the larger expatriate culture of Penang. When he is sixteen, he befriends Hayato Endo, a Japanese who rents an island near his house. They become close friends and develop a student-teacher relationship. Philip shows Endo around Penang as well as other places in Malaya while Endo teaches him *aikido*, Japanese culture and the Japanese language. Thus, Endo gives Philip a sense of purpose, place and grounding. He also enables Philip to reconcile his Chinese identity and culture with his English one. In spite of this, Philip discovers that Endo is a Japanese spy and he himself has indirectly become a traitor. However, Philip continues to work for the Japanese during the Japanese occupation of Malaya. This is because he wants to save his family and provide information to the Chinese community. Hence, in *The Gift of Rain*, English and Chinese cultures, which are Philip's traditional cultures, intertwine with Japanese culture, which is the foreign culture Philip encounters, to create new cultural practices.

On the other hand, the author of the novel *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, Eugenia Kim, is an American Korean born in the United States of America. She declares in an online magazine article, "The Real Family Behind 'The Calligrapher's Daughter'", that the novel is written based on her mother's life. Despite this, Eugenia Kim can only speak limited Korean while her mother can only speak limited English. This causes Eugenia Kim to have difficulties in understanding her mother's speech. As a result, Eugenia Kim declares, when she is interviewed by Sonya Green, that she fictionalises her mother's life and creates the protagonist, Han Najin, the daughter of a traditional Korean calligrapher. Najin is not a child of mixed parentage but she is a Christian. Furthermore, she is different from usual Korean females at that period of time in that she strongly does not want to be bounded by traditions. She escapes from an arranged marriage planned by her father by becoming the princess's companion with the help of her mother. She also pursues education by enrolling in a school and a university run by missionaries. After graduating from university, she works as a teacher in a school but still thinks of continuing her graduate studies in America. Later, Najin falls in love and marries a Korean who is strongly influenced by western culture. The whole novel depicts the conflict between modern possibilities and old traditions faced by Najin and how she struggles throughout the Japanese invasion period. Thus, in *The*

*Calligrapher's Daughter*, Korean culture, which is Najin's traditional culture, intertwines with western culture, the foreign culture introduced to her, to establish new cultural practices. Hence, it is apparent that both novels, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, give vivid portrayals of how the protagonists experience cultural conflicts before incorporating foreign cultures into their traditional cultures.

In short, this study aims to investigate the complex interactions between traditional and foreign cultures depicted in the two novels, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Both *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter* are novels that involve a great deal of debates and discussions in various aspects. On the one hand, various issues in *The Gift of Rain* have been debated by scholars; on the other hand, numerous issues in *The Calligrapher's Daughter* have been discussed by reviewers.

Scholars have debated a number of issues in *The Gift of Rain*. One of the most prominent issues is the protagonist's, Philip, traumatic condition. Goh has analysed Philip's traumatic condition in relation to his memories, the narrative style of the novel as well as the element of reincarnation (Goh, "Hurting from Remembered Pain"; Goh, "The Japanese Occupation"). However, Goh does not study the effects of trauma on Philip's cultures and identities. Although Philip's identities are examined by C. S. Tan, he only focuses on how Philip defends his Chinese identity under Japanese hegemony. C. S. Tan finds that Philip revisits his ancestral roots, Chinese culture, religion and history to defend his Chinese identity against Japanese hegemony (243). This shows that even though C. S. Tan examines Philip's Chinese identity and culture, he only perceives these as Philip's act of defending his Chinese identity. This study proposes to investigate Philip's cultures and identities in a different perspective, which is to examine how Japanese culture drives Philip to rediscover his Chinese culture as well as Chinese and British identities. More importantly, this study argues that it is crucial to discover why Philip continues to practise Chinese, British and Japanese cultures when he is resisting Japanese hegemony. Such ambiguity in Philip's cultures and identities has been pointed out by Holden. Since Philip is a half-British, half-Chinese, Holden states that Philip is a racially ambiguous protagonist ("Communities and Conceptual Limits" 65). Also, he describes Philip as morally ambiguous because, even though Philip saves many people's lives, he cooperates with the Japanese (Holden, "Global Malaysian Novels" 48, 56). These ambiguities foreground the marginalisation Philip faces. However, Holden has only pointed out Philip's marginalised identity, which is the portrayal of his identities at the beginning of the story and during Japanese occupation. In S. Hall's article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", he claims that,

Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. (S. Hall 225)

It is evident that cultural identity is not static. It is not only affected by the historical events experienced but also highly influenced by the cultures practiced. Hence, this study proposes that Philip's identities undergo transformation after fifty years the Japanese occupation ends. In short, although debates on *The Gift of Rain* are growing, there is still a prevalent lack of scholarship focusing on the complex interactions between Philip's traditional and foreign cultures, which influence his identities. Past studies conducted on *The Gift of Rain* have not addressed how Japanese culture drives Philip to rediscover his traditional cultures and identities, why he continues to practise both his traditional cultures and the Japanese cultures when he is resisting Japanese hegemony, the effect of trauma on Philip's cultures and identities, and the changes of Philip's identities. In order to address these gaps, the complex interactions between Philip's traditional and foreign cultures are examined by analysing the process Philip acquires foreign culture and incorporates the foreign culture into his traditional cultures.

On the other hand, reviewers have discussed various issues in *The Calligrapher's Daughter*. One of the main issues discussed is the protagonist's, Najin, namelessness state. Khullar states that the story begins with a young girl wanting a name for herself (98). A review of the novel published on the Historical Novel Society's website reasons that the protagonist is not named by her father because she is born when Japan first occupy Korea. Later, she is known as Najin, which is the name of her mother's birthplace. While the reason Najin is not named by her father is discussed, the reason she acquires western culture and abandons her Korean traditional culture has not been revealed. Additionally, even though the collision of cultures between tradition and modernity experienced by Najin has been discussed by Formy-Duval, Steinberg, Sethi, Khullar and Oh, these reviewers do not clarify how the interactions between the traditional and foreign cultures practised by Najin influence her identities. Furthermore, Christianity is also a prominent theme in the novel. Khullar, Steinberg and Formy-Duval discuss the coexistence of Christianity and Buddhism or Confucian beliefs and rituals in the novel. However, they do not perceive Christianity as an element of western culture. This study argues that this viewpoint is important. Although Christianity is Najin's source of modernity and education, she questions Christian beliefs and does not take The Bible as guidance to salvation (Formy-Duval). This is why Steinberg states that Najin has conflicting emotions towards the religion. By considering Christianity as a western cultural element, this study proposes to analyse the process Najin incorporates western culture into her traditional culture in relation to her conflicting emotions towards Christianity. In brief, even though discussions on *The Calligrapher's Daughter* are emerging, there is still a lack of scholarship centring on the complex interactions between Najin's traditional and foreign cultures, which influence her identities. Reviews of *The Calligrapher's Daughter* have not discussed the reason Najin acquires foreign culture and abandons traditional culture, the changes of Najin's identities, and the relation between her conflicting emotions towards Christianity and her incorporation of western culture into her traditional culture. In order to address these gaps, the complex interactions between Najin's traditional and foreign cultures are examined by analysing the process Najin acquires foreign culture and incorporates the foreign culture into her traditional culture.

In order to investigate the complex interactions between traditional and foreign cultures of the two protagonists, a concept that looks into the process of acquiring foreign cultures and incorporating the foreign cultures into traditional cultures must be applied in this study. Concepts such as hybridity, multiculturalism and the melting pot have been evaluated by Alvarez (43). By comparing these concepts with the concept of transculturalism, she finds that hybridity models only highlight the harmonious end result of cultures while the concept of transculturalism highlights both the tenuous relationships between cultures as well as the painful negotiation process (212). Thus, the concept of transculturalism is employed in this study.

A number of scholars have, however, applied the concept of transculturalism in their literary studies. Nevertheless, these literary studies are conducted on Latin American literary works. Scholars, such as Shaw, Alvarez, Hambuch, and Read, for example, have used the concept of transculturalism to analyse the depictions of Latin American cultures and have found that transculturation takes place in Latin America due to colonisation and post-independence developments. This is why both European and North American cultures are found to have been introduced to Latin Americans. However, previous scholars have argued instead that Latin Americans do not abandon their own cultures but has transformed Latin American languages and cultures using a transcultural approach. This leads them to conclude that the concept of transculturalism, which allows them to examine the cultural conflicts between various cultures, is suitable for analysing Latin American literary texts. This study argues that the concept of transculturalism is not only suitable for analysing Latin American literary works but also Asian literary works.

In recent years, Asian literary texts have also been studied using the concept of transculturalism. Pereira-Ares, Kaur, and Thornber, for instance, have employed the concept of transculturalism to analyse Asian texts and found that languages and cultural traditions are translated and negotiated as various cultures meet. This condition destroys national and cultural barriers. Thus, Pereira-Ares concludes that transcultural identity is produced as one experiences transculturation (486). Since the concept of transculturalism is compatible with Asian cultures, this study employs the concept to analyse two novels that are set in Asia, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*.

Since there is a lack of scholarship focusing on the interactions between traditional and foreign cultures of Philip and Najin in the respective novels, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, the process of acquiring foreign cultures and incorporating foreign cultures into traditional cultures to create new cultural practices experienced by both Philip and Najin are analysed using the concept of transculturalism in this study.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study has three objectives:

1. To examine how the culturally marginalised protagonists of the novels *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, Philip Hutton and Han Najin, are driven by societies to acquire foreign cultures.
2. To discover the interplay of both traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the cultures depicted in the novels.
3. To investigate how the culturally marginalised protagonists in the two novels, Philip Hutton and Han Najin, create new cultural practices.

## 1.5 Research Questions

With reference to the above discussion, this study intends to answer the following questions:

1. How are the culturally marginalised protagonists driven by societies to acquire foreign cultures?
2. How do traditional and subversive discourses interact in the cultures depicted?
3. How do the culturally marginalised protagonists create new cultural practices?

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework

In order to address the objectives and answer the research questions, the concept of transculturalism is applied in this study. Allolio-Näcke explains in the *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* that transculturalism originates from “transculturation,” a term coined in 1940 by a Cuban anthropologist named Fernando Ortiz (1985-1986). In the book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Ortiz uses the term “transculturation” to describe the different stages and effects of cultural contact among people brought together by European colonial expansion into the Caribbean (Duno-Gottberg). Later, in the 1970s, Uruguayan critic Angel Rama applies the concept of transculturation on Latin American literature in the book *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*. However, Hildebrandt, as cited by Allolio-Näcke, mentions that Rama mainly uses the concept of transculturation to present the process of linguistic hybridisation (1986). This is because, as Rama has written, transculturation occurs in Latin American literature in the form of language, literary structure, and worldview (Seguín 332). About twenty years later, Mary Louise Pratt applies the concept of transculturation on literary texts again. In 1992, colonial travel reports examined by her using the concept of transculturation were published in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt begins the book with transculturation induced by anti-colonialism, then continues with transculturation generated by writing, and ends with transculturation caused by migration. Pratt’s writings on transculturation not only generate new world views but also develop new perspectives (Dovale 24). Hence, even though Pratt has been criticised by Allolio-Näcke for only applying the concept in literature in a narrow sense, transculturation has become an analytic category in literature since then (1986). Additionally, Silvia Spitta



has also applied the concept of transculturation on literature in the book *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America*, which is published in 1995. In this book, she not only examines “narratives of transculturation” produced in the Americas, theoretical views of transculture and other related concepts but also descriptions of pictorial traces of transculturation as well as fictional representations of cultural hybridism in Spanish American and Chicano literature (Young 1; Chanady 603). Since Spitta only focuses on specific descriptions and instances of transculturation from the beginning of colonisation to present day, her book is clearly written and has contributed to the growing corpus of studies on transculturation. In the twenty-first century, scholars such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have continued to discuss the concept of transculturation in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. More importantly, Ashcroft has written in the book, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, that post-colonial literature is perhaps the most profound illustration of transculturation (122). Therefore, the concept of transculturation, which is coined for a cultural phenomenon, can be applied to literature.

The concept of transculturalism applied in this study is derived from the discussions on the concept by the few scholars discussed above. In *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Ortiz contends that transculturation illustrates “the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another” (102). More specifically, the process of transculturation “does not consist merely in acquiring another culture”, which is the term “acculturation” suggests, but also “necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation” (Ortiz 102). Furthermore, the process of transculturation also includes “the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation” (Ortiz 103). However, in *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*, Rama comments that Ortiz’s concept of transculturation does not pay sufficient attention to the factors of “selection and inventiveness that must always be part of the mix in any case of cultural plasticity, for such a state testifies to the energy and creativity of a cultural community” (22). Rama points out that a country’s traditional culture is not passive or destined for great losses and inferior to the foreign culture that comes in (19). On the contrary, “[i]f the community is alive”, it will select elements from both foreign and traditional cultures, including traditional cultures that are destroyed or lost (Rama 22-23). Thus, the community’s primitive values that have almost been forgotten could be rediscovered. Moreover, Rama further claims that the rediscovery of primitive values can strengthen its defence against the foreign culture. Hence, the damaging impact of transculturation could be resisted and the community could go through a combinatory system, where new things are invented to suit the cultural system’s own autonomy. In short, Rama believes that transculturation involves losses, selections, rediscoveries, and incorporations (23). Similarly, Pratt delineates that, in the process of transculturation, the subjugated people determine to various extents what they take into their own and what they use it for, even though they have no power over what emanates from the dominant culture (*Imperial Eyes* 6). This leads her to believe that transculturation is a situation in the “contact zone.” In the article “Arts of the Contact Zone”, she further clarifies that “contact zones” are “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt 34). This corresponds with Spitta’s definition of transculturation. She explains that transculturation involves complex processes of re-creation and adjustment (Spitta 2). Thus, during the violence of colonial and neo-colonial appropriations as well as the clash of cultures, new, vital, and viable

configurations would be created. This is why Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin conclude that transculturation is “the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropolises” (213). The conceptual framework of this thesis, which has been explained, is simplified into Figure 1 below.



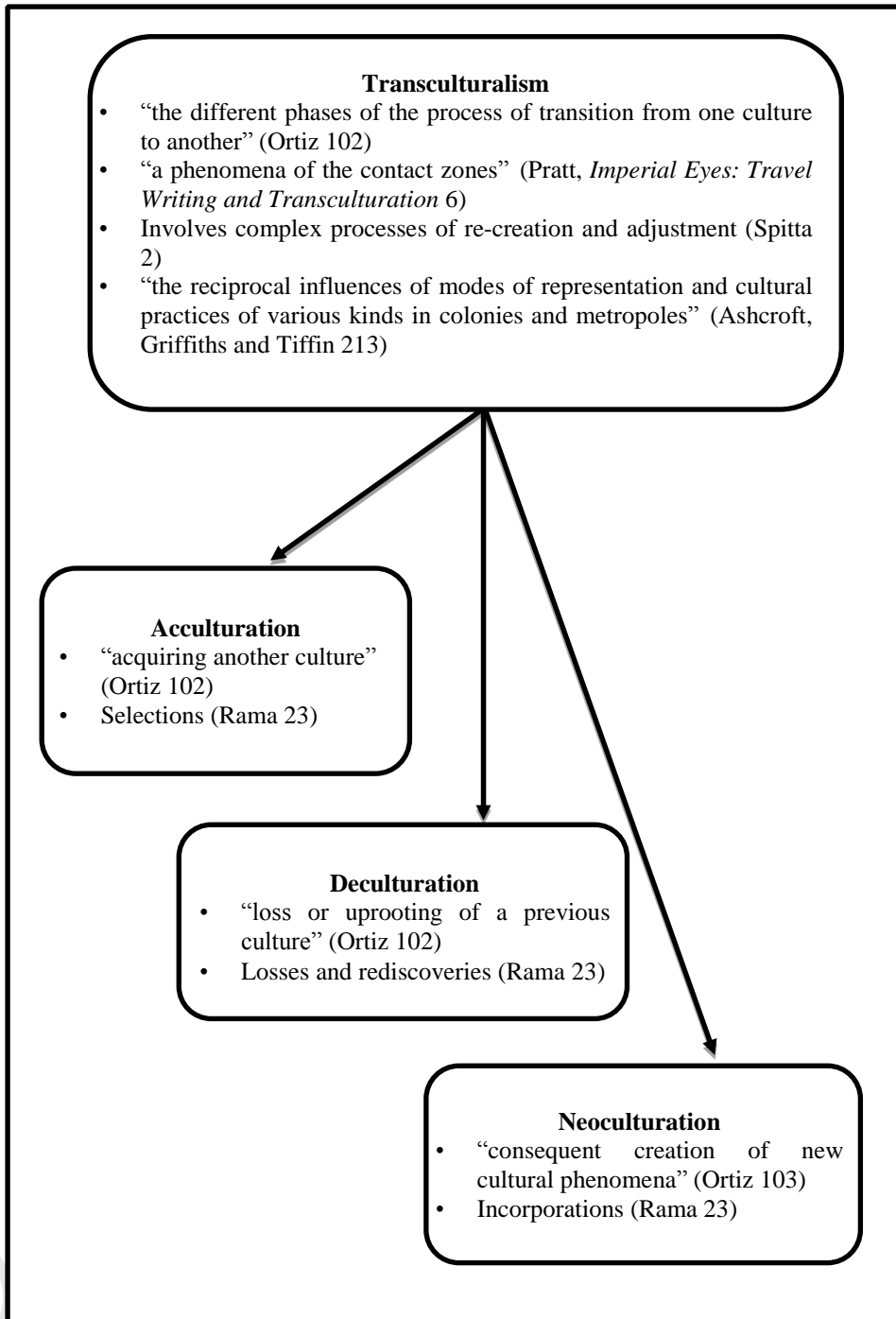


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is significant from three aspects. Firstly, it offers a new perspective on the reading of multicultural depictions. This study does not perceive multicultural depictions as negative phenomena. Khan, Tiwari, Sheoran and C. S. Tan, for instance, have found that multicultural circumstances depicted in literary works cause characters to search for identity or experience identity crisis. The multicultural circumstances resulted from colonisation or migration. This leads Sheoran to state that colonialism negatively affects the colonised people's identity, culture, and psychology (1-2). Since identity crisis and search for self-identity are the negative impacts of multicultural circumstances caused by migration and colonisation, it is evident that these studies see multicultural depictions in literary works as illustrations of certain ethnic groups' loss of cultures and identities. Instead of taking the same perspective, this study intends to foreground the positive side of multicultural depictions. This perspective is supported by Onghena, who emphasises that “[n]ow is the time to stop referring to [cultural] diversity solely as some sort of disturbing “other,” an intruder with the capacity to destabilise our security” (181). Therefore, it is evident that this study is significant for reading multicultural depictions in literary texts positively.

Even though studies that have been carried out on multicultural depictions have also examined the portrayals of hybrid elements, these studies have only centred on the end product. As examples, Zainul Din, See Tho, and W. L. Cheah, who investigate the portrayals of hybrid elements, are only concerned with the representations of hybridity, such as the characterisation and writing styles used to foreground hybridity, and the issues conveyed through these hybrid elements, for instance, multicultural nation, nationalistic tendencies and post-colonial sentiments. On the contrary, studies that have examined the processes of individuals acquiring foreign cultures and incorporating the foreign cultures into their traditional cultures to form new cultural practices are limited. Hence, the present study is significant for investigating the interactions between various cultures.

Furthermore, this study applies the concept of transculturalism, which is a concept that has not been extensively explored in the literature field. Literary studies which have applied the concept of transculturalism have mainly used it to analyse Latin American literature. Asian literature, on the other hand, has not been thoroughly investigated by scholars using the concept of transculturalism. Thus, the third significance of this study is applying the concept of transculturalism to analyse literary texts that are set in Asia, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher's Daughter*. Hence, this study is different from previous studies.

Therefore, by providing a positive reading on multicultural depictions, examining the interactions between various cultures as well as applying a relatively new concept in literature to analyse literary works that are set in Asian countries, this study is significant in terms of the topics studied, concept employed and novels selected.

## 1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study solely focuses on the two protagonists of the selected novels. They are Philip Hutton in *The Gift of Rain* and Han Najin in *The Calligrapher's Daughter*. These two characters are at the centre of this study because they are identified as the culturally marginalised individuals. Events which cause them to acquire foreign cultures and incorporate the foreign cultures into their traditional cultures are examined by applying the concept of transculturalism. This concept, which stresses the transitional process of culture, divides the process of transition into three stages: acculturation, deculturation, and neoculturation. Since this study focuses on the interactions between various cultures, as experienced by the two protagonists, these three stages experienced by the two protagonists are investigated to attain the three objectives of this study. Hence, this study is not only limited to the two selected novels and the two protagonists but is also conducted by solely using the concept of transculturalism.

## 1.9 Definition of Key Terms

For clearer understanding of the terms used in this study, below are their definitions:

**Transculturalism** – It was coined as “transculturation” by Fernando Ortiz in the book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* to describe the cultural phenomena in Cuban society. Ortiz states that, transculturation refers to “the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another” (Ortiz 102). More specifically, transculturation is a process that encompasses three stages called acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation (Ortiz 98). Scholars such as Angel Rama, Mary Louise Pratt and Silvia Spitta apply the concept of transculturation to analyse complexity of interactions between various cultures in literature. Hence, in this study, the two terms, transculturalism and transculturation, are used interchangeably to refer to the process of transition from one culture to another, which involves complex interactions between various cultures that take place in three stages: acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation.

**Acculturation** – This term is defined by Ortiz as “acquiring another culture” (102). This is why, in this study, the terms “acquire” and “acculturate” are used to refer to adopt a culture. Rama adds that selection must also be taken into account as an individual acquires a culture (22). Thus, in this study, acculturation refers to the first stage of transculturation process, where the act of selecting and acquiring another culture, specifically foreign culture, take place.

**Deculturation** – Ortiz states that deculturation is “the loss or uprooting of a previous culture” (102). Thus, in this study, loses a culture is used to refer to no longer practising a culture or no longer adopting a cultural belief. However, Rama claims that rediscovery of a community’s primitive values that have almost been forgotten also

takes place in deculturation stage (23). Hence, for the purpose of this study, the deculturation stage is characterised by both loss and rediscovery of a previous culture, which is specifically called a traditional culture in this study.

**Neoculturation** – Ortiz explains that neoculturation is “the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena” (102). This is supported by Rama, who elaborates that a community would “invent new things through a combinatory system that matches the cultural system’s own autonomy” (22). Rama then asserts that incorporation of culture takes place in the final stage of transculturation process (23). Thus, in this study, neoculturation refers to the final stage of transculturation process, where foreign culture is incorporated into traditional culture to create new cultural practices.

### 1.10 Conclusion

By situating the study in cultural and historical contexts, it is evident that the two selected novels, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Calligrapher’s Daughter*, are similar in two aspects. Firstly, both are set in the Japanese occupation period. Secondly, both depict cultural conflicts, which resulted in amalgamation of traditional and foreign cultures. The protagonists of both novels, Philip and Najin, acquire and incorporate foreign cultures into their traditional cultures. However, there is a prevalent lack of scholarship focusing on the interactions between traditional and foreign cultures of the two protagonists. In order to address this gap, this study examines the process Philip and Najin acquire foreign cultures and incorporate the foreign cultures into their traditional cultures to form new cultural practices. To aid this study, the concept of transculturalism, derived from the debates on the concept by Ortiz, Rama, Pratt, Spitta, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, is employed. Furthermore, the significance of this study lies in the topics studied, concept employed and novels selected. In contrast to literary studies that perceive multicultural depictions in literary works negatively, this study intends to foreground the positive side of multicultural depictions. Additionally, this study is significant for examining the interactions between various cultures rather than only examining hybrid elements, which are only the end products of interactions between various cultures. Last but not least, the concept of transculturalism, which has not been thoroughly explored in literature field, and specifically has not been extensively applied to analyse Asian literary works, also gives this study originality.

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