

SAUSSURE'S SIGN, SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED AND 'MOTHER' AS A SIGNIFIER FOR HAMLET AND HARRY POTTER

Koyel Dasgupta

M.A. in English, Savitribai Phule Pune University,
Maharashtra, India (Independent Scholar)
Padmapukur Harisavalane, Baruipur, Kolkata- 700144, West Bengal, India

INTRODUCTION

We shall briefly discuss Saussure's concepts of the 'Sign', 'Signifier' and 'Signified'. The single word 'Mother' can act as a signifier in completely incongruous ways. In case of Hamlet as well as Haider when 'Mother' is the signifier, his mind is filled with hatred, sexual attraction as well as jealousy for his father and uncle Claudius. For Harry on the other hand, when 'Mother' is the signifier, his mind is filled with pride and love and he remembers his mother Lily who was kind, courageous, witty, loving and affectionate as well as the fact how mother's love is mightier than magic and how he has been always loved by Mrs Weasley as a son. Despite the differences the concept or the idea associated with 'mother' remains the same for both.

ABSTRACT

In this paper we shall evaluate Saussure's ideas about the Linguistic Sign and the Signifier and Signified, what is the signified when 'mother' is the signifier for both Hamlet, the tragic hero of Shakespeare's renowned tragedy Hamlet and Harry Potter, the leading character of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. We shall analyse how the same 'signifier' can produce absolutely incongruous 'signified' for these two characters. For better discernment we shall also consider the film Haider, an adaptation of Hamlet while we discuss Hamlet's Oedipus complex. We shall also see how the idea or the concept associated with 'mother' excluding their individual conceptions remains constant for both of them.

KEYWORDS

Signifier, Signified, Mother, Hamlet, Harry, Oedipus Complex.

Today we acknowledge Saussure primarily as the scholar who defined the idea of synchronic linguistics which is the study of languages as systems at a given point in time and is pellucidly antagonistic to historical linguistics or diachronic linguistics as he would call it. The historical linguistics was comprehended by his contemporaries as the unerring approach to the study of languages. This however was not the reason as to why Saussure rose to eminence and not to forget, he himself was trained in the conventional, historical way to study language. Unfortunately, his book *Cours de linguistique generale* does not bear the imprimatur of its original contributor as two of his colleagues by the names of Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye compiled the notes taken by the students from Saussure's lectures and brought them together in the format of a book. By the grace of this effort Saussure's ideas were promulgated beyond boundaries and this book procured him the title- father of twentieth century linguistics. For several decades after this book was published, it was contemplated that Saussure's ideas were best summarized by a catalogue of dichotomies- synchrony versus diachrony, langue versus

parole, paradigmatic versus syntagmatic, signifier versus signified and by the arbitrariness of a linguistic sign (Lepschy 43). Saussure assessed that for the speaker of a language, its history does not matter and throughout his book, Saussure draws an analogy between language and the game of chess.

Saussure perceived language as a sign system but this sign is not which signifies something else but a relationship between: “the linguistic sign unites...a concept and an acoustic image” (Saussure 67) which is a signified and signifier. The signifier is stringently a sound image rather than a sound and this is because a same sound can be uttered by people in more than one way and even with diverse accents. The phonological demeanour of a linguistic sound is therefore a sound image and not a physical sound, “a sound type rather than a sound token” (Bredin 68). A discrete sound image thus coalesces with a discrete concept and together constitutes a sign. According to Saussure, “The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it ‘material’, it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract” (Saussure 66). The sign is arbitrary as “the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary” (Saussure 67) or in other words cannot be justified. The signifier is linear because it represents a span, and the span is measurable in a single dimension; it is a line” (Saussure 70). The sign being arbitrary is not something Saussure acknowledged first but his brilliance lies in defining sign as the relationship between signifier and signified.

The single word ‘Mother’ is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “The female parent of a human being; a woman in relation to a child or children to whom she has given birth; (also, in extended use) a woman who undertakes the responsibilities of a parent towards a child, esp. a stepmother”. A very generalised or the most common views which are associated with ‘mother’ and shared by most people are that someone who is an embodiment of love, care, affection and perhaps, a shelter that is impregnable which endeavours to shield us from every form of peril and goes on admonishing us to use our circumspection before acting so that our decisions or rather indecisions do not jeopardize our happiness and well-being. We can think of one such stupendous and phenomenal mother in literature- Marmee or Margaret March who is the mother of Meg, Jo, Beth and Emmy in Louisa May Alcott’s novel *Little Women* who is exceptionally strong so much so that she sustains the family when her husband is away at war and concomitantly is caring to each of her daughters and herself becomes an example in the process of teaching her daughters to be strong, benevolent and compassionate. However, there are mothers who are belligerent towards love, care and protection of her child and the character which prodigiously exemplifies it is Lady Macbeth, the remarkably perspicacious and witty but diabolic female character in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. We are never introduced to her child in the play and the Macbeth couple is acknowledged as childless. However, one utterance of hers gives us a transparent insight into the maternal aspect of her disposition- while galvanizing Macbeth to give up his fears and kill King Duncan she boldly proclaims that if ambition demands, “I would while it was smiling in my face, / Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums/ And dash the brains out, has I so sworn...” (Shakespeare 1.7.56-58)- the reference to a child is clear here and its comprehensible that there is no room for her mind to be swithering when her scheme demands viciousness and this applies even for her infant. She nullifies the traditional procreative myth about the feminine motherhood. Her child even if he/she was born undoubtedly would have shared a traumatic experience as Lady Macbeth’s son/daughter.

In this paper however, we shall focus on Hamlet and Harry Potter. Let us first concentrate on Hamlet. The tragedy commences with Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, returning to his country at a time when his father, King Hamlet has died and his mother has entered into a hasty marriage to Claudius, Hamlet’s uncle and the present King of Denmark. Hamlet is incandescent with the marriage and is highly satiric when Horatio tells him “My lord, I came to see your father’s funeral” (Shakespeare 1.2.175) by replying that “I think it was to see my mother’s wedding”

(Shakespeare 1.2.177). We have no instances which can actually prove the kind of relationship Hamlet shared with this mother, Queen Gertrude before her marriage or when his father was alive but what is most commonly believed is that in royal families the children are not brought up directly by the parents but by the governesses or the nannies. The child and the mother therefore cannot be expected to share an extremely proximate relationship and the same goes for Hamlet and his mother. According to Hamlet, his mother has betrayed his father and tries to extrapolate that how his mother could get married to his uncle Claudius even though his father was “so loving to my mother/ That he might not beteem the winds of heaven/ Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth...” (Shakespeare 1.2.141-142). His mother’s actions or rather from Hamlet’s perspectives, her inactions invigorate him to generalize the feminine gender as “Frailty, thy name is woman” (Shakespeare 1.2.146).

With these facts now let us postulate Hamlet’s idea or conception when ‘mother’ is the signifier according to Saussure’s dictums. It seems that when he comes across ‘mother’ as the signifier, Hamlet’s mind is filled with a kind of hatred and of someone whose actions are contemptible. It is obvious that Hamlet won’t remember his mother with veneration or feel contented to think about his relationship with his mother. Even though he can’t denounce the woman from being his mother but then with mother as the signifier it will in Hamlet’s mind signify a woman who has no integrity of character or rectitude, who obviously deceived her dead husband and had perhaps no reverence for him and is a representative of the womankind whom he concedes to be the paradigm of frailty.

Hamlet’s relationship with his mother is immensely convoluted and this also forms an obligatory aspect which need to be addressed in order to discern what ‘mother’ can signify for Hamlet other than what we just discussed. Hamlet’s Oedipus Complex is not an avant-garde concept to be addressed. But before jumping into any kind of conclusion we must understand some fundamentals associated to Oedipus Complex. Oedipal or Oedipus Complex is a psychoanalytic concept which signify the emotions and psychosexual concupiscence which a male child nurtures for his mother during the phallic stage of his development and this eventually stimulates him to acknowledge the father as a competitor for the mother’s love (Essay Writer). Oedipus Complex was introduced by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud where ‘Oedipus’ is a character from the Greek folklore who fortuitously slain his father and married his mother. Freud asseverated that the Oedipus complex is conspicuous in a child in his early years but ends when the child recognises himself with the parent of the same sex and this leads to the suppression of his lascivious instincts (Essay Writer). Freud however, also postulated that the subdued hankering manifest in later years and governs the child’s behaviour (Essay Writer). Freud’s analysis of Hamlet’s behaviour by means of this psychological theory of Oedipus Complex portrays that Hamlet’s behaviour and decisions are subconsciously dictated by the psychological phenomenon. Hamlet’s sense of possessiveness for his mother in the play evince the presence of the features of Oedipus Complex in his character and the way his relationship with his mother is presented echoes that he indeed possesses suppressed carnal desires for his mother. His qualms and his procrastination to avenge his father’s murder by killing the murderer, according to Freud, manifests the fact that he considered his father as his rival or opposition. According to Rashkin, “the reason for Hamlet’s hesitance to abide by his father’s command to avenge his death is Hamlet’s subconscious gratitude to Claudius for murdering his father” (qtd. in Essay Writer). This suggests that Hamlet due to his Oedipus Complex had subconsciously always wished to replace his father. Lacan also suggested by virtue of the Freudian concept that Hamlet procrastinates and is somehow even reluctant to kill Claudius because he visualizes him as a reflection of his suppressed Oedipal self (qtd. in Essay Writer).

Hamlet’s Oedipus Complex also provides an incongruous interpretation as compared to the previous one as to why he abhors his mother for marrying Claudius. If we estimate his

repugnance by keeping in mind the Oedipus complex governing him subconsciously then it connotes that its out of his jealousy for Claudius who although has killed his former rival has now established himself as his antagonist by marrying his mother and therefore, he is exasperated with his her. When speaking about his mother in Act I Scene II he says, “With such dexterity to incestuous sheets” (Shakespeare 1.2.157) which implies that he detests his mother’s transfer of affections to his uncle. This is even more vividly manifested in the scene when he converses with his mother in Gertrude’s bedchamber and his words are filled with sexual allusions when he rebukes her of “...honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty!” (Shakespeare 3.4.91-92) and again when he admonishes her “...but go not to my uncle’s bed” (Shakespeare 3.4.157). Hamlet feels utterly jealous when he imagines the sexual encounters between his mother and uncle and his aversion for his uncle and his relationship with his mother clearly stems from his subconscious sexual desires for his mother. When he kills Polonius by assuming him to be Claudius, he feels that he is now being able to completely eliminate his rivals or rather a ‘father’ figure and will be the sole owner of his mother’s love and this enhances what Freud claimed as it is a clear instance of Hamlet exhibiting his Oedipus Complex which governs him subconsciously. Therefore, after this interpretation it is apparent that perhaps his venereal instincts for his mother dynamizes him to despise his mother’s marriage to his uncle Claudius even more than the fact that his father was a very devoted husband to his mother and his desire to kill Claudius stems from the same feeling which is probably superior or more demanding for him than the fact that his uncle killed his father.

Haider, exigently deserves to be mentioned when we are discussing Hamlet’s Oedipus Complex as the film adaptation of the play Hamlet by Vishal Bhardwaj blazingly delineates Haider’s inherent sexual yearnings for Ghazala, his mother. Just before her marriage to Khurram, Ghazala tells Haider that as a child he used to say that he shall marry his mother when he grows up. Ghazala also tells, “You would sleep between your father and I on purpose every night... You’d fight him every time he touched me” (*Haider* 1:41:41-1:41:55) to which Haider replies, “But now his brother touches you. What do I do?” (*Haider* 1:42:13-1:42:15). He goes on to even question his mother that “Who would want to share you, Mother?”, kisses her neck and tells, “Your beauty is venomous” (*Haider* 1:42:28-1:42:35). The sexual allusions that are commingled with the dialogues and Haider’s act of kissing his mother are very much suggestive of Haider’s Oedipus Complex. Then when he attempts to murder Khurram but fails to because Khurram is praying, he admonishes him, “I’ll aim my bullets at your treacherous eyes, Khurram. The deceitful eyes, that entrapped my mother” (*Haider* 1:58:23-1:58:40) and repeats the same words again. He doesn’t express that he wants to kill Khurram for betraying his father but he is much more solicitous about Khurram’s relationship with his mother and is more fervid to kill Khurram out of his possessiveness for his mother and jealousy for Khurram. When Ghazala goes to meet Haider before he is supposed to go away by crossing the border, Haider claims, “I’ll eagerly wait for you to be widow again” (*Haider* 2:08:19-2:08:21) which suggests that he shall anxiously wait for his uncle to die so that he can finally replace all who he feels to be his competitors for Ghazala’s love (including sexual love).

Let us now analyse with keeping Hamlet’s Oedipus complex in mind as to what the word ‘mother’ signifies for him. Whenever Hamlet comes across ‘mother’ as the signifier, what immediately comes to his mind is perhaps not of an affectionate, loving figure or what is conventionally perceived as the mother-figure but of a woman with whom he desires to fulfil his carnal instincts and of someone who has been continually distanced from him first by his father and then by his uncle. The figure that occupies his mind is of a woman to him he is sexually attracted, of whom is deeply fond of and is possessive about. These are exactly what ‘mother’ signifies for Haider too. ‘Mother’ can also bring Ophelia into Hamlet’s mind because as Cameron argues, Hamlet despises Ophelia because of her acceptance of her father Polonius’s authority which subconsciously reminds Hamlet of Gertrude being succumbed to Claudius (Essay Writer).

It can also bring into his mind his behaviours with Ophelia, his venting out his vexation which he feels for his mother on her. But we are baffled when we try to postulate whether 'mother' signifies all these in his subconscious mind or he consciously apprehends all these.

Hamlet is an intrinsically perplexing character. We could see how 'mother' signifies for him two completely extraneous things and stimulates absolutely inharmonious conceptions and therefore, even though we know that words can signify different things for different people but Hamlet's mind challenges that thought by becoming an embodiment of two different concepts which apparently seems not to be even hypothetically concordant. But what we must also realize is that the first interpretation of what 'mother' signifies for him is taking place in his mind consciously but in the second case since Oedipus Complex subconsciously drives the individual, we can suspect it to betide in his subconscious mind.

Our second character of concern will be Harry Potter. The very first thing to know is that Harry's physical proximity with both of his parents was limited due to their ruthless and unrelenting murder by the dark wizard Voldemort when both of them were just 21 years old. He was brought up by his Uncle and Aunt, who were muggles (the non- magic folk) and who were extravagantly belligerent toward him and therefore Harry did not much experience motherly love and affection in his childhood and was informed that his parents- Lily and James Potter had died in a car crash and was completely incognizant of their and his true identity. It was only with Hagrid's arrival on his 11th Birthday and his declaration that "Harry- yer a wizard" (Rowling 55) that Harry's world changed and this change was enthralling for him. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Harry gets to know about his valiant mother who sacrificed her life to protect her son and it is her sacrifice which protects Harry in his adventure to obviate the Philosopher's Stone from reaching Voldemort. It is Lily's love as Professor Dumbledore says, "Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realise that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark...to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever..."(Rowling 321) while explaining as to why Professor Quirrell on Voldemort's command failed to even touch Harry.

Harry was just a year old when Lily and James were murdered. He enjoyed the ecstasy of their company as a child but it is outlandish to expect him to remember everything. Now when he has been finally introduced to what his mother actually did for him and how much she loved him we can try and analyse what 'mother' signifies for him after his first year at Hogwarts- whenever Harry comes across 'mother' as the signifier it is not wrong to say that in his mind he conceptualizes a woman who did not just unequivocally loved him but who was exceptionally intrepid and who did not even hesitate for a moment to face the intimidating Voldemort and gave away her life so that her son could live. Harry's conceptions thus stimulated will be not just of a loving and affectionate mother but also of a valorous woman.

In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry accidentally enters Severus Snape's memory, he encounters his teenaged father and mother along with Sirius, Remus, Peter and Snape, all very young. James and the others except Remus started making fun of Snape and sort of bullied him when Lily who used to be friends with Severus since their childhood sharply retaliated on his behalf and commanded James to "Leave him ALONE!" (Rowling 597) and was contumelious in her attitude towards James when she temerarily told James "You think you're funny...But you're just an arrogant, bullying toerag" (Rowling 597) and again pejoratively rejected James's proposal to "go out" (Rowling 597) with him by saying- "I wouldn't go out with you if it was a choice between you and the giant squid" (Rowling 597). She even took out her wand to defend Snape. This was another aspect of her mother's disposition which was unveiled before Harry- of a woman who valued friendship and who rebelled against oppression even though apparently it might seem only jocular.

Now when Harry comes across 'mother' as the signifier, besides what we have discussed, he comprehends a woman who could clearly see through what is riotous and what is not even if ostensibly it appears like the former and acknowledge the exploitation. Besides, she could violently protest against it and go to any measure to interdict it. It is very obvious that mother signifies for him a woman who was conscious, sensible, insightful and uncommonly brave. It is imperative that we discuss an incident from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* here even though it is the last book but the incident is ineffaceably connected to what we just discussed from *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*. In *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry travels into Snape's memory in the pensive in Dumbledore's office, he witnesses what happened after the incident with James, Lily and Snape we just discussed and Snape insulted Lily by calling her a Mudblood- "I don't need help from filthy little Mudbloods like her!" (Rowling 598) in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Now mudblood is a foul term for someone who is muggle born, whose parents are non-magical and it's not a term that is expected in a civilised conversation. Lily was enraged and when Snape went to the Gryffindor Tower to ask her forgiveness, she sharply retorted- "Slipped out? ...You can't wait to join You-Know-Who, can't you? ...I can't pretend any more. You've chosen your way, I've chosen mine" (Rowling 552) and she broke her friendship with Severus. With the knowledge of this incident Harry when comes across 'mother' as the signifier, he besides everything we have discussed can also conceptualize a woman who had a great sense of self-respect and who was not scrupulous to do what was right even if that cost her the loss of a friend who was unambiguously wrong and showed no interest to undergo reformation but only sought her forgiveness.

In *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, Harry goes to meet Professor Horace Slughorn with Dumbledore in order to cajole him back to Hogwarts which is an imperative business as Dumbledore tells him. Ever since the first book, Harry has heard from multiple persons who have reiterated the same thing- he looks very much like his father but he has inherited his mother's almond shaped green coloured eyes. Professor Slughorn cherishes students who are talented or who have strong familial connections with famous witches or wizards. On ingeminating about Harry's looks as his father and how similar his eyes are as his mother's (which however Harry himself says this time before Slughorn could) Slughorn proclaims, "You shouldn't have favourites as a teacher, of course, but she was one of mine. Your mother...Lily Evans. One of the brightest I ever taught. Vivacious, you know. Charming girl" (Rowling 58). It's a pity that we as readers don't get to meet Lily in person very much throughout the books and therefore our understanding as well as Harry's discernment of her mother's character occurs through either the remarks or the memory of those who knew her or through Harry's dreams. Professor Slughorn's comments make it perspicuous that Lily Potter (nee Evans) was a brilliant student and undoubtedly, she possessed adroitness in Potions, of which Slughorn is a professor so much so that it even bewildered Slughorn who later came to know that she was a Muggle born and formerly conceived that she was a Pureblood on the basis of her wit. In the course of the books however we have seen that not just Purebloods and Half-bloods but those who are Muggle borne too make excellent witches and wizards of which Hermione Granger- "the cleverest witch of her age" (Rowling 368) is the most notable example. While trying to collect from Professor Slughorn, the memory which is crucial to defeat Voldemort Harry under the influence of Felix Felicis tries to coax him by stimulating his affection for Lily and as expected Slughorn gets emotional as he says, "I don't imagine anyone who met her would have killed her...very brave...very funny" (Rowling 407) and Harry goes even further and with a peremptory tone demands "Be brave like my mother, Professor..." (Rowling 407).

Harry didn't know about this aspect of his mother's personality before and now we can apprehend that with this new knowledge whenever Harry comes across 'mother' as the signifier, besides everything we have analysed, now signifies for him a woman who was exceptionally perspicacious and intelligent. He must also be conceptualizing a woman, who despite her

physical absence chaperoned him in a task and whose deeds, qualities and courage which even though were alive only in memories were strong and invigorating. Now this perhaps is comprehensible even without mentioning that he is filled with pride and gratitude when he comes across 'mother'.

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* when Harry could actually visualize the circumstances of the night his parents were murdered, he sees a wife who has just lost her beloved husband, a prodigiously courageous mother pleading to Voldemort for sparing her only son- "Not Harry, not Harry, please not Harry...Not Harry! Please...have mercy...Not Harry! Not Harry! Please- I'll do anything-" (Rowling 281). We can conjecture that after visualizing this incident when Harry comes across 'mother', he conceptualizes a woman with whom he can sympathise and who in spite of being so brave could plead helplessly out of intense love and perhaps realize that love can compel even a lion-hearted human to shed all of his/her bravery to undertake an action which is incongruous to valorous but then courage did not desert her as urged by that she sacrificed her life for her son. When Narcissa Malfoy goes to check on Voldemort's behalf whether Harry died, she whispers to him- "Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?" (Rowling 593) and Harry replies, "Yes" (Rowling 594) and Narcissa even though Harry is alive bravely lies to the Dark Lord (Voldemort) and others present that "He is dead!" (Rowling 594) out of her gratitude to Harry for communicating to her the news of her only son and more importantly because she knows that on knowing that Harry is dead, Voldemort will go to the castle of Hogwarts with Harry's dead body and with his followers and Hagrid and that will bestow her with the opportunity to meet her son. If Harry had read Plato's *Republic*, he surely would have declared Plato's conception that only rationality and never emotions should be the sovereign of the human soul to be inefficacious. It was the emotion of love after all which dynamized Lily, such a courageous soul to plead to Voldemort but concomitantly it was her love for her son which emboldened her to sacrifice her life and thrust on Harry the ultimate protection and years later it even encouraged Narcissa to lie to Voldemort for her son Draco and therefore 'mother' for Harry can't just signify what his mother was as a human but the fact that a mother's love can perhaps transcend all hardships and that love is the mightiest and the most powerful magic in the world.

But Lily's absence could not completely devoid Harry of mother's love. Mrs Molly Weasley, the mother of Harry's best friend Ronald Weasley becomes a mother figure for Harry who loves her like her own. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Mrs Weasley instantly replies to Sirius's comment, "He's not your son" (Rowling 83) about Harry with "He's as good as" (Rowling 83). A Boggart, a creature in the wizarding world transforms itself to the thing one fears the most in order to petrify one to the fullest. While battling a Boggart, Mrs Weasley witnesses the Boggart transforming into the dead bodies of her sons and husband and finally into Harry's before Remus defeats it. It is transparent that Mrs Weasley never considered Harry as an outsider to the Weasley family and loves her like she does her own sons otherwise there is no reason for her to be afraid with Harry's death to the extent she is with those of her sons and husband. Harry has never received the motherly love, affection and warmth from the one, closest to him in blood relation- his mother's sister but receives all of that from Mrs Weasley right from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* to *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Therefore, when Harry comes across 'mother' as the signifier, it's not just Lily and her virtues and deeds that the word signifies for him but he also conceptualizes Mrs Weasley's humongous love and concern for him.

'Mother' for Harry therefore signifies a woman who was exceptionally brave to stand up to anything wrong either done to her or to others, highly conscious of her amour propre, zealous and someone who loved him immensely. However, concurrently it also signifies for him a woman who loves him unconditionally like her own son. 'Mother' for Harry therefore means love, warmth, affection, strength of character and the courage to do the right and if situation demands

even lie to someone who on discovering that he was lied to could kill the liar without a second thought.

Now comparing what 'mother' signifies for Hamlet and for Harry we can discern how the same signifier (in this case 'mother') signify completely different things for two individuals (in this case two literary characters) at a personal level. Therefore, what a signifier can signify for humans can change at a personal level. A very interesting thing to note is that after reading Hamlet when within few moments we readers come across 'mother' as the signifier, it immediately can bring to our minds besides our personal conceptions of mother, what it signifies for Hamlet too and the same can happen too after reading Harry Potter. Similarly, it can also be culture specific- for example, 'river' signifies or immediately brings into the mind of the Indians the river Ganges but for the English it's the Thames.

The value of a sign depends on the set of its relations with other signs within the same language. We need to understand that signification of a sign means the concept it demonstrates whereas value is associated to a sign by virtue of its relations to other signs in a language. "Signification is within signs; value arises from among signs" (Bredin 69). A sign has two concepts- conceptual and material. The conceptual aspect can be expressed as the concept which a sign demonstrates and which needs to be discerned on the basis of its distinction from the concepts demonstrated by other signs. Saussure explains, "Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not" (Saussure 117). Linguistic concepts do not have an independent existence but its existence depends on other concepts and their identity is acknowledged with reference to all the other concepts expressed in the language. The material aspect of value is associated with the sound image of the sign. The sound image is like the concept depends on its differences from other sound images in the language. This negative and differential character is applicable to each component of the sound image including the phonemes which as Saussure argues, "Phonemes are characterized not, as one might think, by their own positive quality but simply by the fact that they are distinct. Phonemes are above all else opposing, relative, and negative entities" (Saussure 119).

Therefore, we can comprehend that a concept which is negative in character conglomerates with a sound image which is also negative character to form a sign which is why the sign is related negatively with other signs in one particular language (Bredin 69). Signs, within a language are related to one another by means of a couple of ways- associatively and syntagmatically. Structural linguists however replaced associative with paradigmatic. In a syntagmatic relationship, a sign is in opposition to other signs before and after it in a sentence and when the sentence is pronounced or written, all signs are present. It is a linear or horizontal relationship. Paradigmatic relationships are found between signs which are similar to each other either phonically, morphologically or conceptually (Bredin 70). This is a relationship that a sign has with other signs that are not present in the sentence and this is known as 'absentia'. This dichotomy is correlational (either-or) and relational (both-and) hierarchies according to Hjelmslev and 'choice' and 'chain' according to Halliday (Lepschy 51). There are four factors which determine the value of a linguistic sign- the sign has a concept which is not any other concept expressed in the language; the sign has a sound-image which is not any other sound-image in the language; the rules which dictate the syntagmatic relations of a sign with other signs in the language and the sign's paradigmatic similarities to as well as differences from other signs in the language (Bredin 70).

Since we have been concerned with what conceptions and emotions 'mother' signifies for Hamlet and Harry, we shall now analyse the 'idea' or 'concept' that is associated with 'mother' or in other words what is the signified when 'mother' is the signifier in general and not at the personal

level. The idea or the concept the concept that is associated with the word mother is '+female, +animate' and this is common for both Hamlet and Harry. Now when both come across 'mother', they will think of someone who say for example, is not the 'father' - the male counterpart of 'mother'. Hence the idea or the concept that is associated with father, in this context is '-female, +animate'. So, the 'mother' is someone who is not the 'father'. The sound image of 'mother' too is something that is not the sound image of 'father'. Now, for example let us consider the sentence- - 'I love my mother.' 'Mother' in this sentence is in a syntagmatic relationship with 'I', 'love' and 'my'. All of them are in opposition to one another when the sentence 'I love my mother' is pronounced or written. Now, 'mother' is also in a paradigmatic relationship with other signs in the language as for example, with 'mom' which is conceptually similar to 'mother' and can be substituted with it. But 'mother' is dissimilar to 'book' and cannot be substituted with it. Neither phonically nor morphologically nor conceptually 'book' is similar to 'mother'. 'I' here can be replaced with Hamlet or Harry but in that case the verb 'love' changes to 'loves' and in case of Hamlet 'loves' can be substituted with 'hates' as well. The value of 'mother' depends on all that we have discussed. Therefore, even though personal conceptions or emotions differ for Hamlet and Harry but the general idea associated with 'mother' remains constant since the binary of the similarity-dissimilarity remains constant.

FIGURES

TEXTS/MOVIES		OBSERVATIONS WHEN 'MOTHER IS THE SIGNIFIER FOR Hamlet AND Harry
HAMLET	<i>Hamlet</i>	Hatred, Sexual attraction
	<i>Haider</i>	Hatred, Sexual attraction
HARRY POTTER	<i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i>	Loving, Affectionate, Valorous
	<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	A true friend, Brave, With a lot of self-respect (Lily); Mrs Weasley's humongous love for him
	<i>Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince</i>	Perspicacious, Intelligent
	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>	Sympathising, Immensely loving, Sacrificing (Lily); Strength of mother's love is more than magic (Lily and Narcissa)

CONCLUSION

We compared what 'mother' signifies for Hamlet and for Harry we can observe how the same signifier (in this case 'mother') signify completely different things for two individuals (in this case two literary characters) at a personal level. Therefore, what a signifier can signify for humans can change at a personal level. We have also analysed the 'idea' or 'concept' that is associated with 'mother' or in other words what is the signified when 'mother' is the signifier in general and not at the personal level and seen how the idea or the concept or the concept that is associated with the word mother is '+female, +animate' and this is common for both Hamlet and Harry. Thus, the general idea associated with 'mother' remains constant since the binary of the similarity-dissimilarity remains constant even though their personal conceptions or emotions differ.

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AUTHOR

I am **Koyel Dasgupta** and I have just completed my M.A. in English from Savitribai Phule Pune University. I aspire to pursue a PhD in English Literature and continue remaining intimately associated with literature for the rest of my life. My interest lies in Elizabethan Literature, Victorian literature, Romantic poetry, Modern poetry, Partition literature, Detective fiction and Children's literature. Besides being a literature student, I am a painter, a Potterhead, a reader and an adorer of singing and dancing.

