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## Depiction of Muslim Women in **Samina Ali's** *Madras on Rainy Days*

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*"Samina Ali has created a compelling story filled with psychological insight and a deep understanding of the conflicts that plague all of us who inhabit two worlds."*

- Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

*Madras on Rainy Days* is a sad, touching and pathetic story of the life of its heroine, Layla, who is a half-Indian and half-American. She lived partly in America and partly in India. Her parents don't want her to be inhabited by America and wanted her to retain her Indianness. Sameer also calls her:

".....Twins, like you"..... "Yes, like you. You, the American, you, the Indian. Same face, two people. So where is your home? (Madras: 117)

At the age of nineteen, her mother arranged her marriage to an engineer living in Hyderabad. When she was in America she had slept with her friend- Nate and got pregnant. Though so, she did not oppose the marriage arranged by her mother. She took pills to abort the baby and hence she was bleeding. When her mother comes to know about it, she takes her to *Alim* instead of the doctor.

The novelist throws light on the dresses and the *burkhas* of women which was according to their economic status or their family background. When Layla entered the house of *Alim*, she met his wife who "wore a faded sari, its torn edge wrapped around her head as a scarf, the end tight between her teeth." She also met the other three women who came there to solve their problems who wore "the old -style burkhas with mesh face coverings cast back to reveal their features, and not the more fashionable Iranian chadars that Amme and I did, so I guessed they were poor." As Layla said they did not look directly to the *alim* because it was considered improper, according to Islam, for men and women to look into each others' eyes, if they were not married.

The women were always considered inferior to men. It was that the women were made to serve their men and men to trouble the women. As stated earlier in the novel, Amme had a divorce from her husband, and lived there destructing her own life only for the sake of her daughter. Then Layla's father married Sabana, she also had the same status at home. She used to feed him at her own even in her pregnancy. Women were trapped in *burkhas* without considering their age.

"This was a Muslim neighborhood, where women did not leave the house unveiled, not even girls as young as six, their bodies yet indistinguishable from boys'." (Madras: 58)

Henna is the other woman character referred in the novel. Her husband went to Saudi where he couldn't take her with him, she had to live as a servant to her in-laws. He could come back to her only after completion of two years when he could enjoy a holiday for a month only. Even the private property given to her by her father was taken away to sell, breaking the rule of Islam. So it was hard life for her. She says to Layla;

“Everyone in the Old City knows. Wherever I go, women have questions or advice. They blame me or they pity me. It's become so hard, I don't want to leave the house.” (Madras: 61)

It is only thrice the changing condition of women is referred in the novel. Layla's father told Henna about the change intending to suggest the second marriage.

“.... Customs are changing, Henna. These outsiders come in, they stir things up, they make things possible.” (Madras: 65)

Secondly, after Layla's marriage, Zeba, her mother-in-law told her that only the wife has the power to rouse her husband. Thirdly when Layla went to the pizza place with her husband, she saw girls who were more free and frank than in America.

When she went to her in-laws, she was sent to her husband's room. While discussion, she came to know that all the letters sent to her by Nate were reached to her husband through the dress drawer. When he slipped his tongue in her, he omitted because of bleeding. So the union did not take place. Then he said to her that he is haunted by those letters and when he was touching her, he saw Nate touching her. He accuses her of making him a fool. He says:

“Yes, a fool. While I was writing to you, telling you how much I wanted to touch you, be with you, you were there----- with him. Letting him into your room, letting him.... *fuck* you...I tried to do what he... I didn't know I would feel so repelled!” (Madras: 94-95)

As she has no love for her husband, she doesn't care what happens and reacted very differently. She is very firm when she says:

“Do you want me to leave? If you want to.... Send me away, just call Nafiza-” (Madras: 95)

Then Sameer assures her that he will forget all that has happened in past and tells her not to ask about his past. Days passed, but Sameer couldn't make love to her. She was very eager to consummate the marriage, but he was unable. Both husband and wife go to Madras for honeymoon, but there also he could not make love to her. She then comes to know that he loves Naveed, his friend of the same sex. So she goes back to her home in Hyderabad and tells her uncle that she doesn't want to go back to her in-laws as her husband is unable to love her. But she is again sent to her husband's house where she is locked inside the room so that she may not run away. She again and again asks her in-laws that she wants to go back as it is a sin to sleep with such person, but her father-in-law insist her to take Sameer with her to America so that no one will know nothing about him. This is how a woman has no place in her home. She is used for others' sake only without thinking about her life. She had to marry Sameer without having a feeling of love for him only for the satisfaction of others. To whom she had loved, she could not marry because of the tradition. Moreover, she accepted

Sameer whole-heartedly as a husband but she, herself, was unfortunate enough to have such a husband who confessed once to her.

“This is ... I cannot tell you how much I needed to make love to you today, for me. Bloody hell, for me! You should not feel ashamed, you should not feel there is anything...lacking in you. There is something severely lacking in me, or so I am beginning to think.” (Madras: 95)

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Giroux, 2004

## Modernity in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*

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Modernity is one of the important nativistic literary values of nativism. It is a process of change, evolution, progress and development. It is based on rationality, a progressive thought and aims at achieving a decent standard of living for all people. As a culture specific phase of history of any society or nation, modernity scrutinizes the traditional thoughts, values or institutions and fights against superstition, narrow world-view, and backwardness of society and other evilsome aspects of socio-cultural values. Its purpose is to bring about change in socio-cultural-economic and other fields. Mahatma Gandhi, a true nativist, prefers Indian modernity and its real strength is in native values. It is not blind imitation, adoption or borrowing things from the west. In this regard Choudhari, Indranath remarks, "The elements of modernity are to be sought in our roots and traditions – in our own realities...." (1997:2-3). On the whole, modernity cannot be and should not be transplanted but it must be shaped according to past traditions and present circumstances which suits to our ancient heritage. Thus it is a genuine course of social change which lies at the core of nativism.

Girish Karnad's second play 'Tughlaq' (1962) is originally written in Kannada and later translated into English by the dramatist himself for non-Kannada speakers. This play presents Tughlaq as a modernizing monarch and visionary idealist of medieval age whose mind was full of innovative ideas, ideals, plans and projects. Infact he wants to use them for the betterment and development of his subjects. He desires to make his state an utopia. So he sacrifices his sleep, personal enjoyment and luxurious games of life for this noble cause. Verily, he is much ahead of his age. Therefore, he is misunderstood by his people and age. While presenting reformative and progressive zeal of Tughlaq, Karnad wants to discover our identity and socio-cultural and moral meaning in the present scenario for setting up a new society. Thus this play becomes a political critique of the post-Independence decades.

Tughlaq is an avant-garde Muslim ruler of the fourteenth century India. He has uncommon desire to achieve noble ideals like peace, prosperity, justice, equality and harmony in his state. So he decides to implement certain policies for this. He takes five revolutionary decisions, viz. 1) prayers five times a day and punishment if one fails to do so, 2) the provision to raise voice freely

even against His Majesty, 3) the shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, 4) circulation of copper coins alongwith the silver dinars, 5) liquidating all those coming in the path of his decision (Barche, G.D.:1999:74).

Tughlaq knows that there is a divine power in prayer which controls human mind and provides a great strength in a critical situation. So he makes Namaz or prayer compulsory and allows people to read Koran in the streets. He makes a law that the punishment is given if one fails to do so. This is new step which was absent in previous Muslim rulers. Infact prayer is a moral foundation of politics and Tughlaq wants to spiritualize it like Gandhi. However he makes prayer compulsory for the moral and spiritual betterment of his subjects.

Abolition of the obnoxious system 'Jizia-tax' from the shoulders of Hindus is a shocking decision of Tughlaq. He destroys it on humanitarian ground and treats Hindu-Muslim subjects equally for the communal harmony. Infact Jizia-tax is imposed on infidels by the previous Sultans which actually dates from the last quarter of ninth century. "It was tax paid by an unbeliever in an Islamic state for the permission to live. It means substitute money, that is, the price of indulgence" (Sarkar, Jadunath:1972:176). Tughlaq is widely read man. His vision is enlarged by Greek literature and principles of Zarathustra or Buddha which stresses on the importance on good conduct. He knows this evil tradition discriminates human being from human being. "The greatest truth that Karnad has brought out through his Tughlaq is that religious saints cannot wash away fifth from society" (Mahale, H.S.:1985:137). So Tughlaq exempts Hindus from Jizia-tax. He says, "Hindus are also human beings" (Karnad, Girish:1975(2001):2). Thus he ignores Shariat or canon law and proves himself a devotee of modernity.

Tughlaq has a passion to teach and to impart new things to his subjects. He desires to cultivate a true vision of justice and brotherhood without any discrimination. So he makes a provision to complain even against His Majesty if there is any injustice. Under this new system of justice, Vishnu Prasad files suit against Sultan that his land has been confiscated unlawfully by the officers of state. Kazi-i-Mumalik considers the matter carefully and declares that Brahmin's claim is right and he should be given five hundred silver dinars as compensation. Tughlaq admits his guilt and decision of Kazi-i-Mumalik. He proves 'everybody was equal in the eyes of law and it was proved by the act of Vishnu Prasad case. It was a rare act on the part of Sultan' (Mahale, H.S.:1985:113). No doubt, Tughlaq shows impartiality while administering justice. It reflects through the example when he orders a sentence of death by stoning to his own step-mother who found guilty in Najib's murder. Such novelty is seen once in a blue moon.

Shifting capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is another radical decision of Tughlaq. To observe communal harmony, secularism, to build new future for India and security from outside

invadation, are the main objectives of Tughlaq behind this decision. He says, “My Empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near to border and as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom” (Karnad, Girish:1975(2001):3-4). This remark of Tughlaq displays his well-intentioned ideal view, noble vision for the creation of the ideal empire and acute observation of future without emotional attachment with the present. No doubt, all his ideals are influenced by Al Mutazi’s philosophy and Sadi’s poetry. On the whole, his decision of shifting capital suggests his inordinate ambition to change the course of history in general and to reshape and reconstruct it in particular like Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus.

Introduction of copper currency is another fine example of Tughlaq’s exordinary vision. It is the most daring experiment. This Monetary Policy shows his an innate passion to build ‘a new future for India’ (P.40). He introduces it alongwith silver dinars and giving same value both of them. He issues orders that in all transactions copper tokens should be accepted like gold and silver coins. Infact, his purpose is to build a passionate relationship between ruler and the ruled. Unfortunately his romantic journey of innovative idealism fails miserably. But one cannot deny his love for progressive move and unflagging zeal for reforms. On the whole, his novel Monetary Experiment shows his concrete ability and competence to do something new for the people and the state.

Tughlaq is a distinguished scholar and man of ideas. His vision is enlarged and shaped by Sukrat (Socrates), Aflatoon (Plato), Zarathustra or Buddha and Greek literature. So he segregates religion from politics and does not allow himself to rely on God, religion or prayer merely, though the word of God was his breath of life. The supreme ideals like peace, truth, justice, equality, prosperity and regeneration of people are invaluable than religion and religious people for him. Naturally he does not allow the religious leaders like Sheikh-Imam-Ud-din, Sheikh Haidar Ali, Sheikh Hood etc. to interfere into politics and to spread unlawful and fallacious doctrines of religion in society. When they try to do so, Tughlaq either imprisons or exiles or kills them strategically. He firmly says to Sheikh-Imam-Ud-din, “You propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha ..... I’m sorry. But it can’t be done.” (Karnad, Girish:1975: 2001:21). However, Tughlaq knows the spirit of religion which aims at the transformation of human heart, self-realization and social regeneration. Thus he tries to teach wisdom and truth, to mend the minds, to enlighten people’s souls and to free their minds from the

shackles of false religion. While doing so, he crosses the principles of religion but not defies nor sacrileges the religion.

In brief, Tughlaq is avant-garde Muslim ruler who takes radical decisions and implements certain policies in order to transform his state into utopia. His novel policies viz. Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of Jizia-tax, shifting capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, introduction of copper currency, equality before law, freedom of expression, impartial justice and segregation of politics from religion represents him a disciple of modernity whose visions are influenced by the ideology of secularism of Buddha.

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## The Metaphor of the Family as Mileu for Social Comment – A Study of Edward Albee's *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*

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Once when asked if the American family or murdering parents and children constituted the recurring theme in his plays, Albee protested against the critical tendency to fossilize a living artist: "People are often eager to make neat packages. But I think one of the most preposterous things in the world is to examine a body of work that is growing and come to conclusions about it. If I were to drop dead I could understand an evaluation being made. This whole thing may be merely a preparation for something entirely different."<sup>1</sup>

In the early plays, Albee satirizes the bourgeois American family and destroys the common illusions attached to it. He ridicules the family's standardized components but nevertheless implies the possibility of mutual accommodation which emerges in the later plays. The important difference between the early satires and the middle and later plays is that the family unit and the house which shelters it come to represent in both real and metaphysical terms an acceptable search for order and a place for the inherent human need for love. The family is a common metaphor through out, first, providing the agency for either disharmony or communion among individuals, and, second, embodying a recognizable entity for that peculiar Albee character which Ruby Colm has called "Albeegory".

The family group as a vehicle for the themes of spiritual and actual death-in-life is obvious in his brief, early play, The Sandbox. This brief skit, only fourteen minutes long, presents a caricature of Mommy and Daddy in their cliché-ridden existence, opposed by the life-death cycle represented in the dying Grandma and the Young Man, Angel of Death. In abstracting the characters from The American Dream for a play commissioned for the Spoleto Festival in Italy, Albee has successfully distilled their essential qualities and clarified antagonisms. Mommy-Daddy (and their hired musician) are clearly on one

side and the Grandma -- Young Man on the other. On the Mommy-Daddy level, Albee continues his thematic exposure of the hypocrisies and empty customs developed; the awareness of love alongside the inevitability of death. In addition to the basic antagonism between the two sets of characters there is a complex system of role-playing on each side. In The Sandbox, Albee adopts a Pirandellian technique whereby the characters knowingly play out their individual roles within a social structure and a known destiny. The movement of the play<sup>2</sup> is towards inevitable natural death in contrast with the deadening pretenses of living.

Mommy and Daddy come on to a bare stage as a beach setting, where once more we have the isolated two chairs, "set side by side, facing the audience". The stage directions inform us that when these two people call each other by name," these names are empty of affection and point up the presenility and vacuity of their characters.\* Onstage is a Young Man performing calisthenics, employing the arms only, suggesting "the beating and fluttering of wings. THE YOUNG MAN is, after all, the Angel of Death" (9).<sup>3</sup> He is the American Dream Young Man further advanced into simplicity of mind and heart, an actor who is told by others what to do.<sup>4</sup>

The Mommy chooses a place as a perfect spot to set Grandma down for her approaching death – "There is sand there – and the water beyond" (9), she says, describing the end of the land as bordering on eternity. They bring on Grandma, carrying her in a kind of foetal position, and "dump her" into a sandbox. In this box, she is child and ancient, embodying the entire process of life's cyclical ritual, with the end in the beginning. Mommy has arranged a competing ritual of burial according to social custom – the proper thing to do in the face of her mother's death. Playing the role of stage director setting the scene for death, she commands a hired musician to play, sees that all is in readiness, with Grandma in her symbolic box, and seats herself along with Daddy to await the event with suitable attitude of mourning.

They are interrupted in their grief by Grandma who sometimes acts a child and sometimes a stage manager, stepping out of the dramatic frame. She halts the expected passing of time, informs them that she is not yet ready to die and turns to the audience to launch into an autobiographical account of her life: her marriage to a farmer, his Death,

\*Edward Albee. Two Plays—The Sandbox, The Death of Bessie Smith (New York: Signet Books, 1963) p. 8. All subsequent references are to this edition.

and the resultant situation where, pointing to Mommy, “I had to raise that big cow over there by my lonesome,” (The Old Woman in Albee’s play Box-Mao-Box was also married to a farmer, also reviews her past, is also rejected by her girl children, affirming the continuity of Albee’s familial characters throughout his work). Grandma finally begins to busy herself, while the Young Man Angel who is an actor speaks the lines he has been taught and Grandma complements him for his performance. In this ambience of surrealism and Pirandello – like role-playing, Grandma, the master of her own death, folds her arms and pretends to expire at her own rate in the sandbox; Mommy, thinking that Grandma is dead, stops the musician, ceases the death-watch and mouths a cliché of satisfaction with the ritual she has directed: “It pays to do things well”. She and Daddy leave, satisfied that they have done the proper thing. Ironically, Grandma is not dead - she has observed her daughter’s sentiments and mocks them comically. Weak and unable to get out of the box, she is really near death and in her last moments establishes a real exchange of affection with the youth as Angel of Death.

Brief as it is, The Sandbox deserves close scrutiny, despite the fact that the critic George Wellwarth states that, like The Death of Bessie Smith, it is not worth much comment.<sup>5</sup> In a comprehensive view of Albee’s work, it represents a refinement of the beginning plays in the succinctness of its characterizations and in sparseness of its design, a foreshadowing of what is to come in the immensely more sophisticated Box and Quotations. Role-playing which has been fully developed in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and to some extent in Tiny Alice and A Delicate Balance – is among the devices initiated in this little play.

Synthesis of time is one of the most important techniques characteristic of Albee in the development of plot and theme. In The Sandbox, that synthesis is exemplified in the character of Grandma who literally bridges past and present. The end of the playlet is in the beginning, as the aged Grandma dies in the coffin dust of the child’s sandbox. Age and childhood, past and present, the worldly and the other worldly are together – a situation which Albee’s later plays explore in greater depth.

The box is a symbol unique to Albee, appearing repetitively throughout his work. In The Sandbox, as the child’s place and the ultimate enclosure of the old lady, it is the container of time’s continuity, exemplifying the existence of the past and the present. We have a first inkling of this notion in The American Dream with Grandma’s boxes as the

securely tied-up emblems of a lifetime. The form of the box becomes ultimately dominant in Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung where it represents an inevitable presence, a known order which remains unaltered and unalterable through past and present time. Related to the box is the room which can be seen as a symbolic place of security in The Zoo Story. The room as enclosure becomes in later plays a vital centre of struggle, uniting past and present time.

Despite its germinal characteristics in respect to Albee's later work, the little skit is, after all, fundamentally a farce. It is a comedy of manners, employing some rather sophisticated devices including parody, reversal, and irony, as well as amusing visual effects. Contrasted to the stillness of death and the visual blankness of the scene is the Bergsonian comic device of characters engaged in mechanical repetitive motions: the Mommy - directed musician keeps playing the perfunctory music of the funeral rites, while nodding up and down like robot; the Angel of Death, playing his role, does his fluttering calisthenics hovering over the dying Grandma. The nodding may also be interpreted as a friendly and affectionate recognition of the Young Man by the Musician, but the contrasts are visually amusing while at the same time they are symbolically representative of two opposing attitudes at the moment of death.

In one of his fatuous attempts to rewrite Albee, Michael Rutenberg decries all this motion onstage as detracting from Grandma, and wishes it had been omitted.<sup>6</sup> Rather than detracting, these movements enhance the comedic comment in the play, providing a visual and aural counterpoint between the measures of the funeral music and the dance of death as well as juxtaposing two movements in time, one related to the sterile life of Mommy and Daddy and the other to the Grandma - Young Man alliance of feeling. They also provide some rhythm to an otherwise statistically-designed playlet.

Comic scenes in The Sandbox demonstrate Albee's exceptional ear for the orchestration of dialogue and sound. The following dialogue demonstrates his handling of the rhythm of speech with a kind of spareness resembling vaudeville:

(There is an off-stage rumble)

**Daddy:** (Starting): What was that?

**Mommy:** (beginning to weep) It was nothing.

**Daddy:** It was . . . it was . . . thunder . . . or a wave breaking . . . or something.

**Mommy:** (Whispering through her tears) It was an off-stage rumble . . . and you know what that means . . .

**Daddy:** I forget . . .

**Mommy:** (Barely able to talk) It means the time has come for poor Grandma . . . and I can't bear it!

**Daddy:** (Vacantly) I . . . I suppose you're got to be brave.

**Grandma:** (Mocking) That's right, kid, be brave, you'll bear up, you'll get over it. (Another off-stage rumble . . . louder).

**Mommy:** Ohhhhhhhhhh . . . poor Grandma . . . poor Grandma . . .

**Grandma:** (To Mommy) I'm fine! I'm all right! It hasn't happened yet! (16-17).

Biggsby correctly observes that The Sandbox is the "closest that Albee has ever come to reproducing an "absurd" play in the European sense. Nevertheless there are clear indications that his personal vision stops short of Beckett's nihilism. For in the person of Grandma he creates a character whose vitality and perception contrast directly with the vacuity of those who take part in her personal endgame. She clearly has no patience with the hypocrisy shown by Mommy and Daddy. She recognizes their clichés for what they are and in doing so surely attests the existence of other values. At the same time, she faces her death with a dignity and even a sense of touching irony which seem to lift her above the immediate absurdity of her situation."<sup>7</sup>

Despite obvious resemblances to Pirandello, to Strindberg in The Dance of Death and Ghost Sonata, and to other contemporary playwrights, Albee has his own private outlook and technique for developing it. This little play, concentrating on the familial absurdities alongside the vision of love and the need for love, reveals a non-destructive attitude, a typically American hope that things ought to be better than they are. Through the medium of farce, Albee has sharpened his characteristic view.

The American Dream may be considered as play which enlarges the scope of Albee's satire on American society. The American family emerges from its background role in The Zoo Story and becomes the object of open derision in The American Dream; but while Albee ridicules the moral, social, and economic standards which govern the institutions of the home and marriage, he is concerned with corruption in the whole of the societal structure. From the technical point of view, this play contains devices which become characteristic of the later Albee; it also demonstrates clearly a growing schism between his presentation of social problem and an exhibition of personal suffering.

In the Preface to The American Dream, dated May 24, 1961, Albee writes:

The play is an examination of the American Scene, an attack on the substitution of the artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity; it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen.

Is the play offensive? I certainly hope so, it was my intention to offend – as well as amuse and entertain. Is it nihilist, immoral, defeatist? Well to that let me answer that The American Dream is a picture of our time – as I see it, of course. Every honest work is a personal, private yowl, a statement of one individual's pleasure or pain, but I hope that The American Dream is something more than that. I hope that it transcends the personal and the private, and has something to do with the anguish of us all.<sup>8</sup>

Albee hopes that the examination of the “American scene” transcends the “private yowl,” the question is whether he has successfully combined an intellectual satire on society with individual psychology. He begins the play in the mode of Ionesco's The Bald Soprano, an amusing exposure of society fatuities, but veers away from it into probings of psychological order.

The visual setting of The American Dream implies lack of communication, as in his earlier play, The Zoo Story. Mommy and Daddy are discovered at the beginning of the play, seated in two separated chairs set down in a barren living room. The dialogue indicates disorder in the malfunctioning household where the icebox and the doorbell are out of order and the toilet doesn't work.<sup>9</sup> In this parody of the American symbols of a good life, caricatured Mommy and Daddy are dependent on the outside world to assist them not only in righting the physical evidences of disarranged house, but also for standards of judgement.

When we took this apartment, they were quick enough to have one sign the lease, they were quick enough to take my check for two month's rent in advance. . . . .  
But now, try to get the icebox fixed, try to get the doorbell fixed, try to get the leak in the johnny fixed! Just try it . . . they aren't so quick about that (pp. 57, 58).

Mrs. Barker, an embodiment of the “they”<sup>10</sup> who fix things, arrives. She fills a multiple role as symbol of an outside society, as chairman of Mommy's women's club and final arbiter of Mommy's taste, as worker for the Bye-Bye Adoption Agency which was responsible for selling Mommy and Daddy an adopted son who failed to please and has died of wounds inflicted on him by his adopting parents, as the “they” who will give parents “satisfaction”, a term which runs throughout the play with amusing application to sexual as well as material affairs. Mrs. Barker is a comprehensive figure of external moral and social authority which includes the disposition and the fate of children within the family. She is a comic butt of satire.

In this family, the youth who has died was emasculated and literally destroyed by Mommy. By means of an amusing trick of substitution by Grandma – a canny figure whom Albee establishes as the truth – teller and *raisonneur* in the family – a young man without individuality or passion, therefore a model of the splendid American Dream, becomes a replacement for the dead child. He is a living twin, but, deprived of the qualities which Mommy found offensive, he is emotionally and spiritually dead, therefore able to fulfill Mommy’s dreams. The American Dream youth is happily accepted by Mommy who finally has the son she wants, a beautiful young man who is unable to love but submits to being loved, a victim shaped to the needs of those about him:

Young Man: We were identical twins . . . he and I

. . . . .  
 But we were separated when we were still very young, my brother, my twin and I . . . I have suffered losses . . . Once, my heart became numb . . .and from that time I have been unable to love . . . and since that time I have been unable to see anything, anything, with pity, with affection . . . with anything but . . . cool disinterest. And my groin . . . even there . . . since one time . . . one specific agony . . . since then I have not been able to love anyone with my body . . . I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions. I have been drained, torn asunder, disembowed. I have, now, only my person . . . my body, my face. I use what I have . . . I let people love me . . . I accept the syntax around one, for while I know I cannot relate . . . I know I must be related to. . . . As I told you, I am incomplete . . . I can feel nothing. I can feel nothing. (114, 115)

The Young Man concludes his speech with the comment which reflects his destiny: “It will always be thus”. For the final ordering of this household is an empty disorder, matching its physical disarray. The emotional identification of the two halves of the child, the double image of a child sacrificed to a destructive mother, is a psychologically disturbing one. Having begun with the cool, pared-down dialogue of satire and parody, Albee turns to a different mode where turbulent and passionate psychological drama dominates the more objective scene.

Despite shifts between general satire and personal psychology, the view of Mommy is consistent. Mommy is unrelievedly destructive and morally and physically corrupt in The American Dream. The lack of proper name makes her a generic specimen of all Mommies just as the other characters are types representative of other members of the family. The only character in the play with a name is Mrs. Barker, presumably named for the insistent voice of the intrusions of an outside world. Mommy, according to Grandma,

“makes all the trouble. If you’d listen to me, you wouldn’t have married in the first place. She was a tramp and a trollop and a trull to boot, and she’s no better now” (69). The total caricature of Mommy’s materialism and immorality exemplifies the playwright’s view at this point in his development, a view of disorder in both private and public worlds. As a common denominator of evil in both phases of the play – social satire and psychological “drama” – Mommy is consistent and serves as a base for Albee’s ironic views on society as a whole and the American family in particular.<sup>11</sup> In the later plays, the character changes somewhat. Although the “Mommy” of Virginia Woolf and A Delicate Balance retains some of the characteristics of this Mommy, she loses her ascendancy to the male. In the later plays, a softer closure is effected with the view of Mommy’s capacity for acceptance of accommodation, if not actual love.

Yet Albee is not denying the possibilities of rapport between people; it is notable that those possibilities reside in Albee’s mouthpiece for truth, the Grandma. Hamilton has quite correctly identified her as the conscience of the play and its “questing intelligence.”<sup>12</sup> Mommy and Daddy want to get rid of her, as, like the generation she represents, the truth of the past has outlived its usefulness. But Grandma has a close liason of understanding with the Young Man, establishing what Dan Sullivan has called “some hope for the family romance after all.”<sup>13</sup>

In The American Dream, Albee introduces techniques and devices which distinguish his future work. First, the personae of the Albee family make their first real appearances, the domineering Mommy, the arid Daddy, the sympathetic Grandparent, the suffering child. Second, the Insider-Outsider confrontation which is vital to an understanding of the structure of Albee’s plays is born with Mrs. Barker, the first of a long line of outsiders who represent the corruption of exterior values affecting the “house”. Third, the double or mirror image reflecting dual sides of time and character – a device greatly extended in later plays – appears literally in a pair of twins, one living and one dead, allying the child and death as a recurrent motif in Albee.

The metaphor of family as a milieu for social and historical themes begins with The American Dream. The notions of fertility and aridity as exemplified in familial relations are later extended in Virginia Woolf, and particularly in All Over into a broader framework dealing with man’s historic place. In The American Dream, nothing is certain for Mommy and Daddy, representatives of the shifting realities of today’s society, not even

individual desire or taste. In Mommy's parable of the hat, Albee employs the parable technique which is typical of his dramaturgy. Mommy was uncertain of its colour, bought an identical hat taking it for another, always dependent on the judgement of somebody else. Physical objects are unreal; rooms disappear absurdly in that disordered house, Mommy goes for water and can't find it, Daddy can't find Grandma's room which was there but isn't really discoverable. Albee is making a modulation from the examples of silly disconnections of reality within the family to the larger social and contemporary scene, equating the absurdities in both worlds. On the other hand, Grandma has everything tied up in small boxes. She knows where she is and where she is going, she has a history enclosed in the boxes. In a motif which harks back to Jerry's possessions in his room in The Zoo Story and which anticipates the symbol of order in the play called Box-Mao-Box, Grandma finally explains the contents of her precious containers after Mommy and Daddy, caught up in ephemera, repeatedly refuse to be interested or to understand the real memorabilia of a life-time: "some old letters, a couple of regrets . . . Pekinese, blind at that . . . the television . . . my Sunday teeth . . . eighty-six years of living . . . (120). Albee employs the imagery of these boxes as concealing the elusive realities of life which Daddy and Mommy and Mrs. Barker are unable to see. For Grandma, they are the abiding and permanent things, her intimate properties, objective correlatives of a genuine self. The removal of Grandma from the house implies the inherent schism between the realities of a known past and the unrealities of an uncertain present – a theme which absorbs Albee in later plays.

Lee Baxandall has placed an historical interpretation on the whole roster of Albee characters in all plays, including The American Dream, according to epochs in American history. He states that "three generations comprise Albee's archetypal family: Then, the epoch of a still-dynamic national ethic and vision, Now, a phase which breaks down into several tangents of decay, and Nowhere, a darkly prophesied future generation. Only two characters are left over from Then; Grandma . . . and a *pater-familias* or patriarch who is occasionally mentioned but never appears."<sup>14</sup> In The American Dream the child is seen in the context of a real family as compared with Jerry's Mom and Pop who are shadowy figures in the background or empty spaces in a picture frame.

When Grandma has her confidential discussion with Mrs. Barker, Grandma relates the story of the child adopted twenty years earlier in order to explain to Mrs. Barker why

she has come to see Mommy and Daddy. Grandma lapses into the story-telling attitude; “Once upon a time. . .” (96). She proceeds to tell the story with only a slight disguise: “There was a man very much like Daddy, and a woman very much like Mommy. . . .” Grandma is playing a word game with Mrs. Barker, but Mrs. Barker later reveals that she is unable to understand the rationale between Grandma’s use of the word “like” and the visit to Mommy and Daddy. It is certainly probable that twenty years ago, they all were not as they are now. What Mommy and Daddy wanted was “a bumble of joy.” Mrs. Barker states, “Oh, like a bundle” (97). Grandma says, “Bundle, bumble, who cares?” (98). The substitution of the word “bumble” becomes significant when it is revealed that what Mommy and Daddy wanted is comparable to a “bumbling idiot.” Also, with her rhetorical question, Grandma re-emphasizes the lack of concern not merely for words, but for the thoughts and ideas which they should transmit.

The story is filled with indications of Mommy’s and Daddy’s sexual sterility and mental impotence. The baby is bought, as one buys a commodity, and what follows is a tale of child abuse which is related through the use of clichés of the body: “It cried its heart out, “Mommy gouged those eyes right out of its head,” (99), Mommy and Daddy castrated the child and cut its hands off for developing “an interest in its you-know-what,” they “cut its tongue out” for calling Mommy “a dirty name” (100). As the child grew, Mommy and Daddy discovered that “it didn’t have a hand on its shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay. . . .” (101). The literal use of the clichés temper the horror of the story with the ridiculous. This combination, which gives the story its meta-realistic effect, is further compounded by Mommy’s and Daddy’s actions after the child died, naturally Mommy and Daddy resented its death, “their having paid for it, and all.” They proceed to demand satisfaction from the agency, which supports the idea that the child was treated as a commodity: “They wanted their money back. That’s what they wanted” (101). This attitude further illustrates their crass complacency. The child meant no more to them than the fixtures they could not fix. Instead of enabling the child to explore as children do, Mommy and daddy not only emasculated him, but left him unable to learn sensorality. He was thus not merely dehumanised, he was given the attribute of “thing-ness”. The logical conclusion is that the child became being-as-object-corpse. The child was permitted no life, and therefore was beyond Death-in-life.

After Grandma finishes telling her story to Mrs. Barker (who can only say, “My, my, my” (101), Mommy and Daddy are heard wandering around off-stage, unable to find not only Grandma’s television and Pekinese, but also such illogical things to lose as the water and Grandma’s room. This is a situation of incomprehensible inanity, for they cannot accomplish what any trainable retardate can learn to do. It is amid this confusion that the Young Man enters, greeted first by Grandma, who has the same reaction of pleasure as the Grandma of The Sandbox. Again, both Grandma and the young man admire his muscles, while he flexes them to justify her admiration, as well as his own. He is likewise considering an acting career. As Grandma says, he should be “right up there on the old silver screen.” The young man agrees that his face is handsome:

Yes, it’s quite good, isn’t it? Clean-cut, midwest farm boy type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way. Good profile, straight nose, honest eyes, wonderful smile . . . (107).

What the young man has described is the prototype of the traditionally acceptable American young man, judged on the basis of physical appearance and surface reaction. Grandma explains the meaning of his self-description:

Yup. Boy, you know what you are, don’t you? You’re the American Dream, that’s what you are. All those other people, they don’t know what they’re talking about. (108)

The tendency at this point is to regard the young man as a symbol, and his mental and emotional vacuity justifies the symbolism as well as clarifies it. The clean, honest good-hearted, and pleasant looking young man is considered by American society to embody the potential to fulfill the dream of success. As the young man says of himself, “I’m a type” (113). But the required conformity constitutes that middle-class deformity Grandma earlier mentions. The young man does not care what kind of work he performs; “I’ll do almost anything for money” (109). He will help Grandma only if “there’s money in it” (110). He is unsure of most things and seems to have little or no recall. He explains,

It’s that I have no talents at all, except what you see . . . my person, my body, my face. In every other way I am incomplete, and I must therefore . . . compensate” (113).

The young man’s story reveals that he was the identical twin of the child Mommy mutilated and murdered, the young man is without grace, innocence, heart, sight, or sexual potency:

I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions. I have been drained, torn asunder . . . disemboweled. I have, now, only my person . . . my body, my face. I use what I have . . . I let people love me. . . I accept the syntax around us, for while I know I cannot relate . . . I know I must be related to. As I told you, I am incomplete . . . I can feel nothing. I can feel nothing (115).

This statement presents a complete picture of spiritual sterility.

The implication involved in this presentation of the young man is that the Mommies and Daddies of the world have destroyed the founding idealism of the American Dream. Because of “complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity” of such members of society, the American Dream is now only an outward form. It has no further substance than the alphabetical letters which form its name. These people try only for the trite aspects of life, the basic value is money rather than accomplishment, personal dignity means only that the real truth is not recognized or stated, and language is limited to a group of stylized, meaningless forms. The Mommies and Daddies of the world refuse to think or feel, what they live is the life-lie to the extreme, an existence of total inauthenticity. In a society in which sterility has become a way of life, all that is left is a crude deformity of what man could be. Thus, as Mommy and Daddy accept the young man as a substitute for Grandma, it is understood that their trite hopes are bound in a dead and thus futile future.<sup>15</sup> Unlike in The Sandbox, Grandma does not physically die. As Albee states, Grandma “departs from a form of life a great deal more dead than anything else”.<sup>16</sup> Yet, as in Jerry’s case (The Zoo Story), Grandma makes a decisive act to remove herself from the Death-in-life situation around her. At the end of the play, Grandma has already left the play. But she returns to the audience’s view to make the last statement of the play:

Well, I guess that just about wraps it up. I mean, for better or worse, this is a comedy, and I don’t think we’d better go any further. No, definitely not. So, let’s leave things as they are right now . . . while everybody’s happy . . . while everybody’s got what he wants . . . or everybody’s got what he thinks he wants. Good night, dears (127).

This is the statement of The American Dream directed to the audience, and its inclusive “everybody” implies that the members of the audience are involved in the same situation portrayed on the stage. As Anne Poolucci states, the play is “an incisive comment on the lie in us all.”<sup>17</sup> Grandma indicates that if the play were to continue, it would no longer be comic, for the future of those in such a situation is not pleasant or amusing. Mental, emotional, and spiritual sterility can only lead to a future continuation of what Grandma has called “an age of deformity.”

## References

1. Wagner, Walter, ed., The Playwrights Speak (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967) 61.
2. Richard E. Amacher – adopting some Aristotelian criteria for this little play as for other Albee works – observes that it moves through a complex design of “recognition” to a destined close. He states that the design is “complex, not because it reverses itself but because it does not. The general line of the plot is unchanged from beginning to end, Grandma dies. But the plot is complex because it contains recognition, or discovery . . . a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined . . . for good or bad fortune.” Richard E. Amacher. Edward Albee (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 177.
3. This authorial note, while of course not transmittable in performance, points up Albee’s stress on “doubling”, the reflecting of a character in multiple embodiments. This insertion is similar to a textual comment in the much later play, All Over, where in almost identical language, Albee equates two separate personae in the play.
4. Cohn has remarked on the similarity of monograms in American Dream youth and the Angel of Death. Cohn, Ruby. Edward Albee, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 77 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minneapolis Press, 1969) 13.
5. Wellwarth, George E. “Hope Deferred: The New American Drama”, Literary Review, 7 (1963) 274-84.
6. Rutenberg, Michael E. Edward Albee – Playwright in Protest (New York: DBS Publications, 1969) 43.
7. Bigsby, C.W.E. Edward Albee. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969) 30.
8. Edward Albee. “The American Dream” in Two Plays by Edward Albee. (New York: Signet Classics, The New American Library, Inc., 1961) (53-54). All subsequent references are to this edition.
9. Michael Rutenberg carries his social and political bias into an extra-textual interpretation of the broken down household, observing that the “refrigerator represents our hunger drive, which is at the moment now being taken care of adequately. The broken down bathroom suggests that waste is piling [sic] up in this grotesque household. The broken doorbell symbolizes the family’s isolation.”  
Rutenberg, Michael. Edward Albee – Playwright in Protest, p. 64.
10. Albee’s fascination with the plural pronoun replacing the singular pronoun becomes more visible in later works, especially in Tiny Alice.
11. Debusscher views the play as a comment on the American institution of “momism”. Debusscher, Gilbert. Edward Albee, Tradition and Renewal. Brussels: American Studies Center, 1967.
12. Kenneth Hamilton, “Mr. Albee’s Dream,” Queen’s Quarterly, 70 (1963) 393-99.
13. Dan Sullivan. “Albee’s Bessie Smith and Dream Revived,” New York Times, (3 Oct., 1968) 55.
14. Lee Baxandall. “The Theatre of Edward Albee,” Tulane Drama Review, 9:2 (Summer 1965) 19-40.
15. Ibid., p. 20.
16. Rutenberg, Michael. “Interview with Edward Albee”, in Edward Albee – Playwright in Protest, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
17. Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic, p. 29.

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## Ecology as a Mode: The Poetry of D.C. Chhabial and Kulbhushan Kushal

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Indian English literature, particularly fiction, has received unprecedented acclaim all over the world in recent times. There have been a number of writers who have won prestigious literary awards like the Booker and even the Nobel Prize for their fictional writings. At home also, Indian-English fiction has gained enviable popularity, prestige and critical attention. On the other hand, Indian English poetry has suffered neglect despite valuable contributions being made by Indian English poets. It can be ascertained from the number of critical studies and academic research in fiction and poetry. The Indian English literary scene also points out an interesting fact about the attitude of critics and the writers involved in the evaluation and writing of fiction and poetry. Whereas the established writers of fiction and the critics allow much space for the blossoming of new writers, the emerging poetic voices seem to struggle against the aura of the established earlier poets that tends to smother their growth. The fiction writers are appreciated and eulogized for experimentation in themes and techniques that mark their difference from the earlier writers. On the other hand, the poets are usually expected to follow the standards set by the earlier poets. In spite of such attitudinal compulsions there are poets who concentrate on contemporary issues in their own way. Their poetry marks a discernable shift from earlier romantic, religious, moral and purely aesthetic concerns to the issues that find greater relevance in the present times in philosophical and experiential terms.

The present study concentrates on the poetry of D.C. Chhabial and Kulbhushan Kushal to explore how contemporary Indian English poets weave global concerns into Indian philosophical thought and cultural ethos. Their concerns do not remain strictly related to Indian social reality and exhibit an awareness of the problems related to the exploitation of nature unmindful of the consequences. These poets assert how these problems eventually demand the adoption of a view of life that advocates harmony between the human and the non-human world. Such a view understands dharma or religion freed from scriptural doctrines or one's duty to do good to one's fellow human beings. It extends the concept of brotherhood to the elements of the non-human world, in other words, to ecology and our surroundings. Consequently, their vision of life spreads across political boundaries, social or cultural and ethnic groups and understands human existence as essentially tied to our surroundings. Their poetry expresses how the culture of gold-digging impacted by lust for material wealth has led human beings to molest and bruise ecology and environment. Their treatment of nature may inspire us to call them nature poets in the traditional sense of the word also but their primary concern to raise a voice against dilapidation and mutilation of nature and an understanding that to harm nature is to harm ourselves brings them closer to eco-critics. It makes the treatment of ecological concerns a form of poetic mode to include broader concerns and issues into their poetry.

As true champions of environmental protection and preservation of nature they reject the prevalent attitude towards nature. According to this view nature and the world surrounding us has value only for human beings and the way they consider it in utilitarian terms. Therefore the use of technology to tame and exploit nature to any extent is justified and acceptable. This view is understood to be “anthropocentric i.e. man centered, which is directly opposed to the biocentric i.e. the earth centered view. But this anthropocentric view is strongly contested in the poetry of D.C.Chambial and Kulbhushan Kushal as they too like, “Deep ecologists reject merely technical solutions; because these constitute yet another form of human dominance”, and sharing the concern of the deep ecologists these poets, “advocate a bio-centric world which recognizes non-human world as having value independently of its usefulness to human beings, who have no right to destroy it except to meet vital needs.” (Waugh 2006:36). Chambial points out how nature resents human dominance through excessive use of technological and scientific power and skill:

Those who brag to have subjugated

The nature with leaping aspirations

Send satellites into space

Despite meticulous skill

They tumble down, a house of cards (Chambial, 2004:59).

The tumbling down of the huge structures reveals that nature too reacts like an over oppressed person. It reveals a symbiotic understanding and attitude of the poet that treats nature and environment as an independent entity and suggests the need for a mutually reciprocating attitude between nature and human beings.

A similar concern is expressed by Kulbhushan Kushal in his poem ‘Dance of Sirens’ where he equates sea waves with sirens. He feels that the sea storm is the result of human attempts to subjugate and obliterate nature:

Planting marines

In their wombs

Made them furious (Kushal, 2005: 79)

Nature has its own laws and values and for ages ‘The water left man alone’ and felt contended like a mother who overlooks some frivolities of her sons. But the excessive plundering of nature forces her to react in the form of ‘Jupiter’s thunder’, ‘To chastise the astray sons, And the daughters’. Kushal, like a true ecologist feels that nature reacts, even if violently, to restore environmental balance and asserts her existence independent of man’s control and thoughts about nature.

The awareness about ecology that proposes happy co-existence of the human and the natural world, these poets assert, leads to an appreciation of the moral and the spiritual faculties of man. Instead of treating nature as something dead and lifeless, its role as a living organism has to be considered. For this, ecologists emphasize that a change of our attitude towards nature and the way we use it is a must for a better civilization: “Deep ecology proposes drastic changes in

our habits of consumption, not only to avert catastrophe but as spiritual and moral awakening” (Waugh 2006:36). These ideas imply that the way we ‘consume’ i.e. use nature ultimately has a deep impact on our lives. D.C. Chambial’s poem ‘This Promising Age’ brings out the consequences of our plundering of nature and destroying it to develop stony structures:

Brooks and parks  
 Mysteriously disappeared  
 in the forced isolation  
 as glass aquaria stepped into  
 a room of hundredth storey steel house (Chambial,2004:7)

The poet also hints at the degeneration that our plundering of nature results in :

Passions degenerated  
 into mechanized smiles  
 while coming and going  
 lips frigid to flowery kisses  
 inside the tube (Chambial,2004:7).

All these result in the emergence of ‘synthetic cultures and ideals’. Lacking an awareness of the possible results of our misdirected use of nature people fall into a trap of taking the virtual for the real. Such an attitude hampers moral and spiritual growth.

People’s misunderstanding that leads them to take virtual for the real is the result of their estrangement from nature. It has brought degeneration into human relationships. Even the most sacred relation between the mother and child gets impacted due to the excessive and unethical use of technology. The natural process of giving birth to a child informs moral depravity when we find:

A business minded mother  
 decides to be pregnant  
 for those who do not want  
 to lose their shape (Chambial,2004:8)

It marks the height of moral depravity that has entered the natural human process of procreation. Apart from this, a loss of concern for values introduces an unhealthy trend in motherly affection and the attitude towards the mother. Kushal expresses the synthetic nature of this relationship that shows people’s misplaced concern for values: Now even a mother has become an ornamental object. Our attitude that sees nature only in terms of its use value has also impacted an understanding of parent –child relationship pointed out by the poet in ‘Sanitized mother’:

Please take real mothers away

Substitute please

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I am not asking for

The real mothers

.....

I want a mother

With a smile pasted on her face

Looks moist, face angelic (Kushal, 2005:38)

And to cater to this demand, the other persona in the poem offers;

The mother you may display

In your drawing room

And show all those

Who matter not (Kushal, 2005:38)

Ironically, this attitude speaks of our replacement of plastic flowers for the real ones in our drawing rooms. It shows how our understanding of nature has an extremely decisive role that influences our thinking about human relationships. Instead of the real, man prefers the plastic, artificial and the unnatural. This view is further strengthened when we see that the 'sanitized mother' here is more of a picture or an image of the mother that one cherishes in accordance with the requirements of the business world. The child here wants to decide the kind of mother that suits his social status. Just like human beings treat nature as something to be used according to their requirements. In both the cases, the 'other' i.e. the mother and the Mother Nature are treated as objects.

The implied similarities in human attitude and treatment of nature and the understanding of human relationships indicate that human existence is tied to nature in multiple ways. The poems of D.C. Chambial and Kulbhushan Kushal support this view through the assertion of an interconnection between all lives. The presence of nature in its various forms in the poetry of these writers shows how it plays an active role in human life. In their poetry, "The non-human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (Buell 1995:7). These poets seem to suggest that all species on this earth have sanctity of their own and there exists an inseparable bond between them.

Another belief that the two poets seem to share about nature and the non-human world that surrounds us is that, "non-human others have their own value and humans cannot judge them based on their knowledge about them." (Kumaran, 2009: 16.). The attitude based on human

knowledge about nature and animals alienates them from the non-human world and humans tend to degrade them or take them as something fixed and taken for granted. These poets try to add a different perception by highlighting the value of these objects of nature through the idea of the existence of a bond between man and nature as well as man and the animals. They do not treat these entities as just trees, rivers earth or dogs and cats as they believe that animals and trees etc also have their own grace.

Kushal's poem 'Intimate Strangers' reveals that man may be blind to his relation with his surroundings and behave like a stranger, but there does exist an intimate relation between man and nature, only man has to develop an awareness to realize this. Kushal talks about a symbiotic relation between man and trees in attempt to resolve the doubts, 'How I am related with the trees' when he suggests the nature of their common responses:

But I have seen them trembling  
When there is an earthquake  
I have seen them frightened  
When the lightning  
Strikes across the skies  
I have seen them.  
Lost in deep meditation (Kushal, 2008:27)

Similarly, Chambial's poem 'Manacles' shows similarity of attitudes between human beings and animals:

Do not make me a pet  
like a bird in a cage  
Or puppy in the lap  
Nor enthrall  
in the manacles  
Of your freedom ((Chambial, 2004:36)

The enslavements that man does not like to experience are also abhorred by animals. In similar situations, the humans and the non-humans undergo the some kind of humiliation and helplessness.

The non-human world that surrounds human life has the potential to provide meaningful messages to man. This world also serves the purpose of comparison that brings new awareness and has the ability to provide moral lessons. The world of nature is not merely an object of

observation or limited to spectacular scenes only that human beings have often taken it to be. The words of Berger that animals, "...are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance" (Berger 1980), point out the centralized way of thinking that people have about the world of nature. According to these views humans are treated to be the centre and the animals and natural objects as the 'other'. D.C. Chambial's poem 'The Difference' contests this view based on binary understanding. In this poem, the creatures like hen tend to acquire the central position as the human mother is suggested to learn motherly lessons from hen. A hen scares away the cat from her chicken whereas in the human world, A cat

seizes the bowl of milk  
 from the hands of a baby  
 whose father drudges in office  
 the mother at the type-writer,  
 dreams to spend the evening  
 at some fashionable discotheque  
 and listen to music. (Chambial, 2004:72).

In his poem, 'Dogs' Kushal also suggests to shun stereotypical attitude indicated by Berger in the earlier quoted lines. The poet emphasizes the evolvement of a different perception concerning human attitude towards animals like dogs: Instead of treating them as observed we should also treat them as observing us:

Dogs may laugh at us  
 At our contrived faces  
 At our gullibility  
 As we believe  
 We are sleeping  
 And they are awake! (Kushal, 2008:58).

Kushal's view about the harmony between man and nature, seeks a symbiosis between the two. Their happy co-existence and a healthy balance evolve in Kushal's poetry as a form of eco-dharma. His poetry thus can be seen as a prayer for the welfare of the whole universe. This universal welfare can be achieved, Kushal seems to convey in his poetry, through the promotion of awareness about the role of ecology and nature in human life. This becomes a kind of new dharma in the contemporary scenario as Skolimowski avers, "True Prayer and true meditation in our time becomes ecological prayer—such a form of meditation and action which helps to heal the planet which helps to heal other human beings, which helps to heal all other beings—including the forests, soil and polluted rivers."(Skolimowski, 1999: 14) Conforming to the ideas of eco-

dharma Kushal ironically prays to the elements of nature to remain away from human beings as they have become aliens to nature:

We are aliens

Alienated beings (Kushal, 2008:35)

And man's alienation has corrupted him to the extent that his proximity with nature invariably obliterates it. Therefore the poet with a concern for their sanctity prays to the elements of nature:

We pray to you

Please stay away from us

Our touch shall temper your heat

Shall steal your warmth

And shall rob your sacredness ((Kushal, 2008: 37)

This ecological prayer of the poet seeks to keep the purity of the seasons, trees, rivers, sky and the earth. It shows his condemnation of man's exploitation of nature. Due to the technological advancement man feels empowered to use nature without bothering about the consequences and its degenerating impact on nature. Man's unconcern for nature that results from his treatment of nature as dead objects plays havoc with it. Kushal indirectly makes a plea to treat nature as a living organism. He is highly critical of the attitude expressed in these lines:

We eat what you give

And in turn we pollute

Your heavenly stretch

With our curses (Kushal, 2008: 36)

The poet treats human beings as unworthy of living in touch with nature as they fail to be grateful for the gifts that nature bestows on us. Man's attitude that shows his dominating and oppressive attitude towards nature goes against Eco-justice that envisions underlying equality between human as well as non-human worlds.

Eco critics also highlight nature culture divide as a source of man's troubles and sufferings. The divisions amongst human beings based on different cultural systems are human constructions. The traits associated with the 'high' and the 'low', good and the bad or civilized and the uncivilized are not in accordance with the plan of nature. Nature here is perceived as a divine force that nourishes and governs all forms of life in terms of equality. The treatment of difference in human beings on the basis of these cultural constructs is not fundamental, transcendental or 'natural'. According to these perceptions peace is not the purpose of culture but nature that sees no differences and follows no discriminations:

No men strangers, no land foreign;

Everywhere shine the same sun and moon;  
 The spring brings buds and flowers forth  
 The clouds rain, the birds sing, Rivers flow  
 And air blows. Meddle not with their course.  
 We want peace. Give us peace. (Chambial, 2004:60).

How human intervention and exploitation of nature prompts nature to react in order to establish ecological balance forms another major concern of these poets. The natural calamities, these poets feel, are a kind of reaction that nature expresses. The disturbance in the basic harmony is disliked by nature. It is there not as something passive and dead. It has its own values and norms apart from its usefulness to man. Talking about the floods, Kushal expresses this view about nature:

The floods are here again  
 To remind us  
 How our anarchy has robbed  
 The peace of the earth. (Kushal, 2005:59)

The happenings like floods and earthquakes also form a kind of warning and reminder that  
 how our ears have stopped  
 Listening to the music  
 Of water, fire, earth  
 Either and wind. (Kushal, 2005:59)

The contemporary human culture has destroyed nature to such an extent that even the human existence on this earth stands endangered. With little regard for rehabilitation or restoration of the nature and ecology that has been destroyed man has turned into a parasite. He knows how to extract maximum benefits from nature without ever thinking to give her back its due. According to Eugene P Odum, "Until now man has generally acted as a parasite on his autotropic environment, taking what he needs with little regard to the welfare of the host."(Odum, 1995:233) Man's ingratitude towards his environment, ecology and nature has destroyed his surroundings beyond recognition and this has the potential to cause great harm to human civilization. Eugene P Odum also suggests, "If man does not learn to live mutualistically with nature then like the unadapted parasite he may exploit his host to the point of destroying himself" (Odum,1995: 233). Similar situation is presented in D.C. Chambial's poem, 'Testimony' in which we find:

To satiate inner urge  
 a super-scientist

in a super-lab

fired life ! (Chambial, 2004:76).

But ultimately ‘Super-Scylla’ created by this scientist ran out, ‘devouring and devastating’ when non-left, recalled upon father, to satiate the devil in stomach (76). It shows how human tendency to rob, dominate, exploit and destroy nature may ultimately destroy all these things and human beings too. .

Thus these poets express their awareness about the dangers that human race has to encounter due to excessive plundering of nature and contamination of environment. At the same time they express a firm faith in an inseparable bond and harmony between human world and the environment that surrounds it. Their major poetic achievement here lies in expressing this concern without a specific consideration for geo-political terms. Another special feature of their poetry in this connection is their contribution to our perception about the human and the non-human world. Instead of simply extending and intensifying our perceptions through the use of poetic devices like images, symbols, rhythm etc. to defamiliarize the familiar, they insert new reality orientations to our perceptions. It becomes a potent poetic mode in both these poets. These elements certainly point out the shift that contemporary Indian-English Poetry is headed towards that will certainly broaden its horizons extending from the Indian to the global.

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**HOODOO DETECTIVE PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN  
ISHMAEL REED'S NOVELS**

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the essential features of hoodoo detective is the issue of the African American civilisation. To probe the mysteries of this civilisation, it is appropriate that Reed uses the detective genre, essentially as a novel of suspense, in order to structure the novel. The conventions of this genre enable him to depict a world of conflicting powers which the detective must investigate and explain. While there are several layers of time in the novel, the main plot unfolds during the 1920s and concerns the apparently inexplicable outbreak of the plague in his novels.

Reed signifies on the discovery of truth pattern in the detective fiction. Structure in his novel is shaped in part by the structure of the traditional detective story. He uses that form as a skeletal structure for the basis of the narrative. Through the variety of personal life histories Reed tried “to redeem Black history from oblivion, correct the false account of White historians and make future Black generation aware of their proud heritage” (Wells 4-5). This paper analyses the reflection on the Black literary tradition and its relationship to Western literary forms played in the Hoodoo detective. The detective fails to solve the crime or find the truth. The missing text destroys any expectation of a closed conventional ending and reaffirms the text’s sense of indeterminacy. To Reed his novels do improvise upon the conventions of the traditional detective story [much in the same way the jazz musicians are expected to improvise on the standard composition].

In criminal investigations, detectives apply different thinking styles, such as method style, challenge style, skill style and risk style. In a survey in Norway, detectives were asked to list the five most important characteristics of effective investigators. This was done in a free format, requiring content analysis to categorise responses. Responses were categorised according to thinking styles. While creativity was the most frequently mentioned characteristic, content analysis shows that the skill style of detectives is the most effective thinking style. To be effective, detectives need to practice good empathic communication, open-minded curiosity, logical reasoning, creative thinking and dogged determination. The detective that consistently solves difficult cases is often said to have luck. While this may be partially true, it is probably only a small portion of what really makes the detective effective. To be an effective detective, in addition to that, being adequately prepared, one must also possess and develop certain essential traits. Some of these traits are self discipline and reasoning ability.

Every successful detective must possess a high degree of self discipline. This self discipline helps the detective's behavior to ensure that only legally acceptable and ethical methods of investigation are utilised to solve cases. A successful detective always approaches the case with an alert and fastidious attention to detail and never leaves anything to chance. All steps of the investigation must be carefully calculated and chances never taken that might jeopardise the case. Similarly, reasoning is based on the detective's ability to draw conclusions from evidence discovered in the course of an investigation. The ability to analyse a multitude of facts, and determine how they interrelate, is basic to a successful investigation. Although law enforcement officers practice this trait on a regular basis, this mental challenge is a routine part of being a detective.

Detectives are viewed as experts in many regards. Along with this recognition comes the responsibility for developing a case, while acting in a responsible and ethical manner. Most people have the ability to draw good conclusions from a set of facts. This conclusion does not necessarily have to agree with the conclusion other detectives have drawn [there can be an honest disagreement among reasonable people]. The problem arises when a detective is not willing to realise or admit that his/her bias is influencing his/her course of action.

## **STRATEGIES OF DETECTIVE FICTION**

Detective fiction is a branch of crime fiction that centers upon the investigation of a crime, usually murder, by a detective, either professional or amateur. It is the most popular form of both mystery fiction and hardboiled crime fiction. It is a stand-alone course and it examines, American and British detective fiction and the cultures in which these texts are literary created one. The American hard boiled approach versus the British arm chair approach to this genre, looking at characteristics which include narrative structures, plot devices, themes, stylistic flourishes, characterisations, and the function of detective heroes within the stories. Research scholars have the opportunity to research and read the major writers of detective fiction and explore how many of these authors have used detective fiction as social commentary, and, how, at the very least, their texts reflect the values, achievements, and social structures of their time.

Detective fiction, a genre once considered mostly fluff, abounds with good writing and trenchant social criticism. Although in the latter, teachers

of literature should be aware of the former as they consider whether or not to use detective fiction in their classes. Because of the latter, however, parts of the chapters could be used in classes of history, sociology, women's studies, African American studies, or even Native-American studies. The novels in this unit deal with themes of identity, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, assimilation, and discrimination.

But for the more traditional teacher of literature, the novels also contain complex protagonists and intricate plots. Hence they can be used to study characters and to analyse the structure and conventions of plot and narrative. The settings range from the rural to the urban, including the suburban, and these settings often play an integral role in developing aspects of the characters and the plots. This is to say, all the elements of good literature are here, and the added advantage of trying to solve a mystery alongside a fascinating detective in a clearly evoked setting.

While each novel in the paper will be dealt with separately to exploit what is interesting and unique about it, there are certain elements common to most literary works within the detective fiction genre that should be established at the beginning of the paper itself. These include a detective, a crime or mystery that needs to be solved, clues, suspects, and the positive identification of the culprit or solution to the mystery based on the clues given.

## **BLUES DETECTIVE**

The above statement is taken from the work of Stephen F. Soitos, whose text 'The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction' provides what Soitos calls "major tropes" that have "transformed [the detective fiction tradition]" These tropes include: "the detective persona, black vernaculars, and hoodoo" (11). Laura said to Soitos by introducing his writing that:

Black detective writers use African American detective tropes on both classical and hardboiled detective conventions to create a new type of detective fiction. Through the use of black detective personas . . . , black vernaculars, and hoodoo creations, African American detective writers signify on elements of the detective genre to their own ends. (BIDF 3)

These tropes not only apply to the novels of the African American writers in the unit, such as Walter Mosley and Barbara Neely, but, by replacing the words black and African American with Indian and Native American, they can be shown to apply to the novels of Tony Hillerman. According to Soitos, the fictional black detectives in his study identify strongly with their blackness and "all of them are aware, and make the reader aware, of their place within the fabric of their black society" (29). He further explains that "Black detectives are intimately connected to their surroundings, often involved in family relations, certainly deeply committed to exploring the meaning of blackness in the text" (31).

The blues detective creates a different set of priorities than either the classical or hardboiled detective. Rather than focusing simply on the crime and capture of the suspect, the blues detectives are interested in the social and political atmosphere. This social and political atmosphere is inscribed by racial prejudice. The blues detective recognises his or her own blackness as well as what blackness means to the characters in the text. Soitos use the term hoodoo to represent indigenous, syncretic, religions of African Americans in the New World, expanding the term to suggest that it also represents alternative worldviews of some black Americans. Soitos goes on to explain what he means by alternative worldviews:

The most important aspect of hoodoo . . . is the pervasive influence of its combined beliefs in creating an alternative belief system . . . These alternative systems include all of the common African philosophies such as ancestralism, belief in a higher life force, and the concept of full ontological being, which can include aspects of divination, animism, and spiritual awareness, through magic and conjure. (47)

Reed thinks that the Western novel is tied to Western epistemology. So it is usually realistic and has character development and all these things that one associates with the Western novel. Deconstructing his novels becomes a metaphor for deconstructing Western metaphysics.

## **DECONSTRUCT THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE DETECTIVE SUBGENRE**

Reed's Mumbo Jumbo is a busy and noisy novel. The pastiche of parody and satire clamours are the reader's attention for laughter. The novel

is what Bakhtin calls a carnivalesque text [a media theory], one seeking to capture the comic spirit in a jaded, overly rationalised and standardised age. In the novel, Reed offers the healing power of laughter as an antidote to the plague of tragedy – to him, essentially an exalted form of rationalism that has been the bane of Western Civilisation. The seeds of it are there in the possibilities inherent in Jes Grew and in the figure of LaBas who stands for and points to the meeting of the real World and the spiritual World.

In addition to the satire of cultural politics and the fervent declarations of aesthetic independence, Mumbo Jumbo is a novel concerned with pedagogy and epistemology. It forays into myth and legend. It is also a revision of history that seeks to challenge and dismantle our assumptions and conceptions about knowledge and truth. The novel seeks to undermine the artifice of conventional history and to remind them that there are other ways of knowing and other things to know.

This detective novel, in Mumbo Jumbo evinces Reed's desire to deconstruct the epistemology of the detective subgenre, with its emphasis on realism, linearity and ratiocination. Unlike the brooding, the hard-boiled sleuths of American fiction, Reed's detective, LaBas, is above all else intuitive. His name, as Gates has noted, suggests both the Voodoo loa (deity) Esu, in Haiti called Legba, a pan-African trickster figure. LaBas, a phrase used in New Orleans jazz recordings of the '20s and '30s. A "Two-headed man" (or hoodoo) who works out of Mumbo Jumbo Cathedral, LaBas eschews empirical evidence, preferring to understand phenomena through dreams and his feelings.

The monologue of the West cannot stand. A polyphonic and heteroglossic conversation must replace it. This is Reed's positive vision of American society, like Robert Hayden. To open up to Jes Grew does not mean that life would be an endless Madrigal, but it would keep it from being a perpetual Lent, as the Atonists seem to prefer. The Jes Grew movement is opposed by the Wallflower Order led by Hierophant one who hires Hinckle Von Vampton, a Knight Templar, and his thugs, Biff Musclewhite and Hubert safe cracker Gould, to destroy Jes Grew before it dismantles Western Civilisation. This is not the first time these forces have collided. The conflict in the 1920s, and by extension in the 1960s, is a replay of the ancient struggle between Osiris and Set and the various cults derived from that myth.

The plot of the novel is about the plot to stop Jes Grew from repossessing its ancient text, which connects Jes Grew to a primordial force

and an ancient conflict enshrined in myth but repressed throughout history. While there are murders that Reed's Hoodoo detective LaBas must investigate, Reed is more concerned with the macro crime, the theological and metaphysical betrayal at the root of it all. As LaBas says in the novel's epilogue – which takes place in the late 1960s – “I was a jack legged detective of the metaphysical who was the case” (MJ 212).

## **RACIAL AND INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Going back into the past to get some metaphor from the past to explain the present or the future is what he calls necromancy, in the form of prophecy. For Reed the cultural politics of the 1960s seemed to recapitulate what was happening in the 1920s. Both decades are full of political corruption. Racial consciousness is high and intense. The decade of the 1960s was both the Age of Aquarius and the politics of Law and Order. The authority to give the name to an age depends on the choices the culture makes – jazz or prohibition, doing the Eagle Rock or standing on the Plymouth Rock. It is one of the roles of art, as he sees it, to show what choices have been and can be made in this novel.

Reed let Neo-Hoodoo breakout into a fully large enough epidemic in his 1972 novel Mumbo Jumbo. In this novel, both black and white characters are beset by a disease called “Jes Grew” which throws them into dancing fits and makes them unable to function in American society. The novel's hero, a “Hoodoo detective” named LaBas, investigates the plague and in the process constructs the Hoodoo aesthetic that became Reed's Manifesto.

Reed makes plain, however, that some manifestation of Jes Grew would be revived by future generations of artists. The novel is about the near success of the transformation from old to new in the 1920s, an explanation of why Jes Grew did not reach pandemic proportions and change the face of America. Mumbo Jumbo suggests that the current upsurge of artistic activity among black artists is guided by an impulse more favourable to Jes Grew, the determination to reject white forms and recall back. It is not only concerned with the traditional province of fiction but also the registration of individual consciousness. In an interview given after Mumbo Jumbo was published, Reed discusses his concerns in the novel:

I want to go into the mysteries of the American civilisation. The American civilisation has finally got its rhythm; looking into the past you can see the rhythms of this civilisation. So I

stepped back to an age that reminds me of the one I'm writing in. I stepped back to the twenties. Instead of Nixon I invoked Harding. The parallels between the two are remarkable. (CIR 133-34)

As a metaphysical novel, the hoodoo detective LaBas, Reed's man at the borderline of human, combines mystical communication, the phenomenon of the crossroads, on the one hand, and the search for the solution of crimes, on the other. Reed's Mumbo Jumbo is the best mystery novel of the year and there is a problem as to whether or not this humorous experimental work can be classified as a mystery. Carter sees Mumbo Jumbo as:

further extension of the mystery genre into the realm of serious literature... Reed regards the mystery novel as a vehicle for getting at other mysterious, such as the mystery of American civilisation... Obviously Reed is after bigger game than individual evil doers. (IND 8)

According to this view, there is a metaphysical dimension in detective fiction which is down-to-earth-i.e., the mystery is ultimately concerned with matters of this world.

## INDUCTIVE NARRATOLOGY

In The Last Days of Louisiana Red novel, LaBas the Hoodoo detective recovers a spirit from the world of the dead. He tries to solve the murder of a gumbo works owner whose gumbo had been found to cure the illness brought on by forgetting the history. This is a good example to illustrate Reed's notion of metaphysical detection in The Last Days of Louisiana Red. The gumbo is the way to connect back to the spirit of the African past. Neo-Hoodoos' are detectives of the metaphysical about to make a pinch. A writing strategy of detection is replaced by one of induction narratology of detection in the novel.

At this point it should no longer come as a surprise that Reed turns to one of the most popular genres using a retrospective strategy, the detective story as a vessel for his Neo-Hoodooism. This detective story defines a discursive realm in which the very inductive rules of tracing causes from symptoms are constantly thematised. Reed himself extends the notion of mystery when he refers to The Last Days of Louisiana Red as:

A detective novel and a mystery... there are a lot of esoteric things -mysteries - in it, but at the same time it is a detective novel because there are people consciously looking for clues. (IND 8)

According to this view, there is a metaphysical dimension in detective fiction which is down to earth which means the mystery is ultimately concerned with matters of this world. Unlike many white authors for example, Graham Greene, Reed does not aim at reaching a transcendental dimension. Much of Reed's close descriptions and predilections for vivid detail can be traced to Himes's hyper realistic style, which he greatly admires. Reed associates Himes's work with concrete perception and description, quoting Marcel Duhamel, the director of Gallimard's detective story series, who gave the following advice to Himes:

Always action in detail makes pictures. Like motion pictures. Always the scenes are visible. No stream of consciousness at all. We don't give a damn who's thinking what-only what they're doing. Always doing something from one scene to another. Don't worry about making sense. (IND 8)

Though Himes may not offer a lot of free narratology, the abundant use of concrete details in his writing makes an analogy to Reed's possibilities.

Moreover, in both cases they appear textualised like words; the physical traces which Himes's detective ace needs in order to arrest the Harlem hoodlums and the signs which Reed's detective is used to solve metaphysical crimes are phenomenally alike. Description may point in either direction. Both narrative strategies have in common a gesture of detection, which celebrates the inductive approach. It is by the signs that they can recognise the forces, by the manifest details--detectives cannot work without traces, no matter whether they are detectives of the physical or of the metaphysical. In this sense mythic rings of a conspiracy against Black men and white women that only Reed, with his enormous post-rational leaps of causality, could devise-and only detective LaBas, the leading occult troubleshooter in the country could solve.

Louisiana Red Corporation is a criminal mail-order house specialising in juice boxes, black record companies and hard drugs. The novel chapters are narrated by a black minstrel Chorus who holds an old grudge against an actress starring in Antigone who once upstaged his act, and the dialogues of some street people Moochers named such as Andy,

Kingfish and their moralistic compatriot Amos, a loyal Worker for Solid Gumbo. Yellings' was eliminated and a black Mammy in love with a white man is no more a mystery than the conclusion of any Greek drama or super-detective story, even though there will always be Louisiana Red. Reed's hoodoo has a wickedly funny vitality that undermines white European ideology. Ironically, Reed's narratology seem to have given too much emphasis to inductive notions reminiscent of the physical sciences, consider that Reed's narrative gesture also correlates with that of the mythologies, and that it is precisely the original status of knowledge which is different in myth and in history.

## **BLACK LITERARY TRADITION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP OF WESTERN LITERARY FORMS**

Reed's next Neo-hoodoo novel Flight to Canada is a playful reflection on the black literary tradition and its relationship of western literary forms. It is a wildly comic novel that reverses a number of the genre's formulas, in particular the association of freedom with the movement from south to north. The narrator, Raven Quickskill, is an escaped slave who has returned south to tell the story of Uncle Robin. The second half of the novel continues to alternate between scenes in the North with Raven and scenes on the plantation with Swille. Flight to Canada is a conventional novel. The characters do not belong to a world resembling everyday reality.

The major plot of Flight to Canada involves the escape of Raven Quickskill from his owner, Massa Arthur Swille, and Swille's efforts to capture Quickskill. The historical Canada is the eventual destination where Quickskill and other slaves wish to arrive when they run away Virginia, but this historical Canada is not the heaven slaves to think and pray. Yet in the face of the depressing stories about Canada from his friend Leech field, Carpenter, Cato and 40's, Quickskill will not relinquish his dream. For him, Canada is personified beyond the physical plane - it is a metaphor for happiness, be it evil, death, art and liberation in the novel.

Hoodoo time is also liberally dispersed throughout the novel by the usage of contemporary indices. The opening of the novel, which is the poem 'Flight to Canada,' mixes the time of the novel (the 1860s) with the present time. The poem also serves as a synopsis of the action prior to the beginning of the narrative in chapter one. This chapter opens with Raven reflecting "on the writing of the poem: Quickskill" (FC 3 – 5). Later, Cato arms the female slaves to monitor the male slaves, who are excited over the escape of 40s,

Leechfield, and Quick skill. Cato says, “They’ll keep order. They’ll dismember them niggers with horrifying detail” (FC 56). This is an extra – textual reference to the episodes in Gayle Jones’ Corregidora (1973), in which black men were pictured as brutes and brutalised by black women.

Quickskill reflects on The Man Who Cried I Am (1971), by John A. Williams as an indication of how titles tell the tale of the black man’s sojourn in America, and how far that tale has advanced as indicated by the progression of titles, from Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin: The Man who was A Thing (1852), Half A Man by Mary White Overton, (1910) and finally William’s book in 1971.

## SEEN AND UNSEEN FORCES OF HOODOO POWER

As in The Last Days of Louisiana Red Hoodoo also surface in Flight to Canada as a corporeal force. In chapter one, Quickskill asks himself if it is Hoodoo who is writing the poem Flight to Canada and if it is Hoodoo who punishes Stowe for stealing the plot of Uncle Tom’s Cabin from Josiah Henson, an escaped slave. Stowe is quoted as saying that ‘God wrote Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ (FC 11); Quickskill asks, ‘Which God? Some gods will mount anything’ (FC 11).

Later, Swille anthropomorphises Hoodoo as a strong, real influence carried by blacks who have the United States under a spell. Finally, Uncle Robin says that it is the power of Hoodoo which has allowed him to triumph over Swille in the end. In response to Aunt Judy’s assertion that the deception of Swille is an Christian Uncle Robin responds:

I’ve about had it with this Christian. I mean, it can stay, but it’s going to have to stop being so bossy. I’d like to bring the old cults back. This Christian isn’t going to work for us. It’s for desert people. Grey, arid, cold. It’s a New Mexico religion. There’s not a cloud there often, and when they do come, it looks like judgment. Sure was lively out in the woods when they had them horn cults, blacks dressed up like Indians. Everybody could act a fool, under controlled conditions. (FC 171)

Aside from its concept of time, Hoodoo is principally used in this novel as a kind of force which gives the African American protagonists the strength to be direct in the face of seemingly hopeless situations. It becomes a kind of faith which sustains and uplifts without at the same time

necessarily degrading those toward whom it is in opposition. Hoodoo is also the unseen force behind Lincoln's Plunge into the Civil War and his signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The non – fictional Lincoln is portrayed as a man who, at best, was ambiguous about the quality of African Americans.

At one point in the novel, Cato attempts to explain Quickskill's poem, Flight to Canada: "it does not have no redeeming qualities, it is bereft of any sort of precede resistance, is cute and unexpurgated (FC 52). Swille, unimpressed, simply says:

Spare me the cotton. Stuffing, Cato. No one's interested in your critical abilities and you know what they did in the old days to the messenger who brought bad news." Cato is hurt by this: "But, Mr. Swille, you sent me to school for that. To be critical about things. (FC 53)

In Cato's case, being critical without historical perspective this causes his observation to exist within the framework of possibility bounded by current events. Transcendence beyond current event occurs only as a function of what Cato has been socialised to believe as possible by his master and illegitimate father, Arthur Swille. Cato is neither free nor literate, they gibbed him stands as an ironic affirmation of his status as a slave. When a member of an oppressed racial minority decides not to idealise reality based on their own history that individual finds ingenious and always brutal ways to support the status quo. The tradition of which the educated Cato is a part sometimes finds its contemporary to regard in academia, where African American occupy privileged positions (certainly in comparison to the majority of African Americans) not unlike those of the house slaves, Mammy Barracuda and Cato. To be sure, these privileged positions do not insure a consciousness like that of house slaves.

William Julius Williams, Adolph Reed, Jr., and a host of others variously condemn affirmative action programs and almost any attempt at empowerment of African American along racial lines. In the tradition of materialist social scientists who define options in accordance with the seen forces of history, Williams asserts that economic class is the primary determiner of life chances among African Americans. His causal exhortation to blacks is to assume the obligations of citizenship. His argument is that Jesse Jackson's run for the presidency is hopeless. Ultimately, harmful because Jackson will act as a focal point for black concerns and thereby relieve white candidates of the need to speak to those concerns. Essentially,

he argues that because Jackson is not assured of victory he should not run for the Democratic nomination for the presidency. At the very least, this interpretation of current events ignores the dialectic of struggle within African American history. It reflects with examples of individuals posing the impossible, be it ending slavery or eating where one wants to, in the face of odds that, at the very least, seem objectively insurmountable.

For black neoconservatives, black empowerment proceeds along a path defined by those outside the African American experience. It is a static back drop that holds no sway in current politics. One imagines blacks posing in front of one specific historical backdrop to illustrate whatever dramatic historical moment expediency demands, and quite significantly never knowing any motivational connection between themselves and that back drop. The proper socialisation of the slave is not only concerns the obvious manifestations of history but also, and quite profoundly, the more subtle manifestations of people's history as illustrated in their religion and social customs.

## HOODOO TRICKSTER

In The Terrible Twos (1982) Reed uses a contemporary setting to attack the Reagan administration and exploitative nature of the American economic system. The novel is a comic-mythological tour de force, uniting elements of our culture's Christmas story-Dickens's A Christmas Carol, the legend of St. Nicholas, the commercial street-corner Santa Clause into a bizarre satire on greed, racism and inhumanity. Reed chides the United States of the 1980's as a mindless, grasping two-year old, a resources, hope, and compassion, hiding behind a phony costume of charity and concern. Nance Saturday is Reed's African American detective, sets out to discover St. Nicholas's place of exile.

The Terrible Threes are not in the not-so-distant future mostly to undress the Reagan years. The detective, Nance Saturday, who gets lost in the thick plots, remains aloof from the madness of trying to make it in the new white, and becomes celibacy out of a fear of infection. Neo-Hoodooism itself has been pushed offstage entirely by a sort of Gnostic (having mystical knowledge spiritual) sect of questionable sincerity. Characters include President Dean Clift, a former model become-President because he is manipulability by Big Oil. Nance Saturday, black and sexy sleuth on the trail of the real Santa; and Jamaica Queens, a sensual reporter who penetrates the inner Sanctum of the Nicolaites (those who would restore Saint Nicholas to

the church) only to discover Black Peter, everyone's favourite hoodoo man and wizard.

In The Terrible Twos and The Terrible Threes, Reed discovers his hoodoo trickster Black Peter in what appears at first an unlikely source, a major stream of European mythology and legend. Black Peter, a servant who, in the legend of Saint Nicholas, originally "carried Nicholas's bags" (TWOS 81), is transformed into the trickster through a recuperation of two pictures. The first shows Black Peter in a jester's cap with its rooster's comb:

"An illustration of Saint Nicholas, but peeking from behind him is a cox-combed black figure with a bunch of rods sticking out of a pouch he carries on his back. Black Peter!". (TWOS 121)

As phallic images, the rooster's comb and the erect rods also link Black Peter to Blue Coal, the ithyphallic deity of The Last Days of Louisiana Red. The second picture, from a Moscow art gallery, shows Saint Nicholas exorcising a devil, but devil, a "tiny black creature with long body and a big nose and a rooster's crown," (TWOS 121) is another version of Black Peter as trickster. Through this examination of the transformation of Santa Claus into a major icon of Western enterprise, Reed not only recovers the figure of Black Peter, but he finds a connection to the Hoodoo spirit world by pursuing the icon's earliest features in European mythology as he relates Christmas to the "dreadful Winter solstice when the undead, the half dead, and the near dead roamed the world" (TWOS 120-121). A major point made through this examination is that the Hoodoo trickster is omnipresent and irrepressible, something the narrator underscores: "The Americans would soon find out what the Dutch, French, and English had learned before. It's hard to prevent Black Peter from going where he wants to go" (THREES 131).

Reed demonstrates this major point about the irrepressibility of this trickster by organising The Terrible Twos around a modern Black Peter, a ventriloquist with red dreadlocks who displays his power through Hoodoo. Black Peter gives abundant evidence of his Hoodoo power through a dramatic and continued subversion of oppressive authority. First, in a debate with the leader of the Nicolaites, a Christian sect, he astonishes the audience by "using the exact tone and inflection of his opponent's voice" (TWOS 59), wins the debate, and thereby becomes the sect's new leader. Throughout, Reed uses the Hoodoo trickster to present a merciless satire of white infantilism pandered to by greedy bosses whose aim is to make each day a

profitable Christmas and in a particularly subversive image, Reed transforms the familiar sight of Saint Nicholas astride a white horse entering Amsterdam into one in which the black servant as trickster changes roles with his master.

## THE STYLE OF RHETORICAL WORK

Reed's next Neo-Hoodoo novel's title Reckless Eyeballing not only refers Ball's play and Reed's wildly satirical view of American life, but also recalls one of the accusations against Emmett Till, the young Chicago black who was murdered in Mississippi in 1953, for looking and whistling at a white woman. As the novel opens, Ball has written a new play, also called "Reckless Eyeballing", that he hopes will appease powerful New York white feminists and their black women supporters.

Critics have failed to account adequately for Ishmael Reed's Reckless Eyeballing, and generally dismiss it as less interesting than his more controversial early writing. This novel seems more straight forward in the plots and messages, and much less experimental in method. However, this apparent clarity is part of a complex and innovative style. One might characterise this style as "rhetorical" in the broadest and most pervasive sense-that is, its overall narrative strategies at the level of plot, theme and character are constructed primarily on the way the audience can read and even misread the novel. Reed broadens the definition of the rhetorical aspects of the literary text as part of a larger attempt to reformulate how his own works relate to the African American tradition.

Critics have noted that African American writers often are particularly aware of their precursors and tradition. Reed, however, not only carefully situates himself in relation to tradition in the abstract, but also anticipates in the novel's plot and structures the reactions of actual readers who share that tradition only in a problematic way. Indeed, in Reed's fiction this problematic reception of the work becomes the primary content of the novel. The implications of this move force the reader to reconsider how one can trace the African American tradition and to what degree that tradition can remain independent of the readings given it by mainstream American literary culture. Though, to explore such rhetorical workings in one particular novel is Reckless Eyeballing.

Critics and reviewers unanimously agree that Ishmael Reed is assaulting feminism in this novel. His protagonist, Ian Ball, is called a notorious sexist, and yet readers' are invited to suffer with Ball during his

persecution at the hands of powerful women in the theatre world. When Reed climatically summarises Ball's victimisation by revealing him as two-headed man, he seems to be using that common African American trope of black "double-consciousness". This trope defines black consciousness as split into two identities, one acceptable to and partially created by the white hegemony, the other more authentic but disturbing to that same mainstream society.

It is an extraordinarily timely novel that depicts in his usual complex of penetrating satire, surrealism, allegory and farce in the central sources of confusion and pain confronting black man in contemporary society. Reed has insisted here that black experience cannot be the symbols and the form. In this case, the detective formula and the search for selfhood motif (the latter virtually synonymous with serious black writing) but then demolishes these structures by introducing his own distinctive blend of discontinuity and humor. Reed, however, uses the detective story to expose the limitations of Western metaphysics. He wants the reader to know that the traditional detective story is not innocent, that it is a construct, and that it endorses Western metaphysics. In classic form the detective novel requires a concept of time and history in which past events can be frozen in order to reconstruct those events into a teleological (natural phenomena) driven narrative thread leading from a mystery – laden crime to a resolution.

Reed envisions the multi-culture as a sort of collective consciousness to be created through cultural exchanges between individuals and groups which are revitalise not only their individual experiences but their culture as well. His kaleidoscopic surveys of history, art, and religion in his literature are based on the general conviction that a diversity of realities is more of an asset than a liability in furthering self-understanding as well as tolerance of the family of men. But more specifically, those surveys are organised made by ethnic groups within the United States to the country as a whole, contributors which Reed feels have not been given the recognitions they deserve by the majority of the American populace past or present.

## CONCLUSION

As an African American writer, one of his literary objectives is to present the cultural heritage of African Americans as a rich combination of traditions and influences which in turn have contributed than is traditionally recognized. But his literature also documents Asian and Indian Americans whose cultural inheritances have been largely overshadowed by the

European value system prevailing in the United States. To sum up, yet in these novels, throughout this paper, I have analysed that Reed was offering what can be called a postmodern analysis of the United States as a nation, by bringing to light the shaky foundations of the integrity. Through an analysis of the way point of view and time shape character development within the framework of the relationship posed that the novel's structural integrity as well as its quite formidable dimension as social commentary. Reed's novels focus most on social circumstances which inhibit the development of Blacks in American society and this chapter also analysed the characteristics of hoodoo detective in Reed's novels.

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